



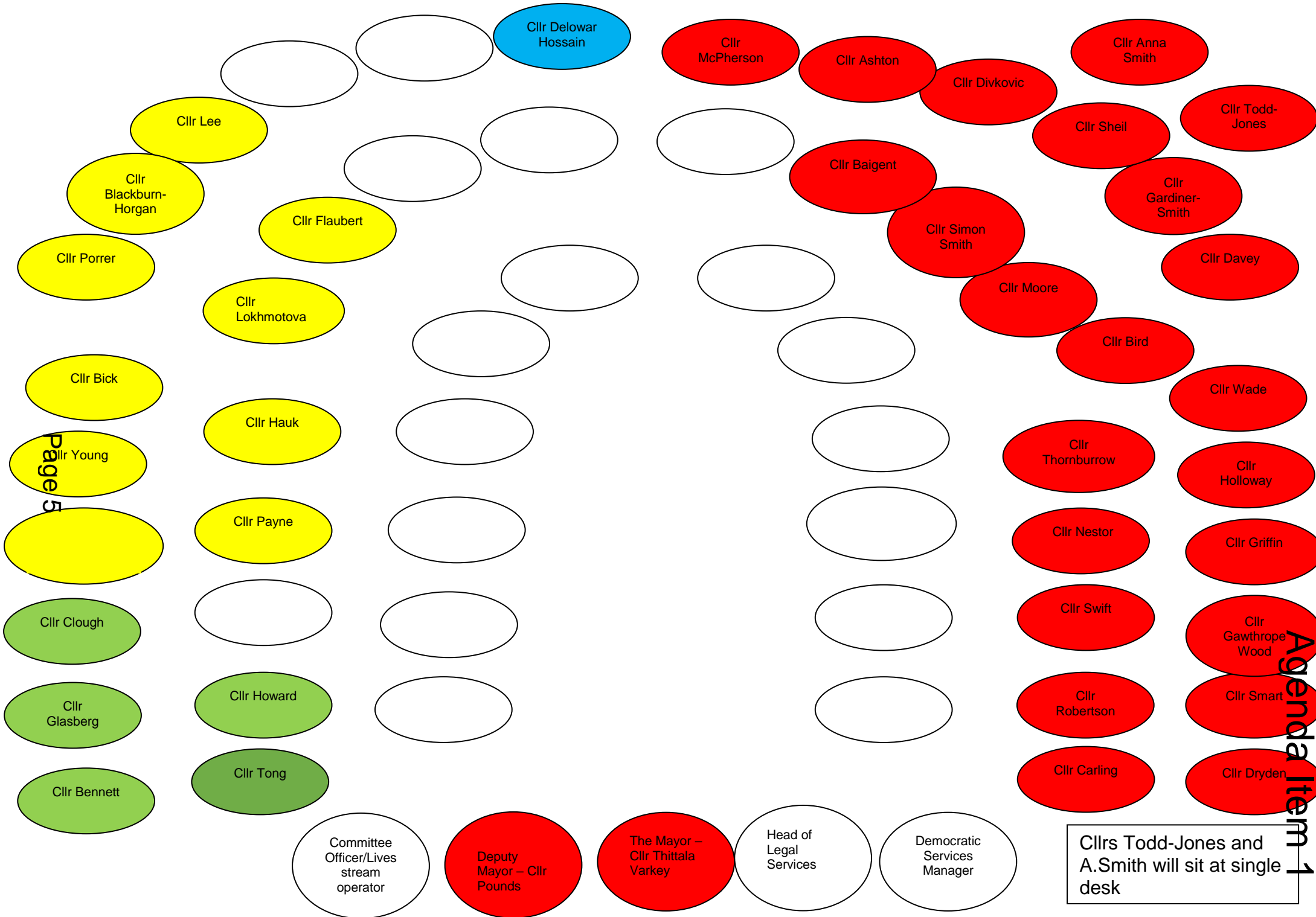
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION PACK

Date: Monday, 24 February 2025

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Cllr Delowar Hossain

Cllr McPherson

Cllr Ashton

Cllr Divkovic

Cllr Anna Smith

Cllr Todd-Jones

Cllr Lee

Cllr Blackburn-Horgan

Cllr Sheil

Cllr Gardiner-Smith

Cllr Flaubert

Cllr Baigent

Cllr Simon Smith

Cllr Davey

Cllr Porrer

Cllr Lokhmotova

Cllr Moore

Cllr Bird

Cllr Bick

Cllr Hauk

Cllr Wade

Cllr Young

Cllr Payne

Cllr Thornburrow

Cllr Holloway

Cllr Nestor

Cllr Griffin

Cllr Clough

Cllr Howard

Cllr Swift

Cllr Gawthrope Wood

Cllr Glasberg

Cllr Tong

Cllr Robertson

Cllr Smart

Cllr Bennett

Committee Officer/Lives stream operator

Deputy Mayor – Cllr Pounds

The Mayor – Cllr Thittala Varkey

Head of Legal Services

Democratic Services Manager

Cllrs Todd-Jones and A. Smith will sit at single desk

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List of Public Questions for Full Council – Monday 24 February 2025

Question 1

Clientelism and patronage networks extending between purportedly independent public authorities have the potential to allow public officials to escape institutional and legal restrictions and to misuse state powers for improper purposes. This can have catastrophic consequences for public confidence in the integrity of our democratic institutions.

Over the past several years, serious concerns have been raised about the improper involvement of elected officials in operational policing matters in Cambridgeshire. When the Police and Crime Commissioner was unwilling to address this issue, concerns were raised by members of the Police and Crime Panel.

