

**COUNCIL**

27 November 2025  
6.00 - 8.25 pm

**Present:** Councillors Ashton, Baigent, Bennett, Bick, Bird, Blackburn-Horgan, Clough, Dalzell, Davey, Divkovic, Dryden, Flaubert, Gardiner-Smith, Gawthrope Wood, Glasberg, Griffin, Holloway, Hossain, Howard, Illingworth, Lee, Lokhmotova, McPherson, Moore, Nestor, Payne, Porrer, Pounds, Robertson, Sheil, Smart, A. Smith, S. Smith, Swift, Thittala, Thornburrow, Todd-Jones, Tong, Wade and Young

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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**25/102/CNL Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hauk and Martinelli.

Councillor Bennett left the meeting after item 6 and did not return.

Councillor Thittala left the meeting during the debate on item 9c and did not return.

**25/103/CNL Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item	Reason
Lokhmotova	25/111/CNL	Personal and Prejudicial: Directly involved in the Civic Quarter Design and did not take part in the discussion or vote.
Lokhmotova	25/113/CNL	Personal: Directly involved in the Civic Quarter Design.  Discretion unfettered.
Tong	25/113/CNL	Personal and Prejudicial: Close relationship with someone involved in the market and did not take part in the discussion or vote.

**25/104/CNL Mayor's announcements**

Recent events of note in the Mayor's diary had included Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, which had been well attended by residents, and the Mayor thanked Councillors who had joined her for these special occasions.

The Mayor had also attended a Student Union event with representatives of both Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin Universities; the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cambridge Corn Exchange to celebrate a collaborative project between the Council's cultural services team and local schools, colleges, universities and community organisations; a Future Champions event to recognise the sporting achievements of young people; the opening of Every Space at Cambridge Central Library; and the unveiling of a plaque for Cambridge philosopher Bertrand Russell.

The Mayor would be taking a tour of Cambridge Crown Court in the coming days and would also attend a performance of the pantomime Sleeping Beauty at the reopening of the Cambridge Arts Theatre.

To mark Thanksgiving in the USA, the Mayor noted that the gavel used by successive Cambridge Mayors had been cleaned and restored, in the process revealing an inscription commemorating the presentation of the gavel to City in 1961. The gavel had been a gift from the honourable Edward Crane, Mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and had been crafted of wood from the original Washington elm tree.

## **25/105/CNL Public questions time**

### **Question 1:**

Is there any plan to reopen the closed toilets in Cambridge city and to renovate the existing ones which are so well used. It has impinged on the dignity of residents and visitors alike and restricted the ability to visit the city for reasons too numerous to mention for many council tax payers.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services responded with:

- i. There were not any plans to open toilets that had been closed in the past, with the exception of Silver Street where construction of a brand-new facility was underway.

- ii. The City Council had invested in half a dozen toilets across the city – located at Cherry Hinton Hall, Chesterton Recreation Ground, Coleridge Recreation Ground, Drummer Street, Nightingale Recreation Ground, and Pavilion.
- iii. Over £2 million had been invested in toilets across the city.
- iv. There were currently 10 public toilets, rising to 11 on completion of Silver Street works.
- v. All of the City's toilet provision was free to use.
- vi. Five changing places toilets could be found in the City, and the Council would improve provision further where budgets allow.
- vii. The toilet provision at Jesus Green was under review and proposals would be considered carefully as part of future capital planning.
- viii. The Council had obtained costs for a full update, conversion, and improvement of the Shopmobility toilet at the Grand Arcade so that it could be fully Changing Places compliant
- ix. The Council recognised the importance of accessible, well-maintained public toilets, in places where they were most needed, that would align with public feedback and responsible budget management.

**Question 2:**

Council documents state that only two options are being considered for the redevelopment of Arbury Court: a plan involving completely dismantling the court, building over the park and playground, reducing parking, and building 217 new units or doing nothing.

Will the Council acknowledge that these are not, in fact, the only two options possible and that a true consultation would involve working with the local community to come up with an alternative, viable option that provides quality homes, improves council housing provision, and acknowledges the unique character of this shared public space alongside the needs of streets like Alex Wood Road and Arbury Road?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- i. For Arbury Court and Kingsway the council would need to balance several trade-offs in any proposed design – including an increased number of council homes, certainty for residents and traders, a better park for residents, open shops throughout, a better shopping centre, a new library and retained community facilities, all for best value.
- ii. An early plan had been presented for each site to obtain feedback from tenants, leaseholders, freeholders, community groups, traders and other local stakeholders.

