

COUNCIL

26 February 2026
6.00 - 9.45 pm

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

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/1/CNL Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Dryden, Lee, Lokhmotova and Flaubert.

Councillors Ashton, Payne and Thornburrow expected to join the meeting after the start.

26/2/CNL Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Davey	26/10/cncl	Personal: Director of Cambridge United Football Club.
Councillor Bird	26/10/cncl	Personal: Board member of Cambridge Investment Partnership.
Councillor Simon Smith	26/10/cncl	Personal: Board member of Cambridge Investment Partnership.

26/3/CNL Minutes

26/4/CNL Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025

The minutes of 20 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

26/5/CNL Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025

The minutes of 27 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

26/6/CNL Mayor's announcements

Past events:

- Mayor's Quiz and other fund raising events for the Mayor's charities.
- City events such as Christmas services at King's College and Great St. Martins.
- The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor visited the new Operations Hub on Cowley Road 4 February 2026.
- The Mayor was joined by fellow Councillors and chaplain at the annual Queensborough Feast held at Corpus Christi College 6 February 2026.
- A new year celebration by the Chinese Community Centre was held at Netherhall School 15 February 2026.
- The Mayor gave a talk in the Council Chamber on local government to a group of RAF 104 Squadron Cadets and Ukrainian school children 20 February 2026.

Events coming up:

- International Women's Day event – to be held in the Council Chamber 9 March 2026.
- Mayor's Reception 20 March. Councillors were reminded to RSVP by 6th March.

The Mayor wished to recognise the contributions of Mark Taylor (Accessibility Officer) who passed away at the end of last year. Mark worked for the shared Planning Service for a number of years. The Mayor wished to pass on condolences on behalf of Cambridge City Council.

26/7/CNL Public questions time

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

Question 1:

During the consultation on the North Cambridge Framework for Change, while discussing the planned redevelopment of Arbury Court, many residents and locals, including me, have expressed that we would like to see the current park retained, rather than built over and replaced. The council has made clear

that the previous plans were not final, and that a new plan, or plans, will be published some time this year.

I would like to ask about these updated plans in three regards:

- Has the council assessed the likely impact on traffic along Arbury Road and the surrounding roads from the redevelopment, and are there any plans in place to mitigate this impact?
- When will these plans be made available, and does the council know if these plans will continue to propose building on top of the current park?
- Has the council assessed the costs and risks of trying to lay down new green space on a currently paved area, in particular in terms of drainage capacity, given that the clay-rich soil in Cambridge is well known to drain poorly, leading to waterlogging and flooding even in well-established green space (e.g., in Logan's Meadow), let alone newly introduced green space?"

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded:

- i. The design and planning process will require liaison with the Highways Authority who were a statutory consultee. There will also be parking surveys.
- ii. Proposals were being developed that took the public consultation into account. Further designs would be shared with the public before a planning submission is made autumn 2026. The public's views on the park have been heard loud and clear by the Council.
- iii. The Council (through its successful partnership with Cambridge Investment Partnership) delivered a number of parks and open spaces at Mill Road, Cromwell Road, the Meadows, ATS Markets, and Orchard Park. There were clear planning and design guidelines that to be followed on drainage and flood risks. The team would work with council colleagues and the public to get feedback on play equipment, plants and the design of open spaces. The Council has been contacted by people who want to help co-design the open space at North Cambridge.

Supplementary:

- i. The bedrock in Cambridge was not great for drainage at the best of times. In the case of Arbory Court, while the current park has been green space for more than 100 years, the proposed replacement space hasn't. It's been under concrete and the weight of the blocks of Arbory Court itself. It'll have been compacted for decades now. Drainage will be difficult to achieve there.

- ii. The Council's own guide to sustainable urban drainage system says that on a former brownfield site, a lot of the measures that would normally be used just aren't suitable.
- iii. Given all the expense, given the requirement laid out in the council's own guides for all sorts of professional and expert consultations on all of these requirements, and given that we know these issues were resolved for the current park because it's been there for decades and isn't currently a lake, was there not a strong argument in the tax payers' financial interest for keeping the park where it was?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with the following:

- i. The Council would undertake investigation work to see what could or could not be done then decide what to do at an appropriate time.
- ii. The Public Consultation Report and the North Cambridge Framework For Change Report would be made public next week. There was a lot of feedback and the team were consulting with Planners and Highways Agency to shape the design. Letters have gone out to tenants, homeowners inviting them to a drop-in with council officers. There would also be a drop in for the public on 10 March.
- iii. The Council met with traders on a monthly basis to have discussions.
- iv. There would be a launch of Shaping North Cambridge 13 June 2026, and it was planned to share a further design in the autumn before a planning submission was made.

Question 2:

Since 2021, the Cambridge City Council has been one of the directing board members of Visit Cambridge, Cambridge's Destination Management Organisation (DMO), which was approved by the Council to be incorporated into a Community Interest Company (CIC).

As stated in publicly available Council documents, this was supposed to:

- Support the recovery and development of a sustainable visitor economy
- Support the redesign of the [Visitor Centre], and any future agreements on funding or other relationships with stakeholders
- Protect the DMO assets for the benefit of the community
- Fulfill the role of DMO for Cambridge city
- Represent the city's tourism sector locally
- Provide a report each year detailing how its activities have benefited the community for which it was set up and continue to meet the test throughout its life.

Following the publication of these documents, these ambitions have not been fulfilled, there is no evidence that they were attempted, and there has never been a Community Interest Company set up along these lines. If these records exist, can they please be brought out?

In the past two years, I have asked multiple times, through formal and informal channels, to be heard and allowed to present the Tourist Information Centre which we set up in the absence of any viable alternative, which has been successful and in need of formal recognition. During this time, I have been ignored by the Council, apart from a few insubstantial informal meetings with officers, which only took place after all the plans had been finished and the process fully underway, in which I was told that there was nothing the Council could do for us.

I would like the Full Council to bear witness to the fact that I invited all the members of the Cabinet to come and visit us, and it was made to look as though they were going to be finding some time in their diaries to do this and get in touch with me, but none of them have.

Considering the non-existent document records of the DMO, and the lack of engagement and seeming refusal to acknowledge the importance of the Tourist Information Centre, would it be fair to say that there has been a conflict of interest between the Council's role as a directing partner of the DMO, and its more recent overriding ambition to force this civic quarter development through planning?

After so many expressions of interest and more than two years of work, investment and professional service provision on behalf of the city, I have a just expectation to be met. When am I going to be given my fair hearing?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. A new destination marketing organisation called Welcome to Cambridge was set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2021.
- ii. The partners were Cambridge City Council (curating Cambridge Limited), Cambridge Bid and King's College. It's been operating since 2025 as Visit Cambridge as a not-for-profit limited company. The accounts were available on company's house, but there's not much to see because it's a dormant company.

- iii. Visit Cambridge promoted your unofficial Tourist Information Company on its website alongside other for-profit city tour services and works with businesses and wider stakeholders to help enhance the social and economic value of the visitor economy.
- iv. Visit Cambridge's work was limited by the capacity of its partners regarding marketing, online information and visitor welcome support.
- v. There was no question of a conflict of interest between the unrelated operations of Visit Cambridge and the council's promotion of the civic quarter development. Visit England is the body responsible for assessment and designation of TIC's.
- vi. Representations from the Questioner had been heard before by Councillors at meetings of the Civic Quarter Liaison Group, Cabinet and Council. The Questioner had also met with Officers on three separations to discuss take up of space in the Guildhall and completion of the works which were to be the subject of a council decision. Officers had responded to previous representations and the answers remained the same. In the event of the works going ahead, the Council would instruct an agent to market any available space to let and all space would be let on commercial terms as income generated from the Corn Exchange and Guildhall was required to fund the construction costs.

Supplementary:

- i. Took issue with details given by the Cabinet Member.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources responded with the following:

- i. A statement not a question was made, so no response required.

Question 3:

Could you please provide information as to where the previous residents of Fanshawe Road and the residents who have recently moved out of Davy Road have gone?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded:

- i. Was able to report in broad terms that residents in both Fanshawe Road and Davy Road had receive support to move into homes of their choice.
- ii. The vast majority of tenants from Fanshawe Road had remained in Cambridge.

