



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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Council Meeting – 18 July 2024

Public Questions

Question 1

Question on behalf of council tax payers and leaseholders of Parkside Place Cambridge for the meeting of Cambridge City Council in the Council Chamber, The Guildhall Cambridge on Thursday 18th July 2024 at 6pm.

Background

Parkside Place is an estate developed in 2012/2013 in the centre of Cambridge by Grosvenor Developments Ltd, a company that is part of Grosvenor Estates, the family company of the Duke of Westminster. The development is a mixed development comprising private apartments, Affordable Housing Units (AFUs) and **Cambridge Fire Station**. In gaining planning consent for the development, Grosvenor entered into a S106 agreement with Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and The Fire Authority. Under this agreement Grosvenor were obliged to ensure that the service charges of the AFUs did not increase annually by a figure in excess of retail price index (RPI).

Grosvenor, by seemingly calculated alteration of the final leases entered into with the residential leaseholders and the Fire Authority, (without any transparency or prior agreement), placed the obligation to pay any excess charge over RPI for the AFUs on the residential leaseholders and the Fire Authority.

To date the excess service charges for the AFUs amounts to over £320,000 of which in excess of £50,000 has been borne by the Fire Authority and therefore charged to council tax payers under the precept. Residential leaseholders are taking legal action against Grosvenor - quite clearly a civil matter. The question below is raised by council tax payers in relation to the burden of additional costs on the Fire Authority.

The Question

a) Does the council feel it appropriate for council tax payers to bear part of the costs of a developer's obligation under a S106 agreement. (£50,000 to date and increasing annually)

b) If it is felt that this is inappropriate behaviour by the developer, will the council make representations to Grosvenor on behalf of council tax payers.

c) Should Grosvenor feel that there is no obligation to recompense the Fire Authority and therefore council tax payers, will the council acknowledge that this behaviour should be taken into account in any future planning application by Grosvenor Estates or their subsidiary companies.

Connected questions were placed before the Fire Authority at their meeting on June 20th 2024 at Shire Hall. The Chief Fire Officer has indicated that legal advice is being taken on their position.

Question 2

The Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations would like to ask the following question at the Full Council meeting, 18 July.

Question

The Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations (FeCRA) shares the concerns of experts that Cambridge will soon run out of water

The East of England is low-lying, and one of the driest places in the UK. Water sources are under pressure meaning people, plants and animals are competing for the same precious resources. With climate change, drought is set to become more common amid hotter, drier summers, and intense rainfall events more frequent.

Many residents are very concerned about this and about the impact on the Cam chalk streams and the wildlife that depends on them.

Several solutions have been put forward including new reservoirs, water transfer pipelines and stringent water efficiency measures but these steps are urgently needed in any case to ensure there will be enough water for existing users and the developments that already have planning permission.

Cambridge's MP Daniel Zeichner Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is on public record as saying that growth in this region can't wait for reservoirs but the Environment Agency has objected to developments such as Bourn and Darwin Green on the grounds that they are not sustainable because there is not enough water.

Our petition to the Environment Agency supports these objections and asks that they continue to protect the environment by opposing major developments in this region until there is clear evidence that there is enough water to support them.

It has now been signed by almost 1000 residents - will the Council back the petition and ensure sufficient water can be provided **before** planning approval is given to further large-scale developments?

<https://www.change.org/p/save-our-chalk-streams-petition-to-the-environment-agency>

Chair, FeCRA

www.fecra.org.uk

www.facebook.com/CambridgeRAs

www.twitter.com/fecra2

Question 3

We are residents of Scholars Court, a block of council flats that rely on communal heating and hot water provided by Switch2. Since the construction of these flats, Switch2 has been our sole provider. Recently, Switch2 has notified us of an immediate doubling of their charges, which is placing significant financial strain on many vulnerable tenants.

Could the City Council review this situation and consider finding a more affordable alternative provider for our communal heating and hot water services?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Question 4

For how much longer will the Council fail to deliver on its promise to provide this marginal, but very real, community with a safe, legal place to stop?

