

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2023

‘Urgent’ additional spend on crematorium for Mepal

We reported last month that the ruling group on East Cambridgeshire District Council had used special ‘urgency’ procedures to give themselves permission to spend an additional £30,000 on ‘more detailed advice relating to the application of VAT on the capital build and proposals for the delivery model of the facility should it get approval’.

The crematorium was not a subject for debate at the meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee on 28 September, nor an item on the agenda for the meeting of the Full Council on 19 October. Why the urgency?

East Cambs Street Scene

A damning report on East Cambs Street Scene has been published following a ‘wide-ranging review undertaken by the Chief Executive’—himself a director of the ECSS Board.

The review, which was initiated by the Council’s Audit Committee following pressure from Mark and from Liberal Democrat Audit spokes Cllr Charlotte Cane, has concluded, among other things, that

- the formal reporting to the ECSS Board and to ECDC Member bodies did not fully reflect the emerging financial pressures facing ECSS;
- whilst the majority of the overspend in 2022/23 (£314k out of a total overspend of £458k) was not quantifiable until after the conclusion of staff consultation in November 2022 and it would have been inappropriate to have done so, there were other cost pressures which should have been reported formally to ECSS and ECDC earlier in the financial year;
- there are governance failures in relation to [the] Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which does not provide a formal mechanism to escalate known and projected overspends to the Council and its shareholder committee.

The report then goes on to list the ‘considerable challenges’ facing the service operationally and strategically, including

- the strategic challenges facing the service are escalating with the impact of legislation both on the waste collection and the disposal authority and the review of the Council’s waste and recycling service due by 2025.

- changes to the residual and inherent score for [risk] A6 leading to a change in the current RAG rating to Red;
- clarifying the description of A6 to ensure focus on the delivery of the whole of the Business Plan including financial and performance risks;
- a new corporate risk related to the Waste and Recycling service exclusively on the Council as a strategic player and as a client which will also be rated as Red;
- acknowledgement and support for short term urgent changes to [the] MOA (as recommended to Council, 19 October 2023);
- recommendation to the Operational Services Committee to begin preparations for the review of the Waste and Recycling service.

The recommendations include a management restructuring. We are not surprised by the findings, having expressed concerns for so long, but are shocked at the extent of the issues and how long it has taken to force the truth from the Council.

Constitutional review

The Council has set up a working group, of which Lorna is a member, to review elements of the Council's constitution. The process should conclude with a report to the Full Council in February 2024.

Meet your councillors

Our next surgeries are

- Monday 6 November, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 4 December, 6:30-7:30PM

in the Community Room at Sutton School. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

Cllr Mark Inskip

District Councillors for the Sutton ward