- a. 16 out of 20 tenants were still residing in the CB1 area.
- b. 8 tenants had moved to new build homes at Mill Road and Cromwell Road.
- c. 6 overcrowded households had moved to three-bedroom homes.
- iii. There was a similar picture at Davy Road. To date, 23 tenants had moved to homes of their choice in Cambridge with 5 overcrowded households having moved to three bedroomed homes that met their needs.
- iv. Leaseholders at both Fanshawe Road and Davy Road had received support throughout the buyback process with most residents and lease holders remaining in Cambridge.

Supplementary:

- i. The Cambridge City Council Development Team Project Manager sent an email to my neighbour last week in answer to a concern about details listed on NextDoor website.
- ii. He said "Former lease holders of the now demolished Fanshawe Road blocks were notified of the sales launch and offered the chance to register their interest as the council's policy was to offer the right to return to regenerated developments. One could now see that the completed three-bedroom houses cost in the region of 650,000. The departing 10 lease holders of Fanshawe Roads flats were valued at £280,000 to £288,000."
- iii. How does the council expect the departing lease holders to be able to afford a residence that was more than twice as expensive? Together with the 22 social rent households that left who would presumably be offered the affordable rent properties when they are completed, we have another empty and meaningless promise.
- iv. How would you explain why you think it's okay for Council to behave in this way?

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded with the following:

- i. The intention was to build more council houses. People complained each time the Council tried to act.
- ii. The Council make sure each tenant had the right information and the right support all the way through into their new property.
- iii. Tenants were asked if they want to move back after they had moved out of Fanshawe Road.

- iv. Some tenants wanted to move back and some did not as they were quite happy where they had moved to. The Council did everything it possibly could.

Question 4:

Great Eastern Street Car Park, we have a problem with drivers abandoning their cars there. Would the council be prepared to change this to a metered car park to allow shoppers using Mill Road to park there?

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

- i. Rather than straight away looking at car parking facilities, the Council wished to consider how to use the space more strategically. For example, it might be used as a green open space or increased children's play provision
- ii. Great eastern car park currently serves a specific function. Any changes to how it operates, including moving to a metered short stay car park as suggested would need to be carefully considered and informed by stakeholders.
- iii. There was a need to consult with stakeholders on how to proceed and explore options in future before bringing forward any formal proposal.

Supplementary:

- i. What would be the timescale for action?
- ii. Could units under the bridge be used for the community? The area needed clearing out. Could it be made a nicer area and have gates?

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

- i. It was a good proposal to improve the area and tackle associated anti-social behaviour.
- ii. Was unclear on details of landownership.
- iii. Would liaise with Officers about a timeline for action. A timeline infers that a change would be made, but that would be subject to consultation with stakeholders.
- iv. People may prefer to drive to the shops but the Council encourage people to get the bus, walk and cycle if they possibly could. Some people, disabled people for example, may need to drive, but the Council did not want to encourage everyone to drive.

Question 5:

Darwin Green is a new community still finding its feet, and our tennis courts were one of the few free recreational facilities available to residents. The tennis courts were used by families, young people learning the game, and residents who want to stay active. These tennis courts will shortly transfer from the developer to the City Council, and there is a concern that as other tennis courts in the city have seen charges introduced, the same could happen to our tennis courts in Darwin Green.

Will the Council prioritise accessible community sports facilities and commit to keeping Darwin Green's tennis courts free to use when they are transferred to the City Council?'

The Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness responded:

- i. Council tennis courts in local neighbourhood parks and community spaces around the city were free and the intention was that the courts transferring to the City Council at Darwin Green would also continue to be free.
- ii. Once the courts were transferred to the City Council, it was intended to add the Darwin Green court to the Council's tennis court booking platform in association with the lawn tennis association. The LTA clubs park booking system would then be available to the public to book the courts free of charge at Darwin Green and guarantee playing times and court preferences. Whilst those who just wanted to turn up to use the courts could continue to do so because the courts were available.

Question 6:

Research¹ confirms that 85 per cent of women do not feel safe walking alone at night, and women's lived experience confirms that women's concerns are not fanciful. Design, planning, servicing and governance of public space does not, or not systematically, take women's everyday features of life into proper account.

In her book *Women After Dark*, world-leading architect and urbanist Dr Nourhan Bassam observes that women are reliant on moving in public space 'in the dark' whether as 'workers, performers, patrons, caretakers, and

¹ DemosAu, [Trusted Market Research and Polling Insights](#) (accessed 23 February 2026).

spectators'.² To that list can be added women as shoppers, caregivers moving from elderly parents' homes to their own homes, friends visiting friends, walkers and joggers keen on preserving their health and wellbeing. Indeed, myriad aspects of daily life are lived outside during evening or night hours, or in the dark winter mornings and afternoons. Bassam proposes that women's safety, security and right to enjoyment of life to the full must be 'inscribed into urban design', focusing on 'width of sidewalks, placement of lights, safety of underpasses, and accessibility of public transport'.

1. Transport is the responsibility of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and is key to many women's safety of travel at night. The previous mayoral transport lead, Labour's Anna Smith, proposed increasing transport safety, including a safer bus stop proposal and a last bus guarantee.
2. Lighting is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council, yet residents express concern about lack or dimness of lighting, particularly during these winter months.
3. Housing development in Cambridge is the responsibility of Cambridge City Council, and moving about in late evenings or nighttime is essential for many women residents.

Could the Council:

1. Take whatever steps are within its power to ensure that the Cambridgeshire Peterborough Combined Authority incorporates into transport planning the importance of public transport accessibility to women's safety, security and wellbeing, starting by implementing Cllr Smith's proposals.
2. Undertake to implement whatever steps within in its power to ensure that Cambridgeshire County Council increases the wattage of City lighting so that residents throughout Cambridge and particularly north of the river where Arbury residents have expressed concerns to me can be secure whether on foot, cycle, or going to and from their cars, so that they can see where they are going and not be subjected to the dangers of dim lighting or darkness.
3. Affirm that in its house building plans it recognises the dangers and apprehensions facing women during non-daylight hours, and will incorporate into all housing plans and designs the features referenced by Dr Bassam, including footpath or pavement width, lights placement, underpass safety and associated matters.

² [Women After Dark: How Cities Keep Failing Women After Dark eBook : Bassam, Nourhan: Amazon.co.uk: Kindle Store](#) (accessed 23 February 2026); [Women After Dark - by Nourhan Bassam - Nourhan's Substack](#) (accessed 23 February 2026).

4. Prioritise in relation to the Nth Cambridge Development including Brackley Close, Kingsway Flats and Arbury Court, the issue of women's safety, security and wellbeing so that they are incorporated into planning, plans and designs, to address the issues raised by Dr Bassam.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport responded:

- i. It seemed to her that design, planning, servicing, and governance of public space, (as the questioner put it) too often resulted in women being seen but not being safe. This was something to be challenged.
- ii. Unfortunately, and too often, women's views were listened to but not heard. Even those who found themselves in position of responsibility did not have the power to achieve all the changes they thought necessary. Undertook to push in every way to change this.
- iii. Would raise the proposal by Councillor Smith at the combined authority transport meetings where Councillor Thornburrow was the sole woman on the committee. Undertook to raise issues with the county council regarding lighting and surveillance of paths and routes so there were improvements in Arbury and Petersfield.
- iv. Asked other councillors to do the same where they were made aware of concerns by residents. They could all act as allies to put pressure on the county council.
- v. Had sent the links of the work of Dr Basam to key officers in the planning service and we collectively would consider how we could incorporate the recommendations and evidence.
- vi. We had some planning conditions which refer to the safety already. One that Councillor Thornburrow had raised in various committees was policy 56 creating successful places which stated a development that was designed to be attractive, high quality, accessible, inclusive and safe would be supported.
- vii. Proposals should be designed to remove the threat or perceived threat of crime and improve community safety.
- viii. With reference to the North Cambridge development, Councillor Thornburrow would work with Councillor Bird regarding the design brief for the homes and places the council would deliver.

Question 7:

As a teacher, I am very concerned for the safety of young people in Cambridge, especially girls and young women. One of the issues most often

raised with me is a desire for better street lighting at night. Why is the County Council not doing more to provide more effective street lighting at night and help people to stay safe, and what can the City Council do about it?

The Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness responded:

- i. In Cambridge, street lighting on the public highway was the responsibility of the County Council (as the Highways Authority). This included decisions about lighting levels, operating hours, column locations, and maintenance standards.
- ii. The County Council decided in 2016 to reduce street lighting levels across Cambridge to 60% illumination. Following that decision, the City Council agreed to fund an uplift for 80% illumination between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. for all street lighting in the city for the protection of all residents and visitors.
- iii. The City Council were particularly mindful of the work that was done through the campaign tackling violence against women and girls.
- iv. You asked what the City Council could do about County Council policy concerning street lighting. Although the County Council holds statutory responsibility, the City Council would continue to advocate strongly for safer streets, use the tools and funding mechanisms available to it and work in partnership to ensure that safety especially for women and girls is a shared priority.
- v. As Councillor Thornburrow mentioned, we could work as allies to put pressure on the County Council in the future.

Supplementary:

- i. Cycling was such an integral part of daily life in Cambridge, both for transport and for sustainability reasons.
- ii. We need to ensure that residents feel confident that their bikes were safe and secure.
- iii. Bike theft remained a concern for many residents in Cambridge. What role has the City Council played in preventing bike theft?

The Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness responded with the following:

- i. In 2019 there were 2,967 bike thefts in Cambridge. As a result, the multi-agency cycle crime group led by Cambridge City Council was set up delivering educational campaign, cycle security improvement, enhancing

enforcement and other measures. This led to a 70% reduction in cycle crime in the city.

- ii. The educational campaign was spearheaded by the local charity CamCycle, encouraging people to work together and help save our cycles.
- iii. 16 new CCTV cameras had been installed in the city centre by our CCTV shared service, covering approximately 650 cycle parking spaces.
- iv. The council has extended and improved cycle parking facilities most recently at Queen Anne's Terrace.
- v. Cambridge Police had been using criminal behaviour orders to target individual offenders. These CBOS could put conditions on individual offenders such as not being in certain areas or not being in possession of cycle without proof of ownership. Where an offender continues to offend, CBOS could make it easier to secure criminal charges and result in more severe court outcomes.

Question 8:

Cambridge City Council referred Council Tax debts to bailiffs over 2800 times between 2023 and 2025, averaging almost 4 referrals per day. What was the cost to the council for these enforcement agencies in that period for the collection of council tax arrears?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. The council issued 61,000 council tax bills every year.
- ii. To support the least able to pay, the council provides council tax relief support to 9,000 households at a cost of £10 million pounds a year. It uses universal credit data to automate people's applications for council tax which stops debt accumulating due to delays of applications.
- iii. The grant funds Citizens Advise to help residents claims and managing debt.
- iv. The payment process starts with standard building process which was followed up by a reminder letter then a final notice letter. The council's customer service team was briefed and able to signpost anyone who contacts the council with outstanding payment to secure sources of support.
- v. Only when there's been no attempt to pay, the debt was referred to court, and a court summons was sent.

- vi. Once a court order was issued, council staff make a further attempt to contact the person directly and to look at alternative routes to payment. During 2025/26, 2,843 court orders were issued and 55% of these resolved at that point.
- vii. Only when all previous processes were exhausted would the council instruct an enforcement agent. The number of council tax debts referred to enforcement agencies 1483 in 2025 and 1295 this current year. This number of cases was higher though than the number of households as households could have multiple debts covering more than one year. If cases were double counted the repayment plan stops and then restarts.
- viii. 60% of the then outstanding cases were resolved by written correspondence and the remainder had an in-person visit. The enforcement agents were trained to report cases of vulnerability of hardship and that prompts the council once again to provide additional support when needed. No goods or possessions had been removed from a household for at least 12 months.
- ix. Finally, enforcement agencies charge and retain statutory fees payable by the data. Therefore, there's no cost to the council for any enforcement activity.

Supplementary:

- i. Took issue with the council putting the tax burden on those least able to pay.
- ii. Asked for a meeting to discuss issues with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources within 30 days.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources responded with the following:

- i. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources undertook to meet with ACORN within 30 days.

Enforcement action was only taken against those who could pay but would not. Safety nets were in place; the Council would not pursue people who could not pay.

26/8/CNL To deal with oral questions

Question 1

Councillor Glasberg to The Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services

Residents are raising concerns about planting on verges being cut back in a way that makes it unlikely that the plants will recover, for example, the mature Cistus bushes planted as part of the landscaping scheme for Hills Road.

Planting on verges is important in the city for amenity and biodiversity as well as reducing air pollution from traffic, and it is hard to see how planting that is less than a metre high impairs visibility for cyclists, pedestrians or vehicles.

While highway safety needs to be considered there is a balance to be struck - these are residential streets not merely transport corridors.

Could councillors be informed of pending work on verges in their ward that involves cutting back planting?

The Cabinet Member responded:

- i. The City Council undertook some work for the County Council/Highways Agency to maintain verges on highways and so had to meet their safety standards. This could result in more cutting back than residents might otherwise expect and could affect plant recovery time scales.
- ii. The City Council did not receive reimbursement for the full cost of work from the County Council.

Question 2

Councillor Dalzell to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport

Could the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport please confirm which councillors were consulted about the Milton Road Library public art project before the artist was commissioned in April 2025 by the Public Art Advisory Service? Was this in accordance with Council protocols and the Public Art Strategy?

The Cabinet Member responded:

- i. The appointment of the artist for the Milton Road Library public art project was fully in accordance with council protocols and the public art strategy.
- ii. Under both the council's adopted public art supplementary planning directive and the public art manifesto, artists appointed were appointed at the start of public art commissioning process so that they could help to shape the project's implementation.

- iii. There was no explicit requirement within the SPT, the manifesto or the commissioning program to consult councillors prior to commissioning an artist.
- iv. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning's public art advisory service was overseeing the project delivery and, in this case, a comprehensive engagement program sought to ensure councillors, residents and young people were fully involved in shaping the art artwork has been developed and refined with input from the local community and local members. This would help shape the project once the appointed artist began their work.
- v. Noted the Milton Road engagement project had been developed by officers and this had involved meetings with eight councillors so far including Councillors Dalzell and Thornburrow.

Question 3

Councillor Porrer to the Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness

The Willow Walk homeless hostel accommodated individuals with the highest and most complex needs on the city's supported pathway from rough sleeping towards sustainable housing. It closed in June 2022, as a result of its ongoing funding being stopped with the support of the city council, offering the explanation that it was no longer needed as capacity existed elsewhere. The charity who owned the building sold it and it is now being converted to private apartments. How is it that the council's consultants have now assessed that there is a shortage of high needs hostel accommodation in the city, which is hampering our ability to get people back into regular housing and could the Cabinet member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness explain what happened?

The Cabinet Member responded:

- i. When Willow Walk was closed there was a national drive towards more community based solutions such as Housing First, and away from traditional hostel type accommodation particularly on the scale of Willow Walk.
- ii. Furthermore, reports of antisocial behaviour from neighbours, relatively high eviction rate, and the configuration of the building suggested that it was proving difficult to provide the support needed for residents within that setting.

- iii. Willow Walk wasn't providing appropriate accommodation and other options were used to get better value for money.
- iv. A full assessment of needs for each resident was carried out by the city and county councils in conjunction with local support providers at the time of closure.
- v. One of the findings from our recent homelessness review was that over the past 5 years, there has been an increase in demand for homeless services for individuals with higher and complex needs. The homelessness landscape has changed since the closure of Willow Walk.

Question 4

Councillor Blackburn-Horgan to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport

It was agreed at council on 28th November 2024 that a report would be prepared on the case for and feasibility of one or more Article 4 directions within the city boundaries further to motion 6e Improving Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Cambridge. This would consider the implications of removing Permitted Development rights for smaller HMOs (currently Use Class C4) and instead require planning permission for all new builds and for change of use for existing housing stock to be used as HMOs for more than two people, including a register of all HMOs from more than 2 people and report back to a suitable member meeting by the summer of 2025. Can the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport please direct Council to this report and its recommendations.

The Cabinet Member responded:

- i. Following the council motion, officers from the council had explored whether data on HMO licensing, registrations, and planning provided evidence for a significant clustering of HMOs in the city that would support an article 4 direction as outlined.
- ii. An article 4 request must be supported by robust evidence that would enable the council to demonstrate to the secretary of state that the direction was necessary and had been applied to the smallest geographical area possible.
- iii. To date, the available evidence had not suggested enough evidence to meet the requirement for an article 4 direction to protect local immunity or the well-being of the area. Officers were aware of continuing concerns about the use of existing family homes in the city for alternative forms of

residential accommodation, including holiday rentals, student housing, subletting, HMO conversions or short-term rental accommodation for business uses. These uses these uses could lead to greater turnover of occupancy.