Why do I have to continue to ask the same question and receive the same irrelevant answer from a Council, which, like the election result, has had an overall Labour majority for several years, yet has failed to come up with a tiny plot of ground – the size of a football pitch – for a transit site? This is much more than an oversight. It is a blatant example of discrimination towards a protected ethnic minority, clearly expressed in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010¹. Provisions of the Police Act 2022 further victimised this community but resulted, on the 14/5/24, with an issuance by the High Court of a declaration of incompatibility finding that provisions in the Police Act unlawfully discriminate against Gypsies and Travellers.² The decision was based on the lack of authorised transit site provision on which they could camp lawfully. The Council have protested that they await the second of two GTANAs, which have taken over 4 years and counting to produce and are, in any event, totally immaterial to the issue of transit sites. On the same day as I was raising this question at the May full council meeting, Council enforcement officers were threatening Travellers with eviction notices at an unauthorised encampment at Arbury Town Park³. The Council state they do needs assessments, while ignoring the pre-eminent ‘need’ of this community — their deep-seated cultural way of life. They

travel and leave a very light footprint on the landscape, while holding on to their abiding belief in their right to roam. They may have 'need' of social support when they stop, but to focus on this is a racist endeavour. Like all other citizens, they have a human right to a home or place to stop, just as the Council have a duty to advance equality of opportunity; foster good relations and remove and minimise disadvantages.

For how much longer will the Council fail to deliver on its promise to provide this marginal, but very real, community with a safe, legal transit site?

Notes

1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 stated 14 years ago that public bodies should have regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; foster good relations; to remove and minimise disadvantages suffered by those due to their protected characteristics; and to encourage them to participate in public life. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/>

2 <https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/smith-v-secretary-of-state-for-the-home-department/>

3 [Travellers asked to leave 'unauthorised encampment' at Cambridge park](#)

Question 5

Motion 8e calls for the city council:

"To adopt the Vision statement which positions the Council as a place maker, convenor and community facilitator as well as playing a core role in providing public services"

With the above in mind:

What discussions will the council have with partner organisations to organise, co-ordinate, and sequence consultation events for future proposals that affect the future of our city and beyond, and what actions could the council take including but not limited to:

- A shared single meetings/consultations calendar for public sector organisations (such as local councils which can scrape calendar data)
- Annual 'societies fairs' similar to the students unions freshers fairs for societies
- civic education for adults mindful of some of the questions that were put to the general election candidates that indicated a collective lack of knowledge on how our city functions and malfunctions
- Developer-funded events that bring together multiple proposals for residents to look at in the round rather than piecemeal and at short notice as at present.

Question 6

Developers are describing the lakes adjacent to Snakey Path and Cherry Hinton Brook as 'just amazing' but proposals for their opening as an urban country park, as part of the Mission Street science centre planning application mean they will soon become very ordinary. The lakes are a designated City Wildlife Site, home to chalk grassland wildflowers, orchids and numerous birds. But the plans include lakeside paving, unregulated access throughout much of the area, and three new access points via the Tins, a pedestrian and cycle path currently beset by many problems. Somewhat naively, the developers consider that the annual hot weather anti-social behaviour will be managed by 'passive surveillance'. Would Councillors consider delaying decisions about this component of the application until adequate consultation has been held with local residents and environmental groups, workable solutions developed for public access and health and safety issues, and mechanisms found to safeguard the important biodiversity of the area?

CIVIC AFFAIRS

10 July 2024
5.30pm - 6.39 pm

Present: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Bennett, Gawthrope Wood, Robertson, Sheil and Young

FOR ADOPTION BY THE COUNCIL

24/26/Civ – Civic Affairs: Update to Alternative Options to Area Committees

The report provided the follow-up to a report brought to Civic Affairs Committee in October 2023, as requested by the Committee at that time. It provides an update on work carried out in accordance with that report's recommendations to explore alternatives to Area Committees.

Resolved (unanimously) to recommend to Council:

- i. That Area Committees be paused for the remainder of the municipal year, 2024/25, while pilot work on alternatives continue and while more detailed proposals are developed for implementation from the start of the municipal year 2025/26.

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Oral Questions for Council 18 July 2024

1. Councillor Porrer to Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing.

Could the Executive Councillor please update council on how noisy and antisocial driving is being dealt with throughout the city?

2. Councillor Dryden to Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment.

How well are the bin collection rounds going following the implementation of the 4 day week trial?

3. Councillor Shiel to Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing.

Could the Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing update us on what is being done to support women experiencing homelessness in Cambridge?