Rather than addressing those concerns, the concerned panel members were simply purged from the panel using the system of patronage networks operated by local authorities and local political parties.

Does the Mayor of Cambridge have confidence that the majority political group at this council is committed to ensuring that the democratic process in Cambridgeshire is not subject to improper police interference, and if so, can the Mayor of Cambridge please explain why this council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel has been unwilling to meet with representatives of my organisation to discuss this important issue?

Question 2

Residents who get Housing Benefit paid by Cambridge City Council are concerned that their service charges (the mandatory fee levied by the housing association or management company) are artificially high or inflated beyond a reasonable amount for services provided. Public money is used to pay these charges when the resident is entitled to housing benefit. Does the Council know how much public money went towards service charges in 2023/24 and does the council scrutinise service charges and ensure they are legitimate?

Thank you,
Service Charge Justice Cambridge

Question 3

Is the closure of the public toilets a forgone conclusion? Have you thought of the impact on disabled members of the public. The impact on disabled people not having access to public toilets is monumental. Not all shops/cafes are accommodating and there's massive anxiety and pressure to purchase goods just to use the toilet. Please consider these before a decision is made to close vital amenities which could potentially deter disabled people from coming into the city.

Question 4

Operational Staff working in Streets and Open Spaces already have to regularly clear up human faeces and wash down urine from the market square, nearby alleyways and other areas to keep the city healthy and safe for residents.

Unison would like to know how the reduction of approximately 13% fewer staff working in the operational teams of Streets and Open Spaces, which is represented in this budget proposal, will be able to cope with the results of removal of the 3 public toilets at Gonville Place, Quayside and Midsummer Common, because we predict that this decision will lead to further use of our streets and open spaces as toilets?

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT TO HRA BUDGET-SETTING REPORT (BSR) 2025/26

To:

Full Council 24 February 2025

Report by:

Jody Etherington Chief Finance Officer

Tel: 01223 458130 Email: jody.etherington@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Liberal Democrat Group, having considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Setting Report (BSR), are proposing the following amendments for consideration and decision at Full Council:

One-off Revenue Proposals

i) Asset Management Officer

It is proposed to recruit a dedicated Asset Management Officer for 5 years to assist with catch-up of the decent homes backlog. The post would help address ongoing issues with access to properties and, in particular, focus on overdue replacement of boilers and central heating systems without which homes may be vulnerable to the development of damp, condensation and mould. This post would include a flexible contract, with some working later on weekdays or Saturday mornings to allow tenants more options to make contact out of working hours.

Cost of proposal: £43,000 per year for five years

ii) Damp, Condensation and Mould Management

This amendment proposes one-off project funding for an external review of damp,

condensation and mould (DCM) management, to ensure adherence to best practice. The work would encompass current reporting systems, surveying, and commissioning of required works, and would ensure that the council is ready for implementation of Awaab's Law in October 2025.

Cost of proposal: One-off cost of £30,000 in 2025/26.

Capital Proposal

iii) Affordable Redevelopment at Stanton House

This amendment seeks to allocate a total of £9.8 million from the 10 Year New Homes Programme (Unallocated) budget in the capital plan to fund a 100% affordable redevelopment of Stanton House, a council site which was until recently focussed on the provision of supported accommodation, with a view to bringing a report to the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2025.

Since this is a reallocation of capital funding, with no change to the underlying sources of finance, there is no net impact upon HRA finances.

iv) Reduction of 10 Year New Homes Programme Funding

To fund the revenue proposals set out at i) and ii) above, this amendment seeks to reduce the capital budget for the 10 Year New Homes Programme (Unallocated) by £73,000 in 2025/26 and £43,000 in each of the subsequent 4 years. This will allow a corresponding reduction in the revenue contribution to capital financing.

It should be noted that, whilst this capital budget is termed 'Unallocated' on the basis that schemes have not yet been brought forward for formal approval, there is an assumed provisional pipeline of schemes behind this budget, and reducing the budget in this way may impact the total number and mix of housing which can be delivered.

Saving: £73,000 in 2025/26, followed by £43,000 per year for the subsequent 4 years

2. Purpose and reason for the report

- 2.1 This report sets out amendments proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group to the HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2025/26, presented for decision to Full Council on 24 February 2025.

This report outlines the amendments proposed and the net impact on the HRA, assuming all of the amendments are carried.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1 Under the constitution, amendments to the Executive's Budget recommendations may be submitted by Opposition Groups or any Member.

4. Background and key issues

4.1 Statement by the Liberal Democrat Housing Spokesperson

A fundamental duty of this Council is to provide safe, secure, and high-quality homes for its tenants and those on the housing needs register. Yet, in recent years, we have seen a disturbing trend: a failure to respond adequately to tenant concerns, coupled with a shift in development strategy that is undermining the provision of social and affordable housing.