- iii. Council was aware that residents would like any park at Arbury Court to include all the facilities offered by the current park. Cycle lanes crossing the park were not a popular option.
- iv. Other feedback had included concerns about being able to use the shops throughout the building program.
- v. These and other points would help the project team shape the design.
- vi. Residents were encouraged to share feedback so that it could be included in the consultation results.

**Supplementary Question:**

In the original consultation on North Cambridge, hundreds of respondees, car users, cyclists, and pedestrians noted that local roads are overused, unsafe, and literally cracking under the pressure. Yet, the plans drawn up by the Council will add an additional 180 dwellings on Arbury Road, plus potentially hundreds more on the other side of the road in the coming years. So, despite our feedback, Arbury residents like myself are now presented with a plan that pushes yet more traffic onto Arbury Road, builds over our ever shrinking designated open space, already the lowest in Cambridge, and sets a precedent for cramming taller and taller buildings into North Cambridge, while other areas of the city do not face the same treatment. So does the Council agree that there's a significant risk that the community will stop engaging on consultations if they do not respond to our concerns? And going forward, how will you ensure there's a proper dialogue with the community that addresses the critical infrastructure challenges of these plans?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- i. Cars and roads were an issue for the County Council.
- ii. There had been no decision on how tall the buildings would be and this would be made after the consultation had closed.
- iii. Residents should respond to the consultation to have their views heard.
- iv. Meetings and liaison forums would be held with residents, tenants, and all involved with the Arbury and Kingsway areas.

**Question 3:**

Unsurprisingly this is on the subject of Cambridge City's five-year contract with Re-Gen to take our blue bin recycling 400 miles to their site in Northern Ireland for sorting.

At the last full Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October you stated that Re-Gen were using HVO fuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) in order to reduce the impact their lorries had on the climate, by reducing the amount of CO2 emitted. We

were left to infer that they were using this in the lorries that come to Cambridge. This would obviously be very welcome if true.

Unfortunately, according to Re-Gen's own website, it is not true. They are only using HVO for 2 of their 159 lorries (that's 1.2% of them), and only on the short 38-mile trip between Newry and Belfast.

Please could you check and confirm whether this is still the case?

Maybe they are using biodiesel in the lorries that come here? (Biodiesel is available at more petrol stations than HVO. They are not considered to be exactly the same thing.)

Biodiesel can be bought at different strengths. Most vehicles cannot run on 100% biodiesel, so it is usually bought blended with normal diesel, eg 7% strength or 20% strength. Any reduction in emissions of global-warming gases associated with this contract would be better than nothing. Meanwhile we wait for the real solution to this situation, which is the MRF site in England that Re-Gen said would be open by April of this year.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and the Environment responded with:

- i. Thanked the questioner for their excellent scrutiny of the Council's Waste and Recycling Service and acknowledged that they would welcome Regen using HVO fuel for all of their vehicles collecting our recycling, which was exactly what was happening.
- ii. The reference quoted in the question was to a trial carried out by Regen on HVO usage in their vehicles in November 2024. Due to the success of that trial and the fact that HVO could be universally used by all Regen vehicles with no requirement for modifications, Regen were now using HVO across all of their fleet to replace diesel fuel in line with their commitment to deliver a reduction in carbon emissions from the transportation of materials.
- iii. Regen had confirmed that they did not use biodiesel in the vehicles that collect Cambridge's recycling.

**Supplementary Question:**

At the City Council meeting on 24th of July, you stated wrongly the procurement process was based on the MRF in Newry and it was on that site that Regen won the contract. The plans for a UK mainland site were only known after the contract was signed and so there's not been a failure as has been suggested. Regen signed the contract on 10th of April this year. Cambridge City Council signed it on 2nd of June, but plans for a MRF in

England were known about long before that. It was almost promised in a letter from Regen on 29th of January. The plans were mentioned frequently in Council and in both local papers on 15th of January, in a City Council press release in February, and in the environment and scrutiny committee in March. Anyone who was interested knew about the plans for an English MRF. Why did you say in this chamber the plans for a UK mainland site were only known after the contract was signed?

