

District Councillors' Report to Parish Councils October 2024

Operational Services Committee

The following was agreed at this meeting on Monday 23 September:

- the Committee was currently projecting a yearend overspend of £135,000 on revenue, when compared to its approved budget of £7,134,292; the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £3,656,199, an underspend of £1,000,000 (allocated to new bins, see below) when compared to its revised budget.
- the Council implements the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing proposals, to wit:
 1. collect food waste in a separate container, on a weekly basis by 31 March 2026,
 2. the collection of residual waste in a 180lt wheeled bin fortnightly,
 3. a free fortnightly garden waste collection service and the possibility of a second garden waste bin for free,
 4. fortnightly collection of recycling as at present,

the aim is to increase the recycling by residents. Exceptions will be made for larger households and those houses that have no storage facilities which will be given coloured bags as now. Comprehensive information will be disseminated to all residents well in advance to help with a smooth transition.

- retain the current street cleansing service specification, and review it in one year's time
- to proceed with using East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS) even though it was still not performing to target.

Finance & Assets Committee

The following decisions were made at the meeting on Thursday 26 September:

- introduction of a £70 fine for misdeclaration of Council Tax discounts,
- there is a projected underspend of £197,000 on revenue,
- there is a projected underspend of £1,000,000 on capital, due to the loan to ECTC not being fully taken up,
- The Hedgehog Recovery Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document was formerly adopted, after comments from consultees had been considered,
- Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme was approved; £150,000 to be allocated to villages for improving community premises; applications for up to £30,000 to be sent in by the end of the year. This grant is open to Parish Councils and community organisations.
- Council Officers now predict an 'overall increase in costs' for the planned crematorium at Mepal, and an attempt by Liberal Democrats on the committee to refer the cost rises to a Full Council meeting next month was rejected by a block vote of Conservative Councillors;

the details of the increased costs were in a confidential report, but the published papers state that the rise is 'largely made up of a gap in the projects contingency budget and an increase in build costs'; the escalating costs for the crematorium, already predicted to cost over £9 million, have substantial implications for the project, and further work is being undertaken and further costs are being incurred without this coming back to the Full Council for consideration of the new information; Charlotte pointed out that the tight timescale and restricted times of year for working on a biodiverse site would also lead to cost increases; John said that changing the scheme to keep it within the budget would not deliver the project the Council had approved.