- iv. The Council did not have compelling evidence that HMO occupancy for three or more people alone would address the high threshold requirement to justify an article 4 direction as outlined.
- v. Officers were proposing to bring a report engaging with these wider housing related matters and the housing strategy to Members later in the year and Councillor Thornburrow would keep the Council informed about the progress of this report.

Question 5

Councillor Hauk to the Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Spaces and City Services

What steps can the City Council take to facilitate and accelerate the adoption of open spaces and roads that are currently under the control of developers?

The Cabinet Member responded:

- i. The Council was keen to adopt open spaces and new roads adopted as quickly as possible assuming they could be managed consistently and to an agreed standard.
- ii. Adoption was governed by legally binding section S106 agreements and linked directly to development bill programs, site phasing and the satisfactory resolution of defects.
- iii. Section 106 agreements were legally binding documents between a developer and a local planning authority under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 designed to mitigate the impact of new developments. These arrangements were deliberate and existed to protect the council and residents from inheriting assets that were incomplete, unsafe, or would create long-term maintenance liabilities for the public purse.
- iv. Within that framework, the council was taking practical steps to facilitate and where possible accelerate adoption. This included earlier engagement with developers, clearer guidance on adoptable standards, early technical signoff specifications, improved coordination across services, and the use of phased adoption where completed areas met the required standards.

- v. Where delays persisted, the Council could also use enforcement mechanisms available through section 106 agreements to ensure developers met their obligations.

The Council could not adopt assets before they were complete or accept land with unresolved defects as this would transfer unacceptable financial and operational risk to the council and its residents. Ultimately, the delivery and timing of adoption was determined by developers build programs and the planning permission granted including the conditions attached to those decisions.

26/9/CNL To consider the recommendations of the Executive for adoption

26/10/CNL Budget Setting Report and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27

The Executive presented its budget recommendations as set out in the Council Agenda and published on the City Council's website.

Councillor Bick and Liberal Democrat Group Members presented the Liberal Democrat Group's alternative budget as set out in the Council Agenda and published on the City Council's website.

Councillor Bennett and Green Group Members presented the Green Group's alternative budget as set out in the Council Agenda and published on the City Council's website.

Councillor Payne joined the meeting before debate started on the budget.

Members **agreed nem con** to extend the meeting past the 3 hour guillotine.

Under the Council's budget procedure, the Liberal Democrat Group's alternative budget was deemed to have been moved and seconded as an amendment.

Under the Council's budget procedure, the Green Group's alternative budget was deemed to have been moved and seconded as an amendment.

The Liberal Democrat Group's alternative budget amendment was **lost by 15 votes to 22 with 1 abstention.**

The Green Group's alternative budget amendment was **lost by 5 votes to 22 with 11 abstentions**.

Councillor Glasberg left the meeting and did not return.

The Liberal Democrat Group requested the recommendations below were voted on separately to the rest of the Budget Setting recommendations contained on pages 41-45 of the Council agenda. This included the HRA components of recommendations L, Q, R and S.

Housing rents and charges:

c) Approve an increase in rents for all Social Rent, Social Rent shared ownership and Affordable Rent properties of 4.8% (September 2025 CPI plus 1%), with effect from 1 April 2026.

d) Agree to fully implement rent convergence for all Social Rent tenants at a maximum rate of £1 per week from 1 April 2027, then £2 per week from 1 April 2028, in line with recent government announcements, for a period of up to 10 years.

e) Approve an increase in rents for Affordable Rent shared ownership properties in line with the maximum permitted in each individual property lease (generally RPI plus 0.5%).

f) Approve that garage and parking space charges are increased by up to 4.8%, as set out at section 10 of the Budget Setting Report 2026/27.

g) Approve the methodology for calculating Housing Revenue Account service charges and leasehold administration costs as set out at Appendix K, and delegates authority to the Chief Finance Officer to carry out the detailed calculation of 2026/27 charges in line with this methodology, noting that the council will endeavour to limit increases to 4.8% where possible.

Revenue budgets:

i) Approve the Housing Revenue Account revenue proposals shown at Appendix H.

Capital budgets:

k) Approve the Housing Revenue Account capital proposals set out at Appendix I(a) and the revised capital plan set out at Appendix I(b).

(Housing Revenue Account element of recommendation L only to be voted on with this vote)

l) Approve the proposed capital financing plans set out at section 5 (General Fund) and **section 7 (Housing Revenue Account)** of the Budget Setting Report 2026/27, whilst noting that the constitution delegates all executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing to the Chief Finance Officer, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

m) Note in particular that the council's ambitious Housing Revenue Account investment programme, including the 10-year new homes programme, will require new borrowing of around £483 million over the next 10 years, as set out at section 7 of the Budget Setting Report 2026/27.

Risks and reserves:

(Housing Revenue Account element of recommendation Q only to be voted on with this vote)

q) Set the 2026/27 prudent minimum balance at £8.059 million for the General Fund, **and £6.801 million for the Housing Revenue Account**, with a working target balance of 120% of the prudent minimum balance in each case, in line with the advice of the Chief Finance Officer.

Medium-Term Financial Strategy:

(Housing Revenue Account element of recommendation R & S only to be voted on with this vote)

r) Approve the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the General Fund and **Housing Revenue Account** as set out at section 9 of the Budget Setting Report 2026/27.

s) Note the key assumptions used in the development of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at Appendix C, and **in particular the sensitivity of the Housing Revenue Account 30-Year Business Plan to changes in these assumptions, as set out in detail at Appendix J.**

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the Executive's budget proposals C-S (contained on pages 41-45 of the Council agenda including HRA components of recommendations L, Q, R and S) **by 36 votes to 1.**

Councillor Bennett left the meeting and did not return.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the remaining Executive's budget proposals **by 22 votes to 1 with 13 abstentions**.

26/11/CNL Council Tax Reduction Scheme

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the recommendations:

1. Universal Credit Scheme Uprating

To uprate the income bands and contribution levels within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for households in receipt of Universal Credit in line with the annual percentage increase in the National Minimum Wage and better equalise earnings disregards.

2. Non-Universal Credit Working-Age Scheme

To retain a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working-age households not in receipt of Universal Credit, and to apply:

- (a) Department for Work and Pensions applicable amounts and premiums where these continue to be published; or
- (b) where such figures are unavailable, to uprate scheme allowances annually in accordance with the September Consumer Price Index (CPI).

3. Council Tax Liability Basis

That 100% of the Council Tax liability shall continue to be used as the starting point for the calculation of entitlement under both Council Tax Reduction Schemes.

4. Delegated Authority and Duration

To delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to carry out the annual review and uprating of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes in Page 149 Agenda Item 8 accordance with legislative changes and the uprating principles set out above; and to confirm that the Schemes shall remain in operation (subject to any such annual uprating) until 31 March 2029.

5. Where the household was on universal credit to retain a flat rate scheme for non-dependence of £8.36 for 2026/27 with an annual uprating in accordance with the September consumer price index and annually increased by September CIP thereafter. Non-dependents who received disability income or pension credit or a war pension or armed forces independent payment or were the charge payer and or partner have a disability or receive a carer's benefit will not have a non-dependent deduction.

26/12/CNL To consider the recommendations of Committees for adoption**26/13/CNL Pay Policy Statement**

Resolved to approve:

- i. The recommendation that the Cambridge Weighting rate is increased from £13.00 per hour to £13.69 per hour.
- ii. To review and recommend to Full Council the Pay Policy Statement in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

26/14/CNL Review of Statement of Licensing Policy

Resolved to approve:

- i. Consider the results of the public consultation exercise as summarised in Appendices B and C of the Officer's report.
- ii. Approve the Statement of Licensing Policy as attached at Appendix E of the report. Appendix D included tracked changes showing the amendments that have been made as part of the consultation and additional changes following consultation responses.