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and the Environment responded with:

- i. The MRF contract had been signed and agreed based on sending the recycling to Newry in Northern Ireland and that was exactly what had happened.
- ii. The plans to go with Newry and Regen had been worked on since before the expiration of the Waterbeach contract and it could take months to agree these contracts.
- iii. There had been additional delays as recycling lorries could empty their load at Waterbeach, now a transfer station was necessary, where the lorries empty the load and the Regen vehicles could be packed up.
- iv. Regen had won the public sector procurement because they had offered the best service.

Post Meeting note: The Head of Climate, Environment and Waste confirmed the plans to go with Re-GEN in Newry had been worked on before the expiration of the Waterbeach contract in August 2024. The exercise to procure the contract commenced in 2022. Procuring contracts such as these is a protracted process due to its complexity.

#### **Question 4:**

The £82m North Cambridge/Arbury development has received unanimous in-principle support from all City Council parties. Council-run information sessions have been well attended, allowing many residents to review plans and raise questions.

#### **1. Present Configuration of Plans**

Will the Council confirm that, as stated at the information sessions, the current design of the proposed development is not set in concrete and reconfiguration of the design can be considered for the development.

#### **2. Playpark / Play and Park Area**

Will the Council commit to ensuring that the key elements of the existing Arbury Court Play Park will be incorporated into the plans for the proposed development, specifically:

- (a) A secure play area for toddlers and young children of an equivalent or greater area, with enhanced equipment in consultation with local residents and community groups.
- (b) Improved play equipment for older children equivalent to or greater than the current provision, also in consultation with local residents and community groups.
- (c) Open green space in the proposed central area of Arbury Court in at least the same area as the existing courtyard, with a boundary and access points allowing for pedestrian access only so that cycles and scooters are not only prohibited on that space by signage, but are unable to enter or cross the space creating a hazard and danger.

### 3. Trees, Grass and Greenery

Will the Council confirm that the total greenspace, number of trees, and shrubbery in the final plan will be equal to or greater than which currently exists?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- i. The Council had asked for feedback on the current proposals and residents were encouraged to take part in the consultation, which would close on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- ii. The Council had committed to creating an enhanced park that would include an improved secure play area for toddlers and young children, improved play equipment for older children, co-design with residents on the equipment and other park furniture, removal of cycle paths indicated as crossing the new park, reprovision of the same amount and more protected open space than the current park.
- iii. Any reprovision of open space would have to be enhanced.
- iv. An indicative design had been presented and would be updated to take into account any feedback.
- v. A park at the centre of the new Arbury Court would likely be used more, would encourage less antisocial behaviour and had the support of planners in the discussions that had taken place. Not moving the park could mean less council housing or taller buildings.

- vi. The Council was trying provide a balanced design that residents and planners would support.

**Supplementary Question:**

Residents are clearly wishing to have involvement in the project. So you've partly answered this question earlier but I would like it confirmed that a local liaison forum for the Arbury Court, Kingsway and Brackley Court proposals will be established to facilitate further and ongoing engagement with local residents and that community groups will also be involved. Similar to the local liaison forum that was established for Ekin Road so that residents will be involved in the project in the development all the way from go to woah, thank you.

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- i. Every tenant, resident, community group, trader, etc, would be invited to regular meetings to ensure everybody was kept up to date and to prevent the spread of misinformation.

**Question 5:**

Proposed Arbury Court redevelopment in the North Cambridge Framework for Change:

Many locals, including myself, are concerned about the current plans for the redevelopment, in particular the building on the current park and the planned re-provisioning of green space.

Arbury Ward already had the least protected open space per capita of any ward in Cambridge as far back as 2011, and the same document – the Open Space and Recreation Strategy, 2011 – says clearly that “The new land or facility should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users and at least of equivalent size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality.” Does the Council feel that this is achieved by the plans shown on the consultation’s information boards, in which the green space includes three strips of land directly alongside the road, and a central green space crossed by cycle paths?

I recognise that Cllr. Bird has publicly assured locals that “We’ve heard concerns about cycle paths crossing the new park but this won’t happen.” (Press release, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2025). Given this, why do the Council’s own information boards show those cycle paths cutting diagonally across the central green space?