Current residents are clear that the Council's performance is not acceptable: overall tenant satisfaction remains at a stubbornly low 67%, with a particular driver noted as a feeling that homes are not well-maintained. This is not surprising given that the Council's current performance on emergency repairs, the most urgent jobs, sits in the bottom quartile with reference to comparators. This is mirrored in the ever-worsening state of voids returned, driving a subsequent loss of rent. For damp, condensation and mould (DCM) too, the Council languishes in the bottom quartile of performers. Despite repeated assurances from the ruling group that DCM is only a seasonal issue and will

surely improve next year, the cases numbers continue to rise year-on-year. Discrepancies in figures regarding cases and repairs of DCM presented to committee have recently been revealed to stem from an apparent **loss of nearly 300 emails** from tenants reporting damp and mould in their homes. This is not just a clerical error—it is a symptom of a broader issue where the voices of those in need are too often ignored. The Liberal Democrats are supportive of an ambitious council house building programme and we sincerely hope that the Labour government will provide the grants that this Council requires to fulfil its business plan. The reality, however, is that the Council's property portfolio is smaller this year than last and that no new developments have started on site in this financial year. At the same time, the Council's move to a "portfolio approach" to council home development is leading to a reduction in the proportion of truly affordable and social housing being built even on land owned by the Council: we believe such developments must be prioritised and expedited.

This budget amendment seeks to address these failings and reaffirm our commitment to tenants who rely on us.

Capital Investment: Prioritising Affordable Housing

The redevelopment of Stanton House represents a crucial opportunity to deliver 100% affordable housing on a Council-owned site that was previously focused on supported accommodation. While the HRA's shift to a portfolio approach threatens the prioritisation of social housing, certain sites—such as Stanton House—must continue to meet the needs of those on low incomes. By earmarking currently unallocated funds for this affordable redevelopment, we ensure that this site remains a cornerstone of our commitment to social housing. A report will be brought forward to the Housing and Support Committee in March to outline the next steps.

Revenue Commitments: Addressing the Housing Crisis

The housing crisis is not just about new development; it is about maintaining the homes we already have. Too many residents are living in properties that do not meet basic decency standards, and too many requests for urgent repairs are going unanswered. This amendment includes provisions for hiring a dedicated Asset Management Officer for five years to tackle the backlog in the Decent Homes Standard, with a focus on

boiler and central heating replacements to prevent the development of damp, condensation, and mould (DCM). Crucially, this post will include flexible working hours to ensure tenants can access support at times that suit them.

Further, this budget amendment proposes funding for an external review of the Council's DCM management about which we have been greatly concerned in recent years. With the implementation of Awaab's Law approaching in October 2025, it is imperative that we ensure our systems are fit for purpose. This review will assess our reporting mechanisms, surveying processes, and commissioning of remedial works to bring us in line with best practice and prevent further neglect of tenants' concerns.

A Commitment to Accountability and Action

This amendment is a direct response to the failings that have come to light in recent months. It is not enough to apologise for lost emails or pledge improvements while continuing down a path that deprioritises social housing. The Council must act decisively to rebuild trust, address urgent housing issues, and put affordability at the heart of its development strategy. The measures proposed here are practical, affordable, and essential if we are to fulfil our duty to the residents who rely on us the most.

We urge our colleagues to support this amendment and take a stand for those who have been left unheard for too long.

Cllr Anthony Martinelli, Liberal Democrat Housing Spokesperson

4.2 Section 151 Officer Opinion

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Section 151 Officer to report to the council when it is considering its budget requirement and consequent council tax setting. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the reserves allowed for in the budget proposals.

My report, covering both the General Fund and HRA budgets as originally proposed by

the Executive, is set out at section 7 of the General Fund BSR (see pages 261-264 of the reports pack).

I confirm that the amendments proposed by the Liberal Democrats, as set out within this report, would not require any changes to the existing Section 25 report.

Jody Etherington, Chief Finance Officer

5. Consultation, engagement and communication

- 5.1 Tenant and leaseholder representatives are consulted on any changes in the HRA budget as an integral part of the scrutiny process associated with the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

6. Implications

Financial Implications

- 6.1 All financial implications are contained in the recommendations. Should all amendments be adopted, there would be no net impact upon future projected reserves levels (as set out on page 177 of the reports pack).

Legal Implications

- 6.2 None identified.

Equalities and socio-economic Implications

- 6.3 An assessment has been carried out on the equalities impacts of the amendment proposals in this report and is attached at Appendix A.

Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications

6.4 None identified.

Procurement Implications

6.5 None identified.

Community Safety Implications

6.6 None identified.

7. Background documents

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

7.1 HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2025/26

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Equality impacts of Liberal Democrat amendments to the HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2025/26

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Jody Etherington, Chief Finance Officer email:

jody.etherington@cambridge.gov.uk

Appendix A – Equality impacts of Liberal Democrat amendments to the HRA Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2025/26

i) Asset Management Officer

ii) Damp, Condensation and Mould Management

These proposals intend to especially help to manage risk of and treatment of damp and mould. Prolonged exposure to mould can lead to respiratory conditions that have substantial and long-term impacts on individuals, which can result in disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The presence of damp and mould can also affect tenants' mental health. This could be due to worries about the health impacts, unpleasant living conditions, and destruction of property and belongings, for instance. Moreover, some protected characteristic groups are at greater risk of severe health impacts from damp and mould, including:

- Older people.
- People with pre-existing long-term health conditions or disabilities at risk of their condition worsening, people with existing mental health conditions, and people who have mobility issues making it more difficult for them to get out of a home with damp and mould and into fresh air.
- Pregnant women, their unborn babies and women who have recently given birth, who may have weakened immune systems.
- Children and young people whose organs are still developing and are therefore more likely to suffer from physical conditions such as respiratory problems.
- People with two or more of the characteristics above that indicate increased risk.