4. Councillor Todd-Jones to Leader of the Council.

Given the gravity of the previous government's proposals set out in the 'Case for Cambridge', how will the Leader be engaging in discussions on this with the new Labour government?

5. Councillor Flaubert to Executive Councillor for Housing.

Does the Exec Cllr believe that its letting policy and Home Link application system is fit for purpose?

6. Councillor Divkovic to Executive Councillor for Housing.

Could the Executive Councillor for Housing give us an update on our tenant audits?

7. Councillor Bennett to Leader of the Council.

Please can the leader explain what his plans are to improve the sustainability and quality of Cambridge tourism given the failure of the tourist tax vote?

8. Councillor Clough to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

While supportive in principle of the Voi trials there are a number of concerns about the parking arrangements for the bikes and scooters. In some places, such as the Grantchester St/Driftway junction they are blocking the footpath and are a hazard for pedestrians and cyclists.

They appeared without notice overnight so my questions is:

Who decided these designated drop/off and collect locations were suitable, why was there no consultation with local councillors and residents and what action will be taken to remove them urgently from dangerous locations?

9. Councillor Young to Leader of the Council.

What does the Executive Councillor foresee as the role of the Council in the resettlement and rehabilitation of the prisoners released early which has just been announced by our National Government?

10. Councillor Baigent to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

Could the Executive Councillor update Council on steps being taken to promote our work on herbicide reduction both to Cambridge residents and more broadly in order for other local authorities to share in what we've learnt?

11. Councillor Howard to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

The City Council manages 12 of the 26 allotment sites in Cambridge. Many/all of these sites are supplied with troughs and standpipes supplying mains water for watering. Some plot holders are unaware that this is drinking water supplied by Cambridge Water and many still do not have water butts to collect rain water. Would the Council consider launching a project this coming year to assist with (a) the installation of rain water collection systems in all the allotments it manages, and (b) provision of education/awareness materials to encourage plot holders to reduce their use of mains water.

12. Councillor Blackburn-Horgan to Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing.

Does the Exec Cllr believe that the council is doing everything possible to ensure that our young people have safe recreational youth spaces around the city?

13. Councillor Bick to Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control & Infrastructure.

Is the Executive Councillor happy with the government's intention to impose a centrally determined target for new housebuilding on Cambridge, when this council and its partner in South Cambridgeshire have a good record of taking ownership for determining their own target, after analysis of forecasts for the economy and future demand, assessment of local constraints and opportunities and exercising our duty to co-operate with neighbouring councils - and then delivering sustainable new homes?

14. Councillor Lee to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

Could the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services let us know when the public toilets in Nightingale Park are due to open to the public and post opening hours since the council website says there are public toilets they never seem to be unlocked for the public?

15. Councillor Payne to Executive Councillor for Communities.

The roll out of the 4G network by mobile phone companies such as Vodafone this year means that residents with 3G phones are not able to access mobile data unless they purchase a new mobile phone. Can the Executive Councillor tell us about what actions the Council will be taking to support more vulnerable residents to prevent them from becoming digitally isolated?

16. Councillor Griffin to Executive Councillor for Communities.

What improvements are being undertaken to City Council pools/sports facilities?

17. Councillor Pounds to Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources.

Can the Executive Councillor confirm progress with the Council's Park Street development?

18. Councillor Robertson to Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing.

In light of several recent shop break-ins, what is being done to support and protect local businesses and shop workers?

19. Councillor Hauk to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

Can the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services please update us on the planned community clean-up days around Cambridge this year?

20. Councillor Martenelli to Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control & Infrastructure.

The council partners within the GCP have agreed to develop an Integrated Parking Strategy in order to reduce private traffic within the city and encourage use and viability of sustainable alternatives. After the agreed reduction in provision of off-street parking at the Park Street car

park, what further steps is the Council considering to assist the preparation of the Strategy and on what timescale?

21. Councillor Tong to Executive Councillor for Communities.

The Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) community do not receive the support they need around Cambridgeshire, including within the city of Cambridge. At present, there are not enough pitches available on dedicated sites for short-term stays. Will Cambridge City Council commit to urgently investigate the viability of short-term stopping places for members of the GRT community, inspired by the work of Leeds City Council, noting that Cambridge is of immense importance to some members of this community due to family ties and the traditional Midsummer Fair.