And finally – at what stage will the Council consult on alternative plans which do not build on the existing park, given that the requirement to re-provide the green space means no extra space for building will be available from doing so?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- ii. Any provisions for open space would have to be enhanced and the Council was committed to this, including a play area for toddlers, play area for older children, and the removal of the cycle paths across the park.
- iii. The designs shown were indicative, and they would be updated to take feedback into account.
- iv. Residents should provide feedback on the current proposal which would close on 16 December.
- v. Plans would have to balance trade-offs. A park at the centre of the new Arbury Court would be more likely to be used, would have less antisocial behaviour, and had the support of planners in the discussions that have taken place.
- vi. Not moving the park could mean losing council housing. For those who support council housing, not building on the park could mean taller buildings.
- vii. The Council hoped to provide a balanced design that residents and planners would support.
- viii. No decisions had yet been made.

### **Supplementary Question:**

Is it intentional that the answer to my question was word for word copied from the answer to question four? In particular, the latter half of question four, because I don't feel hugely listened to when the exact same words are used for more than one of us. But I'll put that to one side. More importantly, the rubric being used for the specific choice of putting the park at the centre, a reduction in antisocial behaviour and an increase in usage. The current park is very widely used by a number of different groups and the antisocial behaviour that I'm sure you're citing is directly data from the consultation which was not talking about the current park but a different area of the development. So besides the reasons you've given for moving the park which don't seem to be rooted in the evidence, that I hope you and I are both reading the same version of, what reason is there to move the park there if you are obliged by statute to provide the exact same area of green space afterwards.

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with:

- i. Every question directed to the Cabinet Member for Housing at this meeting had been the same – on the subject of the park, the design, and the cycle paths going through the park. The answers had been the same, so that every questioner received all the information.
- ii. The design of the park would be set out at the end of the consultation and the Council would feed back to residents, who would be invited to look at the designs.

**Question 6:**

Following the dismissal of the appeal to demolish the Hobson Street Cinema by the Planning Inspector last week, please can Cambridge City Council appeal to those supporting the Cambridge Pledge and similar minded persons and institutions to acquire the premises and turn it into a joint town-gown community centre so as to provide spaces for the essential shared conversations needed to shape the future of our city and county. There are a number of town and gown groups that would be interested in establishing a presence in such a facility.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport responded with:

- i. The Council welcomed that the inspector upheld the decision of the planning committee and was hopeful that Hobson Street Cinema would find a suitable future use.
- ii. The building was privately owned and any decision was therefore a matter for the owner, but the Council hoped to explore the issue with them.
- iii. Discussions about options for community use had taken place as part of the process considering the previous application, but until the council and owner had met, there could be no further comment on future possibilities.
- iv. The Council was keen to secure a positive and sustainable future for the site that would benefit the city centre and the wider community.

**Supplementary Question**

I've been following this case for about 10 years. I've got a video on my YouTube channel of me asking Councillor Bick a question about this from 2016. I was particularly disappointed with the planning inspector's report in actually not raising some of the issues in the evidence that I submitted. But going forward, I think this building is an acid test for those who are backing the Cambridge pledge and who are making a lot of publicity about what they're doing to deal with inequalities in our city. And my plea to the councillors is can they start leaning on the wealthy in our city to try and get that building back

into community use like it was before and have it properly restored and not comprehensively redeveloped.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport responded with:

- i. It had been sad to see the lack of maintenance over the past 10 years and the way the building had been allowed to dilapidate to its current condition.
- ii. The Cambridge pledge idea could be investigated.
- iii. The councillors here had heard your message.

## **25/106/CNL To deal with oral questions**

### **Question 1:**

#### **Councillor Elliot Tong to the Cabinet Member for Communities**

I was saddened to see the unprovoked attack on the existence of the Cambridge Community Kitchen by an out-of-town politician in the Cambridge Independent.

Given Cambridge Community Kitchen's five years of demonstrably safe, hygienic and essential work tackling food poverty in Cambridge, how will the City Council ensure that this vital grassroots service is protected rather than disrupted in response to external political pressure?

The Cabinet Member responded with:

The Council had supported and worked closely with community groups across the city to promote food justice, including providing advice and assistance to ensure all relevant standards were met, including food safety requirements which Cambridge Community Kitchen had complied with.

The Council had provided grant funding and support to a number of groups seeking to address food poverty – including the Food Justice Alliance, which brought together food charities and community food projects across Cambridge to strengthen coordination and support.

The Community Kitchen played a valuable role in Cambridge City's food justice work. For example, they were one of very few organizations providing hot meals, including on Christmas Day, without gatekeeping and were serving 750 meals a week.