26/15/CNL To consider the following notices of motion, notice of which has been given by:**26/16/CNL Councillor Tong: City of Sanctuary**

Councillor Bick and Councillor Tong proposed to use Council Procedure Rule 1.9.4 to refer the motion to Civic Affairs and Audit Committee for consideration.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree referring the motion to Civic Affairs **by 31 votes to 4 with 1 abstention.**

26/17/CNL Councillor Dalzell: Unfair Business Rates Increases, Threatening Neighbourhood Shops

Councillor Dalzell proposed and Councillor Hauk seconded the following motion:

This Council notes:

1. That neighbourhood shopping areas across Cambridge are facing dramatic business rates increases from April 2026, with Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data showing particularly severe impacts in areas outside the city centre including Milton Road (25% increases), Chesterton Road (43-46%), Cherry Hinton High Street (19-25%), Queen Edith's, and Arbury (approximately 20%).
2. That business rates are a nationally controlled tax, the proceeds of which are controlled by central government, with local councils only collecting them on Government's behalf and receiving a small incentive for increases in the total raised in their areas.
3. That these increases coincide with the removal of 40% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief affecting 230,000 small firms across England, meaning actual bills for neighbourhood shops will increase by several hundred percent over the next three years despite so-called 'transitional protections'.
4. That the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has warned of 'three years of business rates misery' with an average 52% hike in bills for small businesses such as cafés, shops and hairdressers, describing this as a 'tax timebomb' that threatens high streets and the jobs and services they provide.
5. That the Government has raised new funds from a high-value multiplier which it has the power to use to support retail, hospitality and leisure sectors but has chosen not to, leaving most of the high street without adequate support.
6. That the VOA operates geographical 'valuation schemes' grouping streets together, with neighbourhood shopping areas serving less affluent communities systematically facing higher increases than city centre areas.
7. That businesses in these neighbourhood areas provide essential local services, affordable goods, and employment to Cambridge's less affluent communities.

This Council believes:

8. That forcing neighbourhood shops to raise prices or close makes the cost of living crisis worse for families across Cambridge who can least afford it.
9. That viable local shopping areas are essential for community cohesion and supporting residents who cannot easily travel to city centre retail.
10. That there is no rational justification for neighbourhood shopping areas serving deprived communities to face massive increases of 20-46%.

11. That the Government has raised new revenue from high-value properties which could be used to support small businesses but has chosen to provide only limited relief to pubs and music venues while leaving most of the high street without adequate support.
12. That the removal of meaningful RHL relief, combined with aggressive revaluation, threatens the survival of neighbourhood shops across Cambridge.
13. That the Government's transitional protections are wholly inadequate - allowing bills to increase by £800 per year or 15-25% over three years amounts to managed decline of our local high streets.
14. That businesses facing these increases will be forced to raise prices (increasing the cost of living for residents across Cambridge who can least afford it), reduce services, or close entirely.
15. That Labour's handling of business rates reform has been chaotic and poorly communicated, with the Government's own calculator withdrawn after providing incorrect figures, leaving businesses unable to plan with certainty.

This Council resolves:

16. To write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Cambridge's Members of Parliament calling on the Labour Government to provide meaningful relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses equivalent to the previous 40% support levels, using the new revenue raised from high-value properties, and urging Government to enact meaningful long-term reform by replacing business rates with a Commercial Landowner Levy (CLL) paid by property owners instead of tenants.
17. To write to the VOA demanding an explanation for the geographical disparities in rateable value increases across Cambridge, particularly why neighbourhood shopping areas are facing massive increases of 20-46%, and requesting an urgent review of the methodology used.

Councillor S. Smith proposed and Councillor **Nestor** seconded the following amendment to motion (deleted text ~~struck through~~ and additional text underlined):

Labour Amendment to Agenda Item 9b

Proposed by Councillor Simon Smith, seconded by Councillor Antoinette Nestor

Existing text ~~struck through~~, additional text underlined

UNFAIR BUSINESS RATES INCREASES THREATENING RELIEFS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS, HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE SECTORS

This Council notes:

- ~~1. That neighbourhood shopping areas across Cambridge are facing dramatic business rates increases from April 2026, with Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data showing particularly severe impacts in areas outside the city centre including Milton Road (25% increases), Chesterton Road (43-46%), Cherry Hinton High Street (19-25%), Queen Edith's, and Arbury (approximately 20%).~~
- ~~2. That business rates are a nationally controlled tax, the proceeds of which are controlled by central government, with local councils only collecting them on Government's behalf and receiving a small incentive for increases in the total raised in their areas.~~
- ~~3. That these increases coincide with the removal of 40% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief affecting 230,000 small firms across England, meaning actual bills for neighbourhood shops will increase by several hundred percent over the next three years despite so-called 'transitional protections'.~~
- ~~4. That the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has warned of 'three years of business rates misery' with an average 52% hike in bills for small businesses such as cafés, shops and hairdressers, describing this as a 'tax timebomb' that threatens high streets and the jobs and services they provide.~~
- ~~5. That the Government has raised new funds from a high-value multiplier which it has the power to use to support retail, hospitality and leisure sectors but has chosen not to, leaving most of the high street without adequate support.~~
- ~~6. That the VOA operates geographical 'valuation schemes' grouping streets together, with neighbourhood shopping areas serving less affluent communities systematically facing higher increases than city centre areas.~~
- ~~7. That businesses in these neighbourhood areas provide essential local services, affordable goods, and employment to Cambridge's less affluent communities.~~

~~**This Council believes:**~~

-
-
- ~~8. That forcing neighbourhood shops to raise prices or close makes the cost of living crisis worse for families across Cambridge who can least afford it.~~
 - ~~9. That viable local shopping areas are essential for community cohesion and supporting residents who cannot easily travel to city centre retail.~~
 - ~~10. That there is no rational justification for neighbourhood shopping areas serving deprived communities to face massive increases of 20-46%.~~
 - ~~11. That the Government has raised new revenue from high-value properties which could be used to support small businesses but has chosen to provide only limited relief to pubs and music venues while leaving most of the high street without adequate support.~~
 - ~~12. That the removal of meaningful RHL relief, combined with aggressive revaluation, threatens the survival of neighbourhood shops across Cambridge.~~
 - ~~13. That the Government's transitional protections are wholly inadequate – allowing bills to increase by £800 per year or 15-25% over three years amounts to managed decline of our local high streets.~~
 - ~~14. That businesses facing these increases will be forced to raise prices (increasing the cost of living for residents across Cambridge who can least afford it), reduce services, or close entirely.~~
 - ~~15. That Labour's handling of business rates reform has been chaotic and poorly communicated, with the Government's own calculator withdrawn after providing incorrect figures, leaving businesses unable to plan with certainty.~~
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This Council resolves:

—

- ~~16. To write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Cambridge's Members of Parliament calling on the Labour Government to provide meaningful relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses equivalent to the previous 40% support levels, using the new revenue raised from high-value properties, and urging Government to enact meaningful long-term reform by replacing business rates with a Commercial Landowner Levy (CLL) paid by property owners instead of tenants.~~

~~17. To write to the VOA demanding an explanation for the geographical disparities in rateable value increases across Cambridge, particularly why neighbourhood shopping areas are facing massive increases of 20-46%, and requesting an urgent review of the methodology used.~~

1. In April 2026, the Government introduced three changes to business rates. A revaluation based on market rents as of April 2024, five new multipliers and targeted reliefs. Taking each change in turn:

2. *Rateable Value*: This is the annual rent a property could fetch on the open market as estimated every three years by the Valuation Office Agency. The revaluations can therefore lead to increases and decreases according to market trends by location and sector. Businesses can challenge a new rateable value if they believe it is not justified.

3. *Multipliers*: Business rates are determined by a property's rateable value x national multiplier (poundage) set by the Government.

4. From 2026, the Government moved from a two-tier multiplier system (of 49.9p and 55.5p for properties with rateable values of less and more than £55k) to a five-tier system shown below.

5. This includes two permanently lower multipliers for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors which are part of a £4.3bn support package to manage changes in rateable values and loss of the Retail, Hospitality, Leisure relief. However, the revaluation changes and new lower multipliers may not necessarily result in higher business rates for businesses in this sector.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Property Type Rateable Value</u>	<u>2026/27 Multiplier</u>
<u>Small RHL</u>	<u>Retail, Hospitality, Leisure <£51k</u>	<u>38.2p</u>
<u>Standard RHL</u>	<u>Retail, Hospitality, Leisure £51- £499k</u>	<u>43p</u>
<u>Small Non-RTL</u>	<u>Other Sectors < £51k</u>	<u>43.2p</u>
<u>Standard Non-RTL</u>	<u>Other Sectors £51-£499k</u>	<u>48p</u>
<u>High-Value</u>	<u>All Properties > £500k</u>	<u>50.8p</u>

6. *Targeted support*: In addition to the lower multipliers, there are three main relief schemes:

7. Supporting Small Business Scheme 2026-29. This applies when a business has, due to the 2026 revaluation lost some or part of either their Small Business Rates relief, or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief, or 2023 Supporting Small Business relief.