22. Councillor Gawthrop Wood to Executive Councillor for Housing.

Could the Executive Councillor for Housing let us know how successful she feels the new council housing on Campkin Rd in King's Hedges has been in terms of integrating new council tenants with the local community?

23. Councillor McPherson to Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources.

Can the executive councillor confirm the team appointed to undertake the next stage of the civic quarter project and the proposed engagement process?

24. Councillor Nestor to Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control & Infrastructure.

How has the Shared Planning Youth Engagement Service been working with schools in our City? How many schools and children have been engaged?

25. Councillor Lokhmotova to Executive Councillor for Housing.

The Council's Climate Change strategy set an ambitious goal to become net zero by 2030.

Reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions from existing council homes is one of the key pathways to net zero.

The council owns over 7,100 homes, a vast proportion of which have poor energy efficiency.

Could the Executive Councillor for Housing please provide an update on the progress of the retrofit programme, how many existing houses are net zero ready, and what's the vision for the next five years?

26. Councillor Glasberg to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

In November 2022, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority approved a grant of £420,000 for the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream project, which is a joint initiative between Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge Water. Cambridge City Council is responsible for implementing the project, using recommendations in the 2020 Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Audit report.

Please could the Council provide a full update on (a) the activities undertaken, (b) the collaboration that has been undertaken with local groups and residents, and (c) provide a breakdown of the funding spent on this project since the beginning of 2023, given that the response to a similar question asked in November last year was inadequate?

27. Councillor Anna Smith to Leader of the Council.

Following the general election result on 4th July, can the Leader of the Council give us an update on how the Council will be working with the new Labour government and local partners to further support our work in the City?

28. Councillor Hossain to Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

I would like to raise an important issue regarding the lack of public toilet facilities in Cambridge City, particularly during our busy weekend nights.

Every weekend, approximately five thousand people gather in our city for nights out, supported by five hundred professional taxi drivers working through the night. However, there are no public toilet facilities available at all. As a result, many people are forced to relieve themselves outside churches, shops and on footpaths, leading to unsanitary conditions.

Additionally, all the public toilets in our parks and on busy roads such as Mill Road have been permanently closed. This severely impacts visitors, especially children and individuals with special physical needs who require frequent access to toilets. By closing these facilities, the council is forcing our children and residents to relieve themselves in open spaces, which is both unsanitary and undignified.

This situation is not the fault of the individuals but rather a failure of this council to provide adequate public toilet facilities. I urge the council to address this issue urgently to improve the hygiene and dignity of our city's public spaces.

Moreover, Cambridge attracts around eight million visitors every year, and the lack of public toilet facilities significantly detracts from their experience. Therefore, I would like to ask the leader of the council: what major steps are you taking to ensure the environmental safety and well-being of our visitors and residents in Cambridge City?

29. Councillor Swift to Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control & Infrastructure.

What is the status of the Design Code Trial in north Cambridge, and how is this going to be taken forward?

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Councillor Holloway proposed the following amendment to motion 8a. (Deleted text ~~struckthrough~~, additional text underlined.)

Background to motion

It is now nearly 5 years since the last government made a commitment to reform the private rental market and protect people from “no fault” evictions.

These evictions were introduced by s21 Housing Act 1988. They have created a climate of fear for private renters, which can inhibit them from asking for much needed repairs.

After much delay a Renters (Reform) Bill 2024 was drafted which would have reduced the scope of “no fault” evictions, but was halted by the announcement of the July 4 2024 General Election.

Since the announcement of the proposed reform, rates of s21 “no fault” evictions have risen sharply, with 900 s21 “no fault” evictions per week recorded in the UK. The true figure is likely to be higher because not all these evictions are recorded.

Active Motion

This Council notes:

According to the 2021 Census, 31% of Cambridge households were in private rental accommodation. The welfare of these residents is of great importance to our city.

In October 2022, the Council passed a motion (<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=29659>) resolving to, among other things, set up a private renters’ forum, to re-consider the need for a Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme, and to ensure that all HMOs in the city are inspected, improved if needed, and licensed. The Council is taking a proactive approach to private tenant engagement, with a presence in supermarkets and at events such as ARU Property Fair and the Big Lunch, as well as monthly drop-in sessions.

The Council has an HMO licensing scheme, and rogue landlords can be reported to the Council.