Sources:

- [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home - GOV.UK](#)
- [Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 - GOV.UK](#)

iii) Affordable Redevelopment at Stanton House

This would have a positive impact for people in poverty or on low incomes by making more affordable housing available in the city. This means that the proposal could

have a positive impact on equality groups more likely to experience poverty or be on low incomes including:

- Children and young people aged under 18 who are in poverty in Cambridge (impacting on one in ten).
- Disabled people who, according to UK statistics, face a higher risk of poverty. This is driven partly by the additional costs associated with disability and ill-health, and partly by the barriers to work that disabled people face.
- Some ethnic groups who experience higher poverty rates – according to UK statistics Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African people experience the highest levels of poverty.
- Women who are more likely to experience poverty than men according to UK statistics. 64 per cent of the lowest paid workers are women. More than one fifth of women, 22 per cent, have a persistent low income, compared to approximately 14 per cent of men. This often links to fact that women are more likely to have caring responsibilities.
- Care leavers who are more likely to experience poverty/ low-income.

Moreover, people may be at greater risk of poverty or low-income where they have two or more characteristics where likelihood of experiencing poverty is greater.

Sources:

- [mapping-poverty-2023](#)
- [UK Poverty 2025: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- [Women and poverty | National Education Union](#)
- [Spotlight on Poverty: Care Leavers and Care Experienced People | BASW](#)

iv) Reduction of 10 Year New Homes Programme Funding

Further information would be needed around the specific impact on the number and mix of homes to be delivered to be able to identify equality impacts of this proposal.

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Full Council

Monday 24 February 2025 6pm

HRA Budget Commentary

Green Group

Cllr Elliot Tong, Green Housing Spokes

1 Overview

Our main budget proposals for the Housing Revenue Account are as follows:

An “extra care” housing officer to work on complex case work including hoarding related casework.

A systematic review of older garage stock to find new sites for council housing.

A “cold spot” review to pick up unreported condensation, damp and mould cases in areas where there is already a concentration of such reports and disrepair claims.

2 Extra care officer / hoarding related case work

Hoarding is often the easiest sign to spot that a resident may be in need of help. For example, a common trigger for a hoarding problem to start or get worse is the death of a close family member. Left untreated, hoarding can be a serious health and safety threat for the hoarder, their family and their neighbours as well as causing property damage.

However, hoarding isn't always taken seriously. So we were very nervous about suggesting extra resources to deal with hoarding and delighted to discover that officers were already working on a funded proposal for next year.

For that reason, no additional funding is applied for and we take this opportunity to put on record our support for this proposal.

2 Review of garage stock to find opportunities to build housing

Modern cars are larger than cars were when the garages were built and some of the older garages are no longer well used. Much of the older HRA garage stock is used for other purposes rather than as garages. Some of these uses cause problems for neighbours. We have requested a review of this stock to ascertain whether the sites can be repurposed for housing. This suggestion has been taken up by officers and is included in the main budget.

3 Cold spots

Previous Green budget proposals have covered the issues of under-reporting repairs and particularly of condensation, damp and mould. We are still getting new historic cases for a variety of reasons and have proposed a "cold spot" review in places where there is already a high density of claims. Review costs are minimal and no specific allocation is proposed. However, the review is mentioned in the report because there is a clear prospect that it will result in an increase in repairs and repair costs over the budgeted amounts.

Closing remarks

As usual our proposals are driven by our case work in Abbey ward where over 1 home in 3 is a council property.

The voices of our residents, their questions and our case work are the foundation of this report. We also wish to thank officers for their help and advice.

Cllr Elliot Tong

19 February 2024



LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT TO GENERAL FUND BUDGET SETTING REPORT 2025/26 TO 2029/30

To:

Full Council 24 February 2025

Report by:

Jody Etherington Chief Finance Officer

Tel: 01223 458130 Email: jody.etherington@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Liberal Democrat Group, having considered the General Fund Budget Setting Report (BSR), are proposing the following amendments for consideration and decision at Full Council:

Ongoing Revenue Proposals

i) Environment Enforcement Officers

Savings proposal S5251 (Group Design Restructure – Communities) in the BSR includes a reduction of 2 in the number of Environment Enforcement Officer posts. This amendment seeks to cancel this reduction, and instead increase the number of such officers by 1, to restore the team to its previous 2022/23 staffing level.

Cost of proposal: £159,730 per year on an ongoing basis.

ii) Car Parking Charges

Increased income proposal I15256 (Car Parking Increased Income) in the BSR would see car parking charges across the city increase by an average of 20%. This amendment seeks to increase charges by a further 4% on average (i.e. a total increase of 24%), in order to fund proposal (i) above.

Additional income: £159,730 per year on an ongoing basis.

One-off Revenue Proposals

This amendment seeks to suspend or reduce several savings and increased income proposals within the BSR for the first half of 2025/26. This is to allow a period of focussed member scrutiny of their impact on service levels and the council's wider objectives, and consideration of alternative savings or income generation options. At the end of the six month suspension period, members would need to decide to implement either the original proposals, or alternatives which would deliver at least the same net savings to the General Fund.

The proposals which this amendment seeks to alter are as follows:-

iii) Public Realm Team

Savings proposal S5252 (Group Design Restructure – City Services) incorporates significant changes to the Public Realm team, including an overall reduction in headcount of 15.1 full-time equivalent roles. This amendment seeks to suspend this element of the proposal for six months.

Cost of proposal: One-off cost of £335,000 in 2025/26.

iv) Swimming Charges

Increased income proposal I15284 (Swimming Charges increase) will result in increased charges for both city residents and non-residents. This amendment seeks to limit the increase for non-member city residents to a maximum of 2.5% for a period of six months.

Cost of proposal: One-off cost of £98,200 in 2025/26.

v) Public Toilets

This amendment seeks to suspend savings proposal S5257 (Reduction in the Provision of Public Toilets) in its entirety for a six month period.