Over the last 5 years, various Council teams had made multiple offers to engage with the Community Kitchen to understand their needs and to offer support, and that offer would always be open.

The Council had also been working closely with local Market ward councillors and local residents to seek to address any wider issues in the area. The aim had consistently been to assist the Community Kitchen to continue providing safe and valued work in our community whilst also addressing wider issues linked to the building itself.

## **Question 2**

### **Councillor Karen Young to the Cabinet Member for Safety, Well-being and Tackling Homelessness**

Could the Cabinet member describe the current extent of proactive patrolling throughout the city that is currently being undertaken by the environmental enforcement team, how many officers are currently dedicated to this relative to the 7 that were budgeted until recently and over what parts of the week they are deployed to do so?

The Cabinet Member responded with:

The new Public Safety team would bring together the former Public Realm team and the Community Safety team. This integration would strengthen the team. It would be more coherent, more resilient and would ensure that both reactive and proactive work would continue to be delivered to a high standard. The new team structure would provide additional capacity and a broad range of skills supporting proactive activities throughout the week.

Within the team, five staff members would provide regular patrolling of open spaces in neighbourhoods, identifying and resolving issues such as dog control concerns, encampments, fly tipping, littering and so forth. These proactive control patrols would take place across the city every weekday. The wider team would work on a case-by case basis with specific activity related to hotspots.

Creation of the integrated team had increased productive work in areas such as supporting the street life community and responding to illegal encampments. The officers were now able to cover a wider set of enforcement functions throughout the working week and all this was under review.

Reactive work would continue in line with established service standards.

Over the last six months, the team had investigated 390 cases with significant time taken to manage abandoned vehicles and fly tipping in particular.

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Cheney Payne to the Cabinet Member for Housing**

In July 2025, it was identified that the Council has no knowledge of the condition of half of its council housing. Across the last year, there have been extensive reports of households in Cambridge suffering with high levels of damp and mould which the Labour administration had not addressed. Since then, Awaab's Law was introduced in October 2025, mandating that social landlords investigate reports of damp and mould within 10 working days and begin the necessary work to make the property safe within 5 working days of the investigation. This gives tenants legally enforceable rights to safe housing. Given the significant backlog this Council has created in addressing damp and mould, can the Cabinet Member please outline how the Council is planning to meet the requirements of Awaab's Law?

The Cabinet Member responded with:

Cambridge City Council had a strong record of keeping its homes safe, decent and well-maintained. The Council was 99.5% compliant with the decent home standards - significantly above the national average. Council homes were assessed through maintenance and energy-efficiency programmes and urgent safety issues were acted on immediately.

The Council held detailed information about property condition drawn from a wide range of sources. Layered data could provide clear visibility of issues and emerging risks. It had already proved effective in identifying and addressing damp, mould and repair concerns.

The Council's approach had been tested by the regulator of social housing who had found Cambridge City Council to be compliant. To strengthen insight, the Council was going out to market for a full stock condition survey for every council home. This would supplement the substantial intelligence already available.

Over the past year, a specialist damp and mould team had ensured all reported cases were actively managed. In parallel, preparations were underway for the introduction of Awaab's law by refining and strengthening internal process and increasing staff numbers to align with the new legal requirements.

Since Awaab's law came into effect, the Council had received just over 75 damp, condensation and mould reports, representing a measured increase in levels.

#### **Question 4**

##### **Councillor Katie Porrer to the Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Spaces and City Services**

Could the Cabinet member please confirm whether there are any tangible plans for the replacement of the public toilets on Jesus Green, either as part of a wider scheme including improvements at the Lido or separately, and if there are, at what stage are these?

The Cabinet Member responded with:

The council aimed to have high quality toilets across the city, including at Jesus Green. Over £2 million had recently been spent on new and improved toilets across the city, all free to use.

There were currently 10 toilets, and the completion of Silver Street would take that to 11. In that provision, there were 5 changing places toilets. Plans for improved facilities at Jesus Green would mean further investment in addition to the £2 million already spent.

Work was underway to look into options, including accessibility, sustainability, and operational upgrades. The work was at an early feasibility and scoping stage and was supported by condition surveys completed earlier this year. Following the completion of feasibility work, plans would be brought forward through the Council's normal decision-making and budget setting processes. Members would be updated as the work progressed.