When residents are made homeless, there can also be an obligation placed on the council (“homelessness duty”). A rise in private tenants made homeless is likely to increase the strain on council resources.

Re-introduction of the Renters (Reform) Bill to Parliament (~~preferably with the 84 amendments tabled by the then opposition parties~~) or a similar bill would protect private renters from unfair treatment and improve their quality of life.

Any delay in re-introducing this bill or a similar one leaves tenants exposed to s21 eviction.

It is accordingly important that this bill (or a similar bill) is made law at the earliest possible date.

~~The Council therefore resolves to write to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner, copying in our local MPs asking her to bring forward a new renters reform bill at the earliest possible date.~~

The Labour Party's 2024 manifesto states: 'We will immediately abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions, prevent private renters being exploited and discriminated against, empower them to challenge unreasonable rent increases, and take steps to decisively raise standards, including extending 'Awaab's Law' to the private sector.'
(<https://labour.org.uk/change/break-down-barriers-to-opportunity/>)

This Council resolves:

To welcome the Labour Party's commitment to immediately abolishing Section 21 evictions and to introducing other measures to support private renters, including setting up a National Landlords Register.

To keep under review how the Council can use and work within the framework of any new national legislation to further support private renters.

~~(At the time of drafting this motion, the Council is unaware of whether such a proposal will be included in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024 and shall adjust the letter accordingly.)~~

~~The Council also proposes to require its private rentals team to consider whether support for private tenants can be increased in the short term before any increase in legal protection and bring a report to the appropriate council committee on its proposals in Autumn 2024.~~

~~The Council wishes particularly to require officers to report on whether it would be practical to introduce a local version of the measures introduced by the Mayor of London, including online resources Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker, Property Licence Checker and Report a Rogue Landlord tool.~~

Useful Links (not part of active motion)

We have included some background papers that we found useful.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/reforming-private-renting-london>

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10004/>

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/advice-renters>

We have also drawn upon the 2021 Census figures and the council's own Housing Facts.

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Agenda Item 5

Councillor Thornburrow proposed the following amendment to motion 8b. (Deleted text ~~struckthrough~~, additional text underlined.)

Council notes the public outrage displayed in the general election about the pollution of rivers, waterways and beaches by sewage - an outrage which is shared locally in relation to the River Cam.

Council further notes that change has begun, and endorses the statement made by the Secretary of State, Steve Reed, that “We will never look the other way while water companies pump sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.”

Finally, we welcome the support for the actions taken by the new Labour government by people like Feargal Sharkey, our perfect campaigner who has been giving us Labour kicks by recommending Labour as the political party he believes can deliver meaningful change to improve the environment.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Steven Reed, thanking him for the action he has already taken against the polluting water companies by

- Writing to Ofwat to ask them to make sure funding for vital infrastructure investment is ring-fenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment
- Asking water companies to place customers and the environment at the heart of their objectives, demonstrating this by updating their ‘Articles of Association’ to make the interests of customers and the environment a primary objective
- Giving consumers new powers to hold water company bosses to account through powerful new customer panels with. For the first time in history, customers will have the power to summon board members and hold water executives to account.
- Strengthening protection and compensation for households and businesses when their basic water services are affected

and asking him to continue to deliver the change Labour has promised.

~~With the last government having been unwilling to take convincing measures to address this, council calls on the new government now to treat this as a priority for action, including introduction of criminal liability of water companies and suspension of executive bonuses for failure to meet performance targets.~~

~~Council requests the Chief Executive to write to the new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs seeking the inclusion of legislation to appear in the very first King's Speech, and to both of Cambridge's MPs asking them to support this.~~

Agenda Item 6

Councillor Davey proposed the following amendment to motion 8c. (Deleted text ~~struckthrough~~, additional text underlined.)