Cost of proposal: One-off cost of £60,500 in 2025/26.

Reserves Proposal

In order to fund the one-off revenue proposals above (iii to v), the following amendment is proposed in respect of reserves:

vi) Transformation and Reinvestment Fund

The BSR identifies an overachievement against the council's savings target of £1.149 million in 2025/26, and proposes this amount be transferred to a transformation and reinvestment fund (see page 257 of the reports pack). The effect of amendments iii to v above will reduce the savings achieved in 2025/26 by £493,700, and this amendment seeks to reduce the amount transferred to the transformation and reinvestment fund accordingly, to £655,300.

Non-Financial Proposals

The following proposals will have no financial impact upon the General Fund BSR:

vii) Future Strategy for the Crematorium

Noting repeated declines in income from the crematorium, this amendment seeks to request that a report be brought to the relevant scrutiny committee, at the earliest reasonable opportunity and no later than September 2025, setting out options and recommended courses of action for the future of the crematorium.

viii) Local Authority Trading Company

This amendment seeks to request that a report be brought to the relevant scrutiny committee, at the earliest reasonable opportunity and no later than September 2025, evaluating the possibility of a Local Authority Trading Company model for the continued provision of high quality core council services in the city, whilst also earning income by providing similar services on a commercial basis to third parties elsewhere.

2. Purpose and reason for the report

- 2.1 This report sets out amendments proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group to the General Fund Budget Setting Report 2025/26 to 2029/30, presented for decision to Full Council on 24 February 2025.

This report outlines the amendments proposed and the net impact on the General Fund, assuming all of the amendments are carried.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1 Under the constitution, amendments to the Executive's Budget recommendations may be submitted by Opposition Groups or any Member.

4. Background and key issues

4.1 Statement by the Liberal Democrat Finance Spokesperson

The delay in closing the council's long term funding gap has continued with little action for many years. Suddenly a raft of cutbacks is now proposed. We have accepted the need to tackle this gap and have criticised the inaction. But we do not agree that literally any measures that are put on the table are the right ones.

The Labour budget:

- Presents substantial reorganisations of council staff without any detail, nor any opportunity to discuss major changes;
- Is based on asking residents for their own views without listening to their answers;
- Maintains a worryingly low priority for basic services and amenities in the city's streets and other public places.

Our amendment:

- Ensures open, informed debate on budget decisions before they are made;

- Builds on residents' views;
- Encourages the council to try harder to safeguard core public services that are valued by the public as important for a thriving city.

We take issue with measures which fly in the face of residents' views which were recently requested in the budget consultation, notably the closure of still more **public toilets**, and the raising of **charges for swimming** for city residents. We agree with the public that there are powerful cases not to pursue these changes: for improving health and wellbeing, for equalities, for the local economy and protection of the environment.

We also take issue with changes lying behind the large blank envelopes of job losses under the heading of restructuring. No detail has been published on these, yet they touch on some of the most important, public-facing services for which the council is responsible, most notably the **Streets and Open Spaces team** which keeps the city clean and tidy and is to suffer a 20% reduction in staffing.

We say that these proposals must be considered fully by councillors across the chamber, examining them against other measures which are not being pursued. If it is being claimed that these savings will have no impact on the public and are consistent with the council's objectives, then this should be substantiated before they happen. We are proposing a 6 month postponement of these cutbacks to enable proper scrutiny to take place.

Within the restructuring envelopes we have identified a proposal to further reduce the team of **Public Realm Enforcement Officers**, which, for example, deals with fly tipping, littering, dog control, illegal camping, illegal advertising and punt touting across the city. This would add up to a reduction of that team by over 40% since 2023, jeopardising its role as an effective proactive presence on our streets and open spaces. We objected when this process began 2 years ago and object again now. We propose reinstatement to the original level of 7 officers – because unfilled vacancies have already allowed us to see some of their important services being suspended and others stretched.

Finally, we are challenging the silence around other possible means of improving the council's finances. For a third year in a row, the income expectation of the **crematorium** is being reduced, still with protestations that everything is under control, while things repeatedly get worse. The council and the public deserve a fundamental review. The creation of a **Local Authority Trading Company** is a model that has now been adopted by two other city councils similar to Cambridge, as a means of bringing income from municipal enterprise. The council and the public deserve a thorough open evaluation of this here. In both cases these are propositions seeking means of increasing our financial independence and protecting our residents from the kind of cutbacks that this budget brings.

Cllr Karen Young, Liberal Democrat Finance Spokesperson

4.2 Section 151 Officer Opinion

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Section 151 Officer to report to the council when it is considering its budget requirement and consequent council tax setting. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the reserves allowed for in the budget proposals.

My report on the General Fund BSR, as originally proposed by the Executive, is set out at section 7 of the BSR (see pages 261-264 of the reports pack).

I confirm that the amendments proposed by the Liberal Democrats, as set out within this report, would not require any changes to the existing Section 25 report.

Jody Etherington, Chief Finance Officer

5. Consultation, engagement and communication

- 5.1 A summary of the responses to the public consultation on budget setting for 2025/26 is included at Appendix B to the BSR.

6. Implications

Financial Implications

- 6.1 All financial implications are contained in the recommendations. Should all amendments be adopted, there would be no net impact upon the council's future savings targets (as set out on page 247 of the reports pack), or future projected reserves levels (as set out on page 258 of the reports pack).

Legal Implications

- 6.2 None identified.