#### **Question 5**

##### **Councillor Dave Baigent to the Leader of the Council**

This question is raised regarding the Council's commitment to transparency, equity, and fairness in the context of the £80 million North Cambridge Framework for Change Consultation. Specifically, it is asked whether the leader believes that any meetings held by officers and selected community groups and ruling party councillors, can be closed to other councillors (and some local community groups). Surely officer called meetings on something so important to the whole city, should be open and accessible to all councillors who wish to attend. Especially when they write to ask to be there. The intention behind this question is to ensure that all representatives (be they councillors or local community groups) can be present, observe, and if appropriate

contribute, thereby upholding the principles of openness and inclusivity within council proceedings.

The Leader of the Council responded with:

Council Officers held numerous small meetings with residents on a range of topics. The nature of these meetings was that they were an opportunity to hear from residents generally. It would not be practical to invite all 42 councillors to every resident meeting. In this particular case, there were a small number of residents, some officers, Cabinet Members and ward councillors. If all councillors from across the city had been invited, it would not have given residents the appropriate opportunity to have their voices heard.

There were multiple public meetings taking place as part of the ongoing consultation work on North Cambridge and members were welcome to attend those to hear from residents. There were also briefings for councillors.

#### **25/107/CNL To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet for adoption**

No recommendations were submitted to this meeting.

#### **25/108/CNL To consider the recommendations of Committees for adoption**

No recommendations were submitted to this meeting.

#### **25/109/CNL To consider the following notices of motion, notice of which has been given by:**

##### **25/110/CNL Councillor Ashton: The Guildhall**

Councillor Ashton proposed and Councillor Thornburrow seconded the following motion:

This Council recognises the historic and enduring significance of the Guildhall as the ceremonial and democratic heart of Cambridge, having served as the home of local governance and Civic life for over 800 years.

The Council affirms that, notwithstanding the transition to a Unitary Council, the Guildhall shall continue to hold its rightful status as the principal venue for local democracy and civic ceremonies, reflecting its heritage and ongoing role in public life.

Councillor Tong proposed and Councillor Clough seconded the following amendment to the motion (additional text underlined and deleted text ~~struck through~~):

This Council recognises the historic and enduring significance of the Guildhall as the ceremonial and democratic heart of Cambridge, having served as the home of local governance and ~~C~~civic life for over 800 years.

~~The Council affirms that, notwithstanding the transition to a Unitary Council, the Guildhall shall continue to hold its rightful status as the principle venue for local democracy and civic ceremonies, reflecting its heritage and ongoing role in public life.~~

This council recognises that once Local Government Reorganisation takes place, the council will cease to exist and that any decision on the Guildhall and its civic role will be made by the new unitary council that replaces it.

The council recognises that it has no power to bind its successors.

Although ministers have yet to announce their decision on the new unitary council, it is clear that South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council and part of Cambridgeshire County Council will all be part of the same new unitary council.

The council resolves to write to the leaders and chief executives of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to open negotiations about where a future local authority comprising Cambridge should be based.

The council resolves to write to the leader and chief executive of any other council that ministers decide to include in the same new council as Cambridge once a decision has been announced to open negotiations about where a future local authority comprising Cambridge should be based.

The amendment was lost by 4 votes to 34 votes

**Resolved** (by 35 votes to 0, with 3 Abstentions) to:



This Council recognises the historic and enduring significance of the Guildhall as the ceremonial and democratic heart of Cambridge, having served as the home of local governance and Civic life for over 800 years.

The Council affirms that, notwithstanding the transition to a Unitary Council, the Guildhall shall continue to hold its rightful status as the principal venue for local democracy and civic ceremonies, reflecting its heritage and ongoing role in public life.

### **25/111/CNL Councillor Hossain: Review and Amendment of Parking Policy for Morello Place, King's Hedges**

The motion fell as there was no seconder in line with the Council's constitution, 1.13.3 Reference of Motions to Committees or to the Executive.

### **25/112/CNL Councillor Bick : A Thriving City Centre For All**

Councillor Bick proposed and Councillor Payne seconded the following motion:

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

- Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents who often feel the last to be considered;
- There continues to be a strong aspiration for a 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, employment, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection;
- Although our city centre is not suffering from the economic decline experienced by many others elsewhere, it is widely seen by local residents as imbalanced towards the hospitality and tourism sectors, as not providing for some parts of the community and as dominated by chains at the expense of independent businesses;

- The city council's current plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square leverage the council's own assets in expressing confidence in a centre that is for all.