The Council ~~notes that~~ welcomes the result of the recent general election which delivered a Labour Government for the first time since 2010. However, low turnout remains a persistent issue in national and local government elections with participation reducing again at the most recent City Council elections in May 2024. Political engagement is perceived to be particularly low among those aged under 30 and that the lack of engagement from young people is something which should be of concern for all political parties. ~~produced a new government with 100% of the power after winning two-thirds of the Parliamentary seats with only a third of the popular vote, when turnout was the lowest since 2001.~~

This Council believes that electoral reform can help to improve both engagement and tackle polarisation within our political system and will therefore:

- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Government asking it to re-introduce proportional voting systems for the elections for Police and Crime Commissioners and Directly Elected Mayors during this parliament, at the same time expressing regret that the single transferrable voting system was removed from these elections in the first place.
- Ask the relevant Officers at the City Council to develop a plan, working with partners at the County Council (who passed a similar motion earlier in the year) to encourage greater understanding of the role of the different tiers of local government here in Cambridge, and in particular to bring forward proposals about how we can work to better engage with younger people in Cambridgeshire to increase participation in local elections.

~~It considers that 'First Past The Post' is neither fair, inclusive, representative or popular and that it encourages voter disengagement, with surveys frequently showing that switching to a form of proportional representation is widely popular.~~

~~It calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister to express our dissatisfaction with the current electoral system, and our belief that a better system is both possible and desirable, and to ask him to set up a Citizens' Assembly to explore a system of voting fit for the Twenty-First century, encompassing national, local and mayoral elections.~~

~~It also calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the city's two members of Parliament calling for their support for this request.~~

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Councillor Thornburrow has proposed the following amendment to motion 8d.

(Deleted text ~~struckthrough~~, additional text underlined.)

This Council notes with concern the rapidly accelerating water crisis that we are facing and it further notes that, following the declarations of a climate emergency and a biodiversity emergency in 2019, actions have been taken across the Council in relation to this issue, many in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council as part of our Shared Planning service, including:

- Responding to public questions with the Water Crisis Forum 2019
- An Integrated Water Management Study - the Stantec Report 2020
- The Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Report 2020
- A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2021
- The Council Rivers, Safe Swimming and Sewage Motion 2022
- The Council Stop Dumping Sewage in our River and Chalk Streams Motion 2023
- A Water awareness campaign in 2022
- A Biodiversity Strategy 2022 – 2030
- Appointment of Chalk Stream Officer 2023
- A Designated Bathing Water area of the Cam 2024

And work to ensure that our emerging shared local plan has the highest proposed standards of water sustainability measures, including drainage, grey and rain water reuse.

Council resolves to continue to provide support for the ongoing work of the Water Scarcity Group in both its focus on new supply side measures to ensure timely progress with new pipelines and reservoirs for new sustainable developments, and also to ensure that future measures for water credits, grey and rain water recycling and retrofitting linked to new and existing developments in and around the Greater Cambridge area are robust and evidenced.

Council also resolves to hold Cambridge Water and Anglian Water to their commitment to a public information/education programme that will help residents and businesses use less water.

Council believes that, within the powers available to us, we are responding to the water emergency that faces us, working to ensure the sustainable development of thriving communities in Cambridge.

Council therefore resolves to continue to do so, confident that the newly elected Labour government will provide legislative, practical and financial support for local authorities as we deal with these pressing issues.

~~Cambridge experienced severe drought in 2022 and 2023, while recently we have seen some of the wettest six months on record in the UK, which have caused flooding in many parts of the city and surrounding areas, damaged agriculture, roads and other public infrastructure, and affected the lives of numerous residents.~~

~~We now have by turns either too much or too little water, as well as distressingly high levels of pollution. When residents see local flooding, they may think that our water shortage is over. Unfortunately, drought and flooding go hand in hand as dry hard soil fails to absorb water. Valuable rain fails to reach our chalk streams and instead contributes to flooding.~~

~~In 2019, the City Council declared biodiversity and climate emergencies. This helped to raise public awareness of these critical issues and influenced planning and other decisions.~~

~~We need a water emergency declaration for the same reasons.~~

~~This council recognises that other agencies are charged with water management. However, we acknowledge the impact of our own actions and decisions on our local water issues. We acknowledge that without broad engagement and co-operation that the chances of any improvement in our water situation is very limited.~~

~~This may be the longest motion that Greens have ever submitted to this council. We make no apologies for this. The scale of the crisis and the extent of the water supply gap is such that we consider that no prudent or responsible person can justify leaving any stone unturned to improve the situation~~