Equalities and socio-economic Implications

- 6.3 An assessment has been carried out on the equalities impacts of the amendment proposals in this report and is attached at Appendix A.

Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications

- 6.4 The proposal in the General Fund BSR to increase car parking charges (I15256) received a 'low positive' climate rating, on the basis that it will encourage some users to switch to more sustainable methods of transport. The proposal within this amendment will increase charges further, so will have an additional 'low positive' impact over and above the original proposal.

The proposal in the General Fund BSR to close three public toilets (S5257) received a 'low positive' climate rating. The proposal within this amendment to suspend closure for six months will therefore have a 'low negative' impact by comparison.

Procurement Implications

6.5 None identified.

Community Safety Implications

6.6 None identified.

7. Background documents

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

7.1 General Fund Budget Setting Report 2025/26 to 2029/30

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Equality impacts of Liberal Democrat amendments to the General Fund Budget Setting Report 2025/26 to 2029/30

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Jody Etherington, Chief Finance Officer email:

jody.etherington@cambridge.gov.uk

Appendix A – Equality impacts of Liberal Democrat amendments to the General Fund Budget Setting Report 2025/26 to 2029/30

i) Environment Enforcement Officers

An increase in Environment Enforcement Officers might have a positive impact for health and safety and thus in preventing long-term illness and disability by keeping the public realm tidy. The roles cover environmental waste, dog fouling, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and A-Board licencing, for instance, all of which improve accessibility (especially benefitting people with mobility and sight impairments, and people needing to use prams or buggies (so for maternity)). By having an increase of Environmental Enforcement Officers, this would also increase capacity for undertaking health and wellbeing checks for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. If there are more enforcement officers however, it might lead to an increase in fixed penalty notices – and people in poverty and on low-incomes may be less able to afford the fines.

ii) Car Parking Charges

The equalities impacts of the proposal to increase car parking fees by 20% are set out in the EqIA for the General Fund Budget 2025/26 proposals. This amendment seeks to increase charges by 24% instead of 20%, which may exacerbate the negative equalities impacts already identified.

iii) Public Realm Team

By suspending this saving for a period of six months to allow for greater scrutiny, further equality impacts might be identified which might impact on decision making at the end of that period. Also, this might have a positive impact for keeping streets and grounds clear to improve accessibility, which would especially positively impact on people with mobility or sight impairments and people needing to use prams and buggies (so for maternity). However, the rationale for reducing staff in that the team is that the council can make greater use of live data to identify need for street cleansing to continue to target resources effectively, which could mean suspending the saving would have minimal impact.

iv) Swimming Charges

The equalities impacts of the proposal to increase swimming charges are set out in the EqlA for the General Fund Budget 2025/26 proposals. This amendment seeks to suspend charges, which could have a positive impact for equality groups identified in the EqlA for the General Fund Budget as being potentially negatively impacted. Moreover, by suspending this saving for a period of six months to allow for greater scrutiny, further equality impacts might be identified which might impact on decision making at the end of that period.

v) Public Toilets

The equalities impacts of the proposal to close some of the public toilets are set out in the EqlA for the General Fund Budget 2025/26 proposals. This amendment seeks to suspend this change, which could have a positive impact for equality groups identified in the EqlA for the General Fund Budget as potentially being negatively impacted by closures. Moreover, by suspending this saving for a period of six months to allow for greater scrutiny, further equality impacts might be identified which might impact on decision making at the end of that period.

vi) Transformation and Reinvestment Fund

More information would be needed around what this fund would be spent on before being able to identify equality impacts of this proposal.

vii) Future Strategy for the Crematorium

There are no equality impacts for this proposal as it is asking for a report. However, there would likely be equality impacts for the recommended courses of action for the future of the crematorium the report would put forward.

viii) Local Authority Trading Company

There are no equality impacts for this proposal as it is asking for a report. There may be equality impacts uncovered by the evaluation of a Local Authority Trading Company model recommended in this proposal.

Full Council

Monday 24 February 2025 6pm

General Budget Commentary

Green Group

Cllr Naomi Bennett Green Finance Spokes/ Leader

1 Overview

Our budget commentary reflects the circumstances that this city faces. We present a proposal that reflects the expected Local Government Reorganisation and achieves further savings.

We hope that these savings will be used to safeguard jobs and protect services.

2 Civic quarter project

The anticipated local government reorganisation means that Cambridge City Council as we know it will cease to exist from 2028. The decision as to where the headquarters of the new local authority will be based will be taken by the new principal authority council, not the old city council.

Whether the new council is at the smaller or larger end of the scale, it is unlikely to continue to be under Labour control. There will be new political leadership and those leaders will need to forge connections across a much wider area. The shadow cabinet for the new council is not expected to be in place until after the May 2027 elections and accordingly this decision needs to be paused for at least two years until they are in place. We cannot make that decision for them.

We cannot say whether the new principal authority will choose to be based in the historic centre of Cambridge, or even in Cambridge at all.

The new leaders will have to consider the travel needs of a workforce spread over a much wider area as well as that of residents. There are good reasons why major employers choose locations at the edge of the city or outside it rather than in the historic centre.

The Guildhall is not even the only office building within Cambridge owned by a local council. Old Shire Hall is still vacant.

If the decision to press ahead with plans for the Guildhall, it is likely that those plans will become obsolete almost as soon as they are completed and the millions of pounds spent on consultants will be wasted.

Apart from the financial waste, a decision to continue to work on the Guildhall plans is likely to be seen as arrogant, out of touch and Cambridge-centric. At this stage of any reorganisation, a cooperative and open stance is needed if the new council is to have any chance of achieving an appropriate environment for success.