8. If eligible, an increase in business rates would go up by the greater of either £800 or the following transitional relief percentage caps: 5% for properties with rateable values of up to £20,000, 15% for rateable values £20k to £100k and 30% for rateable values of more than £100k.

9. It is important to translate revaluation increases of 25% into the payable business rates bills and review what has happened since 2019.

For example, in 2019 a shop in the City was the subject of a rateable value of £19,500 and a business rates bill of £6,383. In 2026, the same property has a rateable value of £28,750 and a business rate bill of £7,919, after applying the new multiplier and Supporting Small Business Cap worth £287.50. This amounts to an increase of 24% over seven years against an increase in the Consumer Prices Index of 27.5%.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rateable Value £</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>	<u>Retail Hospitality Leisure Relief</u>	<u>Business Rates £</u>
<u>2019</u>	<u>19,500</u>	<u>0.49</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>6,383</u>
<u>2020</u>	<u>19,500</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<u>2021</u>	<u>19,500</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>100% Q1 66% Q2,3,4</u>	<u>2,483.54</u>
<u>2022</u>	<u>19,500</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>4,865.25</u>
<u>2023</u>	<u>23,000</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>2,797.52</u>
<u>2024</u>	<u>23,000</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>2,869.25</u>
<u>2025</u>	<u>23,000</u>	<u>0.499</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>6,886.20</u>
<u>2026</u>	<u>28,750</u>	<u>0.38</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>7,919.13</u>

In the intervening years, the shop has benefited from a rates free year, and temporary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief rates from 100% to 50%, and from 2026/27 a new lower and permanent multiplier of 38p in every £ in rateable value.

ii) Transitional relief: This caps business rate increases for properties over the three years 2026/27 – 2028/29 as follows:

<u>Ratable value</u>	<u>2026/27</u>	<u>2027/28</u>	<u>2028/29</u>
<u>Less than £20k</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>10% + inflation</u>	<u>25% + inflation</u>
<u>£20k to £100k</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>25% + inflation</u>	<u>40% + inflation</u>
<u>More than £100k</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>25% + inflation</u>	<u>25% + inflation</u>

11. iii) Pubs and Live Music Venues Relief. For 2026/27 eligible pubs and live music venues will receive after deducting other eligible reliefs a 15% business rates relief. Business rates will be frozen in real terms for two years from April 2027. This additional relief will benefit 89 pubs in the City.

12. The Council serves as the business rates collections authority on behalf of the Government. In the context of the various changes, the Council Collections team has been:

i) Providing reassurance to businesses concerned about how much their business rates bills will be by signposting them to online calculators and providing estimates and information on the support measures and how to appeal, and

ii) Working to ensure all applicable reliefs and adjustments are applied to the 2026/27 business rates bills which will be issued in March 2026. This will enable all businesses to see how their charge has been calculated and make informed decisions about whether to appeal. However, there may be cases where the exact nature of the business is unknown. Charge payers are encouraged to contact the Council if they believe a relief has not been applied.

13. The Treasury has stated restructuring of business rates for 2026/27 is designed to be revenue neutral overall but shifts the burden from smaller, in-person retail, hospitality and leisure properties to properties with rateable values over £500k, for example distribution warehouses. The British Property Federation claims the overall tax burden will increase by £1.7bn and complained about the burden on big businesses.

This Council believes:

14. Neighbourhood shops and local shopping areas provide residents with convenient access to goods and services, are vital for those with mobility issues and without access to a car and contribute to community cohesion and sense of place and belonging.

15. It has a significant responsibility to maintain the viability of its portfolio of local shops and shopping parades, redevelop them as required and secure provision in new developments through planning policies and development management practices.

16. Businesses whose premises are the subject of hard-to-justify increases in rateable values be encouraged to appeal.

17. Businesses with concerns about their eligibility for the various reliefs be encouraged to seek advice from the Council's collections team.

18. It would be misleading to make claims about 'massive increases' in business rates and consequential increases in retail prices, reductions in services and closures in advance of comprehensive evidence of the impacts in monetary terms.

19. It would be prudent to request and review such evidence before any resolution could be justified to make representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Cambridge's MP's and Valuation Office Agency.

This Council resolves:

20. The Council will use its discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (as amended) to grant the Pubs and Live

Music Venues Relief and claim full reimbursement from the Government in accordance with its expanded guidance (Business Rates Information Letters 1/2026 and 3/2026).

21. Request officers to provide further information – in monetary terms – on the financial impacts of the new rateable valuations, multipliers and relief schemes on neighbourhood shops, hospitality and leisure sectors.

The amendment was **carried by 22 votes to 10 with 5 abstentions.**

Resolved (by 35 votes to 0 with 1 abstention) that:

This Council notes:

1. In April 2026, the Government introduced three changes to business rates. A revaluation based on market rents as of April 2024, five new multipliers and targeted reliefs. Taking each change in turn:

2. *Rateable Value*: This is the annual rent a property could fetch on the open market as estimated every three years by the Valuation Office Agency. The revaluations can therefore lead to increases and decreases according to market trends by location and sector. Businesses can challenge a new rateable value if they believe it is not justified.

3. *Multipliers*: Business rates are determined by a property's rateable value x national multiplier (poundage) set by the Government.

4. From 2026, the Government moved from a two-tier multiplier system (of 49.9p and 55.5p for properties with rateable values of less and more than £55k) to a five-tier system shown below.

5. This includes two permanently lower multipliers for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors which are part of a £4.3bn support package to manage changes in rateable values and loss of the Retail, Hospitality, Leisure relief. However, the revaluation changes and new lower multipliers may not necessarily result in higher business rates for businesses in this sector.

Category	Property Type Rateable Value	2026/27 Multiplier
Small RHL	Retail, Hospitality, Leisure <£51k	38.2p
Standard RHL	Retail, Hospitality, Leisure £51-£499k	43p
Small Non-RTL	Other Sectors < £51k	43.2p
Standard Non-RTL	Other Sectors £51-£499k	48p
High-Value	All Properties > £500k	50.8p

6. *Targeted support:* In addition to the lower multipliers, there are three main relief schemes:

7. Supporting Small Business Scheme 2026-29. This applies when a business has, due to the 2026 revaluation lost some or part of either their Small Business Rates relief, or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief, or 2023 Supporting Small Business relief.

8. If eligible, an increase in business rates would go up by the greater of either £800 or the following transitional relief percentage caps: 5% for properties with rateable values of up to £20,000, 15% for rateable values £20k to £100k and 30% for rateable values of more than £100k.

9. It is important to translate revaluation increases of 25% into the payable business rates bills and review what has happened since 2019.

For example, in 2019 a shop in the City was the subject of a rateable value of £19,500 and a business rates bill of £6,383. In 2026, the same property has a rateable value of £28,750 and a business rate bill of £7,919, after applying the new multiplier and Supporting Small Business Cap worth £287.50. This amounts to an increase of 24% over seven years against an increase in the Consumer Prices Index of 27.5%.

Year	Rateable Value £	Multiplier	Retail Hospitality Leisure Relief	Business Rates £
2019	19,500	0.49	33%	6,383
2020	19,500	0.499	100%	0.00
2021	19,500	0.499	100% Q1 66% Q2,3,4	2,483.54
2022	19,500	0.499	50%	4,865.25
2023	23,000	0.499	75%	2,797.52
2024	23,000	0.499	75%	2,869.25
2025	23,000	0.499	50%	6,886.20
2026	28,750	0.38	0%	7,919.13

In the intervening years, the shop has benefited from a rates free year, and temporary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief rates from 100% to 50%, and from 2026/27 a new lower and permanent multiplier of 38p in every £ in rateable value.

ii) Transitional relief: This caps business rate increases for properties over the three years 2026/27 – 2028/29 as follows:

Ratable value	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Less than £20k	5%	10% + inflation	25% + inflation

£20k to £100k	15%	25% + inflation	40% + inflation
More than £100k	30%	25% + inflation	25% + inflation

11. iii) Pubs and Live Music Venues Relief. For 2026/27 eligible pubs and live music venues will receive after deducting other eligible reliefs a 15% business rates relief. Business rates will be frozen in real terms for two years from April 2027. This additional relief will benefit 89 pubs in the City.