~~This council:~~

- ~~• Asserts that our water issues go wider than the supply and sewage problems that are the responsibility of the local water companies~~
- ~~• Resolves to take steps to ensure the public are aware of the full extent of our water supply gap by monitoring and republishing the information prepared by Water Resources East, the Environment Agency and others as appropriate and providing full and clear information on the extent of the water gap.~~
- ~~• Pledges to encourage all organisational departments, partners and our communities, businesses and residents to address the water crisis within Cambridge and the wider region, and~~
- ~~• To take a full and active part in that work ourselves and employ our “soft power” fully~~

~~(1) Declare recognition of the water emergency and the local impact this could have on the residents, communities and businesses we serve;~~

~~-~~

~~(2) Help reduce over-abstraction by:~~

- ~~• Giving full weight in planning applications for large-scale developments to the evidence of the Environment Agency as statutory consultee on water issues~~
- ~~• Writing to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner to request the withdrawal or amendment of the 8 May 2024 WMS (“Written Ministerial Statement”) on the Cambridge Delivery Group to be replaced with a new WMS requiring greater priority to be given to water issues in considering any local planning applications~~
- ~~• Writing to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner to request that planning matters in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire remain under the control of the local authorities~~
- ~~• Requiring the highest water efficiency standards for any new developments that are approved, including mandatory greywater collection and recycling;~~
- ~~• Undertaking a public information/education programme within the next year to encourage residents to use less water, using all communications mechanisms~~
- ~~• Continuing to engage with the water companies, alongside expert community groups, to accelerate solutions to over-abstraction, supporting those that are strategically planned, clearly costed and transparent, and compatible with commitments to reach net zero and halt biodiversity loss;~~
- ~~• Putting pressure on the water companies to take more concerted, urgent and innovative action to:
 - ~~○ cap abstraction from the Chalk aquifer at today’s actual levels;~~
 - ~~○ manage demand more effectively through actions such as the prompt declaration of hosepipe bans, the accelerated introduction of universal metering and proactive encouragement of water collection and recycling e.g. water butt installation;~~
 - ~~○ rapidly increase efforts to repair leaks.~~~~

~~(3) Reduce pollution by:~~

- ~~• supporting the public’s pressure on Anglian Water to invest urgently in updating its smaller, older sewage treatment works and to halt illegal dumping of sewage into rivers. All wastewater installations and infrastructure that discharges into chalk streams and rivers should be upgraded to this end.~~

~~(4) Mitigate flooding by:~~

- ~~• pushing for the prioritisation of nature-based solutions, including restoration of flood plain habitats and appropriate vegetation management to slow down surface run-off, reduce the risk of flash flooding and minimise pollution;~~
- ~~• promoting the concept of, and principles behind the ‘sponge’ city and region approach: i.e. the creation of places with multiple areas of greenery, trees, ponds, soakaways, pocket parks, rain gardens and permeable paving to allow water to drain away, and with measures to store rainwater and runoff (e.g. water butts).~~

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The erratic weather patterns, generated by climate change, are well understood on paper by both the Cambridge Water Scarcity Group and the water companies. Cambridge Water, the water supply company for the city and parts of South Cambridgeshire, notes in its 2025-2030 business plan^[1] that “we are likely to see more extremes of weather, with 60% less rainfall in the summer and 30% more rainfall in the winter in our Cambridge region by the 2080s.” In its draft Water Resource Management Plan, the company acknowledges clearly that, with current growth proposals and the need for licence caps on abstraction to protect the natural environment, the region will run into a water deficit by 2029/30.

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Current plans for addressing this are wholly inadequate, and incompatible with the February 2024 government ‘guidance’ on water scarcity^[2]. Plans for large-scale development will increase the burden, causing over-abstraction and pollution with negative impacts on the quality of life for residents and further threats to our chalk streams, trees and natural vegetation as the water table falls and becomes more polluted. Information provided by the City Council on the water crisis is minimal: hidden within its webpage on recycling^[3]

References:

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[1] <https://spiral.imperial.ac.uk/bitstream/10044/1/111577/7/Scientific%20Report%20UK%20Storms.pdf>

[1] <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/biodiversity-emergency>

[1] <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=21684>

[1] <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/about-us/our-strategies-and-plans/business-plan-2025-2030>

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures>

[1] <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/reduce-your-waste>

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[Written statements – Written questions, answers and statements – UK Parliament](#)

[1] <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/about-us/our-strategies-and-plans/business-plan-2025-2030>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/reduce-your-waste>

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