Blindly pushing on with this passion project will not only alienate future working partners by showing a less than open attitude to future co-operative working. It also reduces the confidence of the public that their funds will be spent wisely.

We ask you to pause this project during the local government reorganisation. This would return £1m to reserves and generate a cash return of £75,000 over the two year pause period, which could be used to reduce the need for cuts in staff numbers and service levels.

Finally, we have chosen not to present spending plans for the savings generated. Here's why.

We are well aware that the national Labour government expects to make savings from its local government reorganisation plans. We are also aware that the reports of

Price Waterhouse Coopers and Grant Thornton make it very clear that there will be increased costs rather than savings in the short term from the local government reorganisation. Finally, we have heard over and over again the testimony of increased costs and reductions in service levels from councillors in regions that have already undergone centralisation.

Before the white paper announcement, the Green group had worked up a number of plans to utilise any savings from pausing the civic quarter project.

However, the white paper has changed our plans. We now feel that any savings from pausing the civic quarter project should be spent on reducing the deficit, protecting jobs and maintaining service levels.

Closing remarks

The voices of our residents, their questions and our case work are the foundation of this report. We also wish to thank officers for their help and advice.

Cllr Naomi Bennett

20 February 2024

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Order of questions	From	To	Question
1	Cllr Hauk	Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services	To the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services: What does the Council do to promote herbicide-free methods for weed control on roads and open spaces to private bodies such as developers, colleges, schools, and other councils?
2	Cllr Anna Smith	Executive Councillor for Community Safety and Homelessness	<u>The Labour government announced the largest ever cash boost to turn the tide on homelessness in December 2024. What will this mean for the city council and our work to end homelessness?</u>
3	Cllr Swift	Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Environment	<u>There's currently a live consultation on the Council's smoke control areas. Can the Executive for Climate Action and Environment explain what this means and how residents can respond?</u>
4	Cllr Gardiner-Smith	Executive Councillor for Communities	How does the City Council's grants team provide support to Cambridge residents through funding voluntary groups/ organisations in the city of Cambridge?
5	Cllr Glasberg	Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Environment	RVMs are automated machines which offer an efficient, convenient and cost-effective way to recycle plastic bottles and aluminium cans. What steps has the council taken to investigate a trial of Reverse Vending Machines (RVM's)?

6	Cllr Ashton	Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services	Can the Executive Cllr for Open Spaces and City Services give an update on the ongoing programme of refurbishment works to public toilets in Cambridge?
7	Cllr Robertson	Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure	Can the Executive for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure update the council on the latest news about our 5 year land supply and what this means for Cambridge City specifically?
8	Cllr Lokhmotova	Executive Councillor for Housing	Can the executive councillor for housing explain what the council is doing to ensure the housing associations operating in our city provide high quality, safe and secure housing for our residents?
9	Cllr Flaubert	Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services	Could the Exec Cllr for Open Spaces please update the council on inclusive play areas across the city?
10	Cllr Howard	Leader / Executive Councillor for Communities	Given the recent changes proposed by the ruling group's colleagues in national government that many refugees arriving in the UK should NEVER be eligible for British Citizenship - how can this City still claim to be "City of Sanctuary" to those fleeing conflict, persecution and desperation?"

11	Cllr Baigent	Leader	Cambridge City Council's shared services with South Cambs Council are running a full service, with staff working a 4 day week (planning and waste). Can the Leader of the council update councillors on the current consultation and how residents can feed back their thoughts?
12	Cllr McPherson	Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Environment	Residents are being urged not to put batteries in their bins as there were 7 fires in our refuse lorries last year. How can residents make sure they're recycling their batteries and electrical goods properly?
13	Cllr Dryden	Executive Councillor for Resources and Finance	How is the Cambridge Investment Partnership working to support young people into careers in the construction and housebuilding sector locally?
14	Cllr Lee	Executive Councillor for Housing	Would the Executive Councillor for Housing give an update on when we can expect people to move into the Haven on Wulfstan Way? It has been empty for a long time and residents want to see it being used.
15	Cllr Bick	Executive Councillor for Communities	To the Executive Councillor for Communities: What are the council's plans - of a tangible nature - to encourage the take-up of unclaimed state benefits by Cambridge residents?
16	Cllr Payne	Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure	To the Executive Councillor for planning and transport: Homes in Darwin Green phase 2 were fully demolished and have now been rebuilt following the shocking revelation that they had been constructed using the wrong foundation type. What is the council doing to hold big developers to account and ensure planning conditions are enforced?

17	Cllr Todd-Jones	Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services	The council is running a monthly 'LitterLotto' prize, can the Exec for Open spaces and city services talk about how this works and the benefit to residents?
18	Cllr Griffin	Executive Councillor for Housing	Can the Executive Cllr for Housing give the council an update on work being done to retrofit the Council's housing stock?
19	Cllr Gawthrope-Wood	Executive Councillor for Community Safety and Homelessness	What improvements are being undertaken to City Council pools and sports facilities?
20	Cllr Tong	Leader	The Royal National Institute for Deaf People has reported that more than 50% of people over age 55 will suffer from hearing loss, rising to 80% of people over the age of 70. As such, it is immensely important that we work to accommodate these individuals, pushing for local democracy in Cambridge to be as transparent and open as possible. Visitors to this chamber have reported to me that, after being invited to tune their hearing aids into an audio induction loop, they were unable to, harming their ability to take part in the democratic process. Is this due to a fault, and, if so, is work being done to rectify it?
21	Cllr Blackburn-Horgan	Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Environment	Can the Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment confirm the continuation and expansion of the successful S106 Tree Canopy Project which has been received very positively in Queen Edith's Ward and is seen as expanding the green lungs of our City?