12. The Council serves as the business rates collections authority on behalf of the Government. In the context of the various changes, the Council Collections team has been:

i) Providing reassurance to businesses concerned about how much their business rates bills will be by signposting them to online calculators and providing estimates and information on the support measures and how to appeal, and

ii) Working to ensure all applicable reliefs and adjustments are applied to the 2026/27 business rates bills which will be issued in March 2026. This will enable all businesses to see how their charge has been calculated and make informed decisions about whether to appeal. However, there may be cases where the exact nature of the business is unknown. Charge payers are encouraged to contact the Council if they believe a relief has not been applied.

13. The Treasury has stated restructuring of business rates for 2026/27 is designed to be revenue neutral overall but shifts the burden from smaller, in-person retail, hospitality and leisure properties to properties with rateable values over £500k, for example distribution warehouses. The British Property Federation claims the overall tax burden will increase by £1.7bn and complained about the burden on big businesses.

This Council believes:

14. Neighbourhood shops and local shopping areas provide residents with convenient access to goods and services, are vital for those with mobility issues and without access to a car and contribute to community cohesion and sense of place and belonging.

15. It has a significant responsibility to maintain the viability of its portfolio of local shops and shopping parades, redevelop them as required and secure provision in new developments through planning policies and development management practices.

16. Businesses whose premises are the subject of hard-to-justify increases in rateable values be encouraged to appeal,

17. Businesses with concerns about their eligibility for the various reliefs be encouraged to seek advice from the Council's collections team.

18. It would be misleading to make claims about 'massive increases' in business rates and consequential increases in retail prices, reductions in

services and closures in advance of comprehensive evidence of the impacts in monetary terms.

19. It would be prudent to request and review such evidence before any resolution could be justified to make representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Cambridge's MP's and Valuation Office Agency.

This Council resolves:

20. The Council will use its discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (as amended) to grant the Pubs and Live Music Venues Relief and claim full reimbursement from the Government in accordance with its expanded guidance (Business Rates Information Letters 1/2026 and 3/2026).

21. Request officers to provide further information – in monetary terms – on the financial impacts of the new rateable valuations, multipliers and relief schemes on neighbourhood shops, hospitality and leisure sectors.

26/18/CNL Councillor Gardiner-Smith: Holiday Voucher Scheme

Councillor Gardiner-Smith proposed and Councillor A. Smith seconded the following motion:

This Council notes:

- The Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme was championed by Labour and introduced in 2023 by the Joint Administration at Cambridgeshire County Council.
- The scheme provides over 20,000 thousand school-aged children with access to nutritious meals during school holidays.
- The scheme makes a very real and practical difference to struggling families — the equivalent of £15 per week per child during the 12 weeks of school holidays for the worst-off households in our county.
- The Liberal Democrat administration at Cambridgeshire County Council proposed and voted through a County Council budget for 2026-27 that scraps this vital lifeline for vulnerable children and their families from September 2026.
 - The cuts came just a month after the UK government confirmed it was increasing direct funding to Cambridgeshire County Council by 28.8%.
 - The cuts are in marked contrast to the food justice work being supported by Cambridge City Council, which includes support for holiday activity and lunch clubs across the city.

- The Liberal Democrat County Councillors sided with Conservative and Reform UK councillors to vote down the Labour group's fully costed amendment, which would have ensured vulnerable families received this vital support until 2029.

This council resolves to:

- Condemn the decision by Cambridgeshire County Council to cut the holiday vouchers scheme and call on the County Council to support Labour's proposal to keep the scheme.
- Thank the many voluntary and community groups who work alongside Cambridge City Council for food justice in Cambridge.

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

Holiday Voucher Scheme

~~This Council notes:~~

- ~~• The Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme was championed by Labour and introduced in 2023 by the Joint Administration at Cambridgeshire County Council.~~
- ~~• The scheme provides over 20,000 thousand school-aged children with access to nutritious meals during school holidays.~~
- ~~• The scheme makes a very real and practical difference to struggling families — the equivalent of £15 per week per child during the 12 weeks of school holidays for the worst-off households in our county.~~
- ~~• The Liberal Democrat administration at Cambridgeshire County Council proposed and voted through a County Council budget for 2026-27 that scraps this vital lifeline for vulnerable children and their families from September 2026.~~
- ~~○ The cuts came just a month after the UK government confirmed it was increasing direct funding to Cambridgeshire County Council by 28.8%.~~
- ~~○ The cuts are in marked contrast to the food justice work being supported by Cambridge City Council, which includes support for holiday activity and lunch clubs across the city.~~
- The Liberal Democrat county councillors sided with Conservative and Reform UK councillors to vote down the Labour group's fully costed

~~amendment, which would have ensured vulnerable families received this vital support until 2029.~~

~~This council resolves to:~~

- ~~• Condemn the decision by Cambridgeshire County Council to cut the holiday vouchers scheme and call on the County Council to support Labour's proposal to keep the scheme.~~
- ~~• Thank the many voluntary and community groups who work alongside Cambridge City Council for food justice in Cambridge.~~

Council Notes:

Cambridgeshire County Council has provided holiday meal vouchers since 2021, becoming one of the first councils to top up Government funding to ensure no child goes hungry during school holidays

The scheme previously cost approximately £5 million per year: £1.5 million from the County Council and £3.5 million from the Government's Household Support Fund

In January 2026, the Labour Government ended the Household Support Fund and replaced it with the Crisis and Resilience Fund

The Labour Government's statutory framework for the Crisis and Resilience Fund (paragraph 44) explicitly states: "This may not be through the blanket provision of vouchers to those on free-school meals"

The County Council's Section 151 Officer confirmed this was also the case Without additional County Council funding, thousands of vulnerable children would have gone without food support during school holidays in 2026

Cambridgeshire County Council has provided £2.7 million to continue supporting families with holiday meal costs, adding an extra £1 million to bridge the gap left by the Labour Government ending the Household Support Fund

This funding will ensure vulnerable children continue to receive support with food during school holidays whilst the County Council implements the Labour Government's new statutory framework for needs-based crisis support

The Labour Government increased general funding to Cambridgeshire County Council, but simultaneously cut the specific £3.5 million that funded holiday meal vouchers

Cambridge City Council supports food justice work across the city and recognises the vital importance of ensuring no child goes hungry

This Council Resolves to:

Call on the Labour Government to restore the £3.5 million annual funding for holiday meal support that they cut when ending the Household Support Fund

Call on the Labour Government to amend paragraph 44 of the Crisis and Resilience Fund statutory framework guidance to permit councils to provide blanket holiday meal vouchers if they choose to do so
Thank Cambridgeshire County Council for providing £2.7 million to ensure vulnerable children continue to receive food support during school holidays
Thank the many voluntary and community groups who work alongside Cambridge City Council for food justice in Cambridge
Call on all Cambridge MPs to lobby the Labour Government to restore full funding for holiday meal support across the country

The amendment was **lost by 9 votes to 25 with 2 abstentions.**

Resolved (by 26 votes to 9 with 1 abstention) that:

This Council notes:

- The Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme was championed by Labour and introduced in 2023 by the Joint Administration at Cambridgeshire County Council.
- The scheme provides over 20,000 thousand school-aged children with access to nutritious meals during school holidays.
- The scheme makes a very real and practical difference to struggling families — the equivalent of £15 per week per child during the 12 weeks of school holidays for the worst-off households in our county.
- The Liberal Democrat administration at Cambridgeshire County Council proposed and voted through a County Council budget for 2026-27 that scraps this vital lifeline for vulnerable children and their families from September 2026.
 - The cuts came just a month after the UK government confirmed it was increasing direct funding to Cambridgeshire County Council by 28.8%.
 - The cuts are in marked contrast to the food justice work being supported by Cambridge City Council, which includes support for holiday activity and lunch clubs across the city.
- The Liberal Democrat County Councillors sided with Conservative and Reform UK councillors to vote down the Labour group's fully costed amendment, which would have ensured vulnerable families received this vital support until 2029.