Council **BELIEVES** that:

- There is an opportunity for the council to use the soft power of its 'convening' role for a placemaking initiative beyond the current reach of planning powers, by working with the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations and other public service and transport providers to develop a vision to drive future developments and uses in consultation with the public;
- Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;
- The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street must be vigilantly protected - including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – and further developed, considering water fountains, wi-fi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;
- A new unitary council, by bringing together all responsibilities for the public realm, offers the chance to develop an integrated city centre management team, and that it would be beneficial now to start early stage thinking about how this might be organised;
- A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council therefore **CALLS ON** the Director of Economy and Place to scope out this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate part of the council by summer 2026 on the form it might take, and how it could be initiated in the short run and carried forward into a new unitary council.

Councillor Clough proposed and Councillor Howard second the following amendment to the motion (additional text underlined and deleted text ~~struck through~~)

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

- Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents who often feel the last to be considered;
- There continues to be a strong aspiration for a 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, employment, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection;
- ~~Although Our city centre is not suffering from the economic decline experienced by many others elsewhere, it is widely seen by some local residents as imbalanced towards the hospitality and tourism sectors, as not providing for some parts of the community and as dominated by chains at the expense of independent businesses;~~
- ~~The city council's current plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square leverage the council's own assets in expressing confidence in a centre that is for all.~~

Council **BELIEVES** that:

- There is an opportunity for the council to use the soft power of its 'convening' role for a placemaking initiative beyond the current reach of planning powers, by working with the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations and other public service and transport providers to develop a vision to drive future developments and uses in consultation with the public;
- Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;
- The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street must be vigilantly protected - including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – and

further developed, considering water fountains, wi-fi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;

- A new unitary council, by bringing together all responsibilities for the public realm, offers the chance to develop an integrated city centre management team, and that it would be beneficial now to start early stage thinking about how this might be organised;
- A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council therefore **CALLS ON** the Director of Economy and Place to scope out this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate part of the council by summer 2026 on the form it might take, and how it could be initiated in the short run and carried forward into a new unitary council.

Councillor Nestor proposed and Councillor Holloway seconded the following amendment to the motion (additional text underlined and deleted text ~~struck through~~)

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents ~~who often feel the last to be considered~~;

There continues to be a strong aspiration for a welcoming 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, good job opportunities, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection.

~~Although our city centre is not suffering from the economic decline experienced by many others elsewhere, it is widely seen by local residents as imbalanced towards the hospitality and tourism sectors, as not providing for some parts of the community and as dominated by chains at the expense of independent businesses;~~

Centre for Cities data shows that Cambridge has the highest high street occupancy rate of any UK city outside London, with 11 of every 12 units occupied.

Independent businesses, hospitality and tourism all play an important role in Cambridge's vibrancy and character, and in sustaining local employment.

Cambridge is safer than many UK cities, and the Council remains committed to continuous improvement in partnership with the police, the universities and local organisations.

~~The city council's current plans~~ The Council's ambitious plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square ~~leverage the council's own assets in expressing confidence demonstrate leadership, strategic investment, and confidence~~ in a centre that is for all.

Council further notes the initial work underway with the County Council to convene a joint city centre steering group, recognising shared powers and responsibilities and the benefits of coordinated leadership.

Council recognises the importance of establishing a shared performance monitoring framework to understand the environmental, social and economic 'health' of the city centre, to guide future prioritisation and investment.

Council also notes that delivering meaningful placemaking interventions requires capacity and resources, and that these must be prioritised and sequenced within current budget constraints.

Council welcomes the increased capacity being created through the new Inclusive Economy team to help coordinate partners and activity in the coming year.

Council BELIEVES that:

~~There is an opportunity for the Council to use the soft power of its 'convening' role~~ build on this momentum by using the convening power of the Council for a placemaking initiative beyond the current reach of planning powers, by working with the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations and other public service and transport providers to develop a vision to drive future developments and uses shared vision for the city centre in consultation with the public - shaped by public engagement, working with key partners including the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations, NGOs and transport providers;

Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;

The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street ~~must be vigilantly protected~~ should be supported – including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – ~~and further developed~~, while exploring future improvements ~~considering~~ such as water fountains, wifi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;

The concept of a Tourist Levy could be explored with partners as a mechanism to help support essential services used by visitors and residents alike;

~~A new unitary council by bringing together all responsibilities for the public realm, offers the chance to develop an integrated city centre management team, could provide a more integrated approach to managing the public realm, and that it would be beneficial now to start early stage thinking about how this might be organised;~~ early work should be undertaken to shape how this could best support a thriving city centre;

A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council believes that progress should be realistic, phased, and achievable within available funding, while exploring opportunities for external and partner investment.

