

COUNCIL19 March 2026
6.00 - 8.00 pm

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

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/21/CNL Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Dryden, McPherson, Nestor, A. Smith and Todd-Jones.

26/22/CNL Mayor's announcements

The Mayor updated the Council on recent events including a celebration of International Women's Day, a visit from the Commander of HMS Protector, a multi-cultural Ramadan Iftar hosted by the Cambridge Muslim Trust, the installation of the new Chancellor of Cambridge University, and the Mayor's Reception.

The Mayor then presented Councillor Richard Robertson with a certificate marking twenty years of service to Cambridge City Council. Councillors Holloway, Davey and Bird spoke in praise of the work undertaken by Councillor Robertson during this time.

26/23/CNL Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Reason
Councillor Holloway	26/26/CNL	Personal: Member of the Advisory Council to the Cambridge Growth Company
Councillor Davey	26/26/CNL	Personal: Director of

		Cambridge United
Councillor Smart	26/26/CNL	Personal: Chair of Cambridge City Council Planning Committee

26/24/CNL Public questions time

Question 1

I should like to ask the following question about the Establishment of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation on behalf of the FeCRA Committee.

The Federation of Cambridge Residents' associations is a grassroots civic voice for everyone in Cambridge - and also for its environment. Residents want a say in shaping Cambridge's development to ensure that the city grows in a way that will achieve balanced communities and quality of life. The Federation's strength is in our network of members across city neighbourhoods, plus our strong connections with nearby villages. Most residents do not even know there is a consultation on the establishment of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. Why hasn't every household in Cambridge received a leaflet? There have been no drop-in events, no posters, no information on the Council's website. How do City Councillors know the views of residents if they haven't asked them?

The Leader of the Council responded with the following:

- It was vital that residents had a voice in discussions about the future of the City.
- The consultation was being run by central government, but the City Council had promoted it and sought to obtain views from residents in various ways, including articles on the City Council website, a Cambridge Conversations event, a session for young people, radio interviews, social media posts, and a press release.
- Community-led events were also taking place and were welcomed.

Supplementary Question

There had been little information on the proposed Development Corporation compared to the Local Plan. At this Council meeting, Councillors are only asked to discuss the matter and not vote on it. The response will come from the Leader of the City Council. Residents say this denies elected representatives, and effectively residents, a voice on this important decision. We therefore request that no decision is taken before a referendum is held and

that the result of the referendum should be legally binding. Will the Council agree to this in the interests of democracy and transparency?

The Leader of the Council responded with the following:

- The Local Plan showed the importance of local involvement in, and control of, the planning service. There had been 100 events as part of engagement on the Local Plan, however that was a City Council proposal. The Development Corporation proposals were different as they had been proposed by central government.
- As a central government proposal, Cambridge City Council would not have the power to call a referendum.
- The consultation response required answers to thirteen different questions, which would be informed by the discussion at Full Council.
- Anyone could respond to the consultation and the Leader encouraged people to do so.

Question 2

The consultation states that a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation would rely on borrowing, private partners and developing assets to generate income. Won't this financial model end up chasing profit at the expense of social housing, public services and ecological sustainability?

The Leader of the Council responded with the following:

- The funding model was not yet clear, but a significant amount of funding would be required for the Development Corporation to do what it wanted to do.
- Any final decision would lie with central government.

Supplementary Question

If you say you care about the same things as me, why are you ceding control of them? Why don't you trust your local council to deal with these issues? When residents engage on planning matters there is a dialogue and then the option to vote out Councillors if we don't agree with them. This is now no longer going to be possible with the Development Corporation.

The Leader of the Council responded with the following:

- He would not want planning powers to be taken away. Local democratic control was important.
- The planning service was performing well in terms of the number of homes it was bringing forward, but even if it were not, it was important to retain the current level of local engagement to build consensus on how the area grows.

26/25/CNL Consultation on the Establishment of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The Council discussed the government's proposal to establish a centrally led Urban Development Corporation, by reviewing and commenting on the matters highlighted in the officer's report and on any other matter relevant to the consultation ahead of a final response being submitted by the Leader on behalf of the Council.

Key discussion points were as follows:

- The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service was recognised as exemplary. It should not become part of a Development Corporation.
- A Development Corporation would be welcomed to support with:
 - Bringing forward construction of the 37,000 homes for which there is planning permission
 - Sewage capacity
 - Water supply
 - Public transport
 - Energy supply
 - Protecting nature
 - Social infrastructure
- It should not be created at the expense of local democratic oversight of planning decisions and plan-making.
- Evidence base and funding plans were lacking.
- The Development Corporation should consider adoption of transport functions.
- Residents would no longer have a voice in the planning process.
- The Development Corporation would need a strategic framework and clear long-term goals.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

CHAIR