22	Cllr Bennett	Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure	Community organisations such as the British Red Cross Mobility Centre and Cambridge Re Use have an important part to play in our local anti-poverty safety net. Yet increasingly, these important organisations are being displaced as older properties are redeveloped and are struggling to find new homes. Will the planning service and the council's own commercial property department join together to work with developers and other institutions to compile a register of possible "meantime" and longer term temporary accommodation for such organisations?
23	Cllr Martinelli	Executive Councillor for Community Safety and Homelessness	To the Executive Councillor for homelessness: During the last year how many individuals has the Council evicted from interim accommodation to the street?
24	Cllr Young	Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure	Can the Executive Councillor comment on how long the bridge over the railway at Long Road will need to be closed during the construction works for EWR? What diversions are proposed?
25	Cllr Porrer	Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services:	Can the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services please confirm what improvements will be made next year to ensure that the surface of Parker's Piece suffers less damage from the take down process after the Winter Fair, and to ensure that public access is restored more quickly in future years.

26	Cllr Clough	Leader / Deputy Leader	The recent ICAEW survey shows that confidence among small retail businesses has fallen to its lowest level for two years. What support will the council offer to support these small businesses that make such a positive contribution to making our city a special place?
27	Cllr Nestor	Executive Councillor for Communities	What continuing discretionary commitments are the council undertaking relating to equalities for the year ahead?
28	Cllr Sheil	Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure	The Planning authority's annual monitoring report was updated in January 2025 describing progress against the Local Plan timetable. Can the Executive for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure highlight some of the key updates?
29	Cllr Pounds	Executive Councillor for Housing	Can the Executive Cllr for Housing highlight the work the City Council is doing to support the resettlement of refugees who come to the UK?
30	Cllr Divkovic	Leader	At the November 2024 full council meeting, the Labour councillors proposed that local groups work together to 'organize an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event' as per the UN's suggestions for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Can the Leader of the council update on work going on to arrange this event?

Agenda Item 8

Agenda item 9b – Councillor Davey proposes and Councillor Thornburrow seconds the following amendment to motion 9b, additional text underlined and deleted text struckthrough.

~~The purpose of this motion is to draw attention to the very real barriers to the Labour government's ambitious growth plans for Cambridge and the concerns raised for quality of life and the natural environment.~~

Active Motion:

Background:

This council notes the announcement by the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves on 29 January 2025 that she intends to go “further and faster” to deliver an Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.

This Council notes that Chancellor Reeves places particular attention on life sciences, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing.

This Council notes the stated aim of Chancellor Reeves to overcome constraints on economic growth in the region and her statement that to grow we need to attract world class companies and world class talent.

This Council notes the open letter co-written by Cambridge leaders to the UK government in January 2025 which welcomes the government's recognition of the importance of the region for the government's ambitious growth plan.

In addition, it highlights the major issues facing the region stating ‘If we are to maximise the potential benefits of those future Cambridge innovations – the ‘software’ breakthroughs – it will mean investing in the ‘hardware’ of the city. Lack of investment in housing, water and transport needs has meant we have not been able to maximise growth for Cambridge, the region and Britain.’

This Council looks forward to working with central Government and the Cambridge Growth Company to tackle these challenges and continue delivering the best for our residents and businesses.

~~This motion is intended to form an open letter to the Chancellor and her team.~~

Water Supply Concerns:

~~This Council notes with concern that the Chancellor wishes to pursue further investment in life sciences and AI. Both of these are particularly demanding in terms of water use as well as demands made on the national grid.~~

~~Cambridge is in a water stressed region and the national grid is also overstretched locally. The proposed new reservoir will be ten years too late to provide the water needed for the council's original growth plans let alone the increases demanded by first Michael Gove and then Angela Rayner and Rachel Reeves.~~

~~The council notes that just one small data centre uses 26 million litres of drinking quality water per year – enough water for 648 adults using 110L per day.~~

~~The council further notes that the new Fenland reservoir is in an area prone to flooding raising concerns over water security.~~

~~The council further notes that the “investment” required to build the new reservoirs will be provided by allowing water companies to raise their charges in excess of inflation while continuing to pay excessive amounts to management and investors.~~

~~The council asks in which sense is the Chancellor providing this investment and calls upon her to renationalise our failing water companies.~~

Transport concerns:

~~This council notes Chancellor Reeves’ desire to improve commuter routes across the region.~~

~~The council wishes to draw her attention to EW Rail’s own passenger transport figures which show a very limited demand for the proposed new services. EW rail will do nothing to help workers travelling to Cambridge from Haverhill and the east of the city.~~

Quality of life

~~This council notes the Chancellor’s emphasis on attracting world class talent to Cambridge. These are people who might choose to work anywhere and will expect a high quality of life not just a job. Our excessively high housing costs mean that many workers don’t have enough disposable income to enjoy what Cambridge has to offer. Moreover, young GPs and other key workers can’t afford to live here so our health services suffer.~~

In conclusion

~~This council asks the Chancellor to reconsider her plans for Cambridge. We ask her to be open and transparent in acknowledging the extent of our water and other environmental problems as well as the fears of local communities who already perceive increasing inequity in our already rapidly expanding city.~~

~~We firmly believe that the measures she proposes are insufficient to secure the future and safety of our residents, our economy and of our natural environment.~~