This council resolves to:

- Condemn the decision by Cambridgeshire County Council to cut the holiday vouchers scheme and call on the County Council to support Labour's proposal to keep the scheme.
- Thank the many voluntary and community groups who work alongside Cambridge City Council for food justice in Cambridge.

26/19/CNL Councillor Ashton: Potholes Cambridge

Councillor Ashton proposed and Councillor Moore seconded the following motion:

This Council calls on Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council, who are in charge of pothole repairs, to take the urgent measures needed to reduce the current death traps Cambridge City residents face daily and to outline how this will be done.

This Council notes:

According to the County Council's own figures, there are currently 5600 potholes needing repair^[1]. They state that they are fixing over 1000 per week. This would mean we should expect the residents of Cambridge to see an end to the current holes in 6 weeks' time.

A survey by go.compare found that Cambridgeshire has the highest number of potholes reported in England and Wales: 22 potholes per mile of road.

The Labour Government is investing £188m in road repairs and resurfacing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough over the next four years.

This Council resolves:

That the Leader of Cambridge City Council should write to the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight this Council's serious concerns for our residents' health and safety when using our roads.

To call on Cambridge's MPs to write to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight the concerns of our residents.

The Council asks that those City Councillors who also sit on the County council, representing Queen Ediths and Abbey Wards, ensure that action is taken to prevent the roads becoming even more of a death trap for users.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/more-highways-officers-for-pothole-season>

Councillor Young proposed and Councillor Martinelli seconded the following amendment to motion (deleted text struck through and additional text underlined):

This Council calls on:

~~Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council, who are in charge of pothole repairs, to take the urgent measures needed to reduce the current death traps Cambridge City residents face daily and to outline how this will be done.~~

~~This Council notes:~~

~~According to the County Council's own figures, there are currently 5600 potholes needing repairⁱⁱⁱ. They state that they are fixing over 1000 per week. This would mean we should expect the residents of Cambridge to see an end to the current holes in 6 weeks' time.~~

~~A survey by go.compare found that Cambridgeshire has the highest number of potholes reported in England and Wales: 22 potholes per mile of road.~~

~~The Labour Government is investing £188m in road repairs and resurfacing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough over the next four years.~~

~~This Council resolves:~~

~~That the Leader of Cambridge City Council should write to the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight this Council's serious concerns for our residents' health and safety when using our roads.~~

~~To call on Cambridge's MPs to write to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight the concerns of our residents.~~

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<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/more-highways-officers-for-pothole-season>

This Council notes with concern the ongoing challenge of road maintenance across Cambridge, while recognising that the root causes of this crisis demand honest acknowledgement rather than political point-scoring.

This Council further notes:

That Cambridgeshire County Council inherited from the previous Conservative administration a highways department in a state of managed decline, with a maintenance backlog of £800 million, no adequate asset management systems, no leadership, and a highways maintenance contract described by council officers themselves as unfit for purpose.

That the Liberal Democrat-led Cambridgeshire County Council has more than doubled the capital maintenance programme from £24 million in 2023/24 to £59 million per annum, and has instigated a root and branch highways change programme with 55 different projects across 3 phases.

That the total capital highways maintenance funding for Cambridgeshire in 2025/26 amounts to £58.3 million, comprising £31.7 million from the Department for Transport, £20 million of additional funding sourced by the Liberal Democrat-led County Council, £3.5 million of additional County Council maintenance funding, and £3.1 million from the A14 grant — meaning that £23.1 million of the total represents funding the Liberal Democrat County Council has found itself, over and above central government provision.

That the Labour Group at Cambridgeshire County Council voted against this additional funding from 2027, a decision that would have returned the county's highways to a state of managed decline.

That the Labour Government's additional contribution to Cambridgeshire road repairs this financial year was £5.8 million in practice — not the £8.1 million billed publicly, as £2.3 million of existing grant was simultaneously removed.

That Cambridgeshire County Council requires approximately £59 million per year simply to maintain its road network at a steady state — a figure consistent with the Government's own funding formula, which indicates Cambridgeshire alone requires £230 million over four years — leaving an annual funding gap of £27 million. The £188 million referenced in national and local Labour communications covers the entire Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region over four years, not Cambridgeshire alone, and is wholly inadequate to address either the steady state requirement or the £800 million inherited backlog.

That whilst the Labour Government's 2024 general election manifesto pledged to fill one million additional potholes per year, the capital maintenance funding subsequently provided to local authorities cannot be used for pothole filling — meaning the Government has broken its own manifesto commitment, as confirmed by independent national analysis.

That certain roads in Cambridgeshire, particularly those crossing peat fenland, cost up to four times more to repair than standard roads and deteriorate significantly faster due to geological conditions, yet the Government's highways maintenance funding formula makes no provision whatsoever for geological variation — a fact raised in the House of Commons by the Liberal

Democrat Member of Parliament for St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire, who called on the Secretary of State for Transport to either create a dedicated budget for peat-affected roads or adjust the formula accordingly.

That the Secretary of State for Transport, in response to that Parliamentary question, confirmed only that she would raise the matter with the Roads Minister — and that no substantive response has since been received.

That ring-fenced funding from central government cannot be redirected between purposes: Active Travel England cycling funds cannot be used for pothole repairs, and pothole-filling revenue budgets are a separate and highly constrained stream. Conflating these figures to mislead residents is not acceptable.

That the Government's own assessment of Cambridgeshire County Council's highways performance has awarded a green rating for spend, confirming that the Liberal Democrat administration is investing appropriately, and that the road maintenance crisis is a consequence of historic underfunding rather than current council decisions.

This Council believes:

That the £188 million referenced in the original motion as a Labour Government investment represents a four-year Cambridgeshire and Peterborough-wide commitment that, while welcome, is insufficient to maintain the current state, let alone to address an £800 million backlog in Cambridgeshire.

That a Government which pledges to fill one million potholes in its manifesto, then provides funding that cannot legally be spent on filling potholes, owes Cambridge residents an explanation.

That Cambridge residents deserve an MP who raises their concerns about roads in Parliament, rather than one who limits their contribution to social media announcements of funding that was already committed.

That Cambridge residents deserve honesty about who is responsible for decades of road neglect, and that blaming those now working hard to repair the damage does a disservice to residents — particularly when the Government responsible for decades of underfunding sits in Westminster.

This Council resolves:

To write to the Secretary of State for Transport calling for a multi-year, ring-fence-free road maintenance settlement that properly reflects the scale of the inherited backlog in Cambridgeshire, and for an urgent review of the highways funding formula to account for geological conditions including peat fenland roads.

To call on Cambridge's Labour MP to raise in the House of Commons the specific funding crisis facing Cambridgeshire's roads, including the inadequacy of the current funding formula and the £27 million annual funding gap.

To call on Cambridge's Labour MP to seek an urgent substantive response from the Roads Minister following the Secretary of State's commitment to raise the issue of peat-affected road funding, made in response to a Parliamentary question from the Liberal Democrat Member for St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire.

To note the significant and measurable progress being made by the Liberal Democrat-led Cambridgeshire County Council in reversing years of Conservative neglect, including the Government's own green rating for highways spend, and to encourage continued close working between the City and County Councils to prioritise road safety for Cambridge residents.

The amendment was **lost by 9 votes to 23 with 4 abstentions.**

Resolved (by 28 votes to 9) that:

This Council calls on Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council, who are in charge of pothole repairs, to take the urgent measures needed to reduce the current death traps Cambridge City residents face daily and to outline how this will be done.

This Council notes:

According to the County Council's own figures, there are currently 5600 potholes needing repair^[1]. They state that they are fixing over 1000 per week. This would mean we should expect the residents of Cambridge to see an end to the current holes in 6 weeks' time.

A survey by go.compare found that Cambridgeshire has the highest number of potholes reported in England and Wales: 22 potholes per mile of road.

The Labour Government is investing £188m in road repairs and resurfacing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough over the next four years.

This Council resolves:

That the Leader of Cambridge City Council should write to the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight this Council's serious concerns for our residents' health and safety when using our roads.

To call on Cambridge's MPs to write to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight the concerns of our residents.

The Council asks that those City Councillors who also sit on the County Council, representing Queen Ediths and Abbey Wards, ensure that action is taken to prevent the roads becoming even more of a death trap for users.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/more-highways-officers-for-pothole-season>

26/20/CNL Written questions

Members were asked to note the written questions and answers that had been placed in the information pack circulated around the Chamber.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

CHAIR