Council therefore CALLS ON the Director of Economy and Place to scope out this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate ~~part of the council~~ Committee by summer 2026 ~~on the form it might take, and how it could be initiated and how it could be initiated in the short run and carried forward in the short term and taken forward into a new unitary council, -including:~~ partnership governance arrangements, baseline data and monitoring, indicative resourcing, sequencing of activity, and opportunities to leverage external funding (including through GCP), acknowledging the constraints of current budgets.

The Green Group amendment was lost by 3 votes to 34 votes.

The Labour Group amendment was **approved** by 23 votes to 0, with 14 Abstentions.

**Resolved** by 34 votes to 3 to:

Our city centre, like others, continues to experience the impact of both increased online retailing and neighbourhood convenience shopping, yet council **NOTES** that:

Cambridge's city centre is challenged to meet an unusually wide spectrum of needs, as the core of two universities and a magnet for tourism (both important contributors to our local economy), in addition to its local residents;

There continues to be a strong aspiration for a welcoming 'social crossroads' where all parts of the community can meet a variety of needs - still including physical shopping, but also access to services, good job opportunities, leisure and culture at a scale which is not possible in other locations where there is less easy public or active transport connection.

Centre for Cities data shows that Cambridge has the highest high street occupancy rate of any UK city outside London, with 11 of every 12 units occupied.

Independent businesses, hospitality and tourism all play an important role in Cambridge's vibrancy and character, and in sustaining local employment.

Cambridge is safer than many UK cities, and the Council remains committed to continuous improvement in partnership with the police, the universities and local organisations.

The Council's ambitious plans for full utilisation of the Guildhall, modernisation of the Corn Exchange and refurbishment of the Market Square demonstrate leadership, strategic investment, and confidence in a centre that is for all.

Council further notes the initial work underway with the County Council to convene a joint city centre steering group, recognising shared powers and responsibilities and the benefits of coordinated leadership.

Council recognises the importance of establishing a shared performance monitoring framework to understand the environmental, social and economic 'health' of the city centre, to guide future prioritisation and investment.

Council also notes that delivering meaningful placemaking interventions requires capacity and resources, and that these must be prioritised and sequenced within current budget constraints.

Council welcomes the increased capacity being created through the new Inclusive Economy team to help coordinate partners and activity in the coming year.

Council BELIEVES that:

There is an opportunity for the Council to build on this momentum by using the convening power of the Council to develop a shared vision for the city centre in consultation with the public - shaped by public engagement, working with key partners including the BID, commercial landlords, the universities, cultural organisations, NGOs and transport providers;

Stakeholders have a shared interest in maximising value and pride in a city centre which is balanced, inclusive, vibrant, accessible, clean, safe and efficiently managed - and this common interest needs to be activated;

The basic infrastructure of an inviting high street should be supported – including ATMs, banks, Post Office and public toilets – while exploring future improvements such as water fountains, wi-fi, charging points, sympathetic waste collection and reduced highway conflicts;

The concept of a Tourist Levy could be explored with partners as a mechanism to help support essential services used by visitors and residents alike;

A new unitary council could provide a more integrated approach to managing the public realm and early work should be undertaken to shape how this could best support a thriving city centre;

A thriving and inclusive city centre in Cambridge must be complementary to successful neighbourhood centres in existing and new communities in and around the city, which meet equally important needs.

Council believes that progress should be realistic, phased, and achievable within available funding, while exploring opportunities for external and partner investment.

Council therefore CALLS ON the Director of Economy and Place to scope this wider placemaking project and report back to the appropriate Committee by summer 2026 on how it could be initiated in the short term and taken forward into a new unitary council, including: partnership governance arrangements,



baseline data and monitoring, indicative resourcing, sequencing of activity, and opportunities to leverage external funding (including through GCP), acknowledging the constraints of current budgets.

### **25/113/CNL Written questions**

Members noted the response to the written question.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

**CHAIR**