

Cambridgeshire County Council

Joint Administration agreement

between the Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Independent groups

Introduction

On 6 May 2021 residents in Cambridgeshire voted for change in removing a Conservative majority Council. The Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Independent Groups believe we have a duty to change the direction of the Council to reflect that vote, and to work towards a greener, fairer, and more caring Cambridgeshire.

Our key priorities for the term of this Council must be Covid recovery, for individuals and communities, and tackling the climate emergency. These priorities will require further investment in Cambridgeshire. We aim to work constructively with the Mayor and Combined Authority in the achievement of these policy objectives.

1. Environment, sustainability, and the climate emergency

We will put climate change and biodiversity at the heart of the Council's work and at the heart of its land management strategy. As the holder of the largest County farms estate in England and Wales the Council has a significant direct role to play.

We commit to reviewing the Council's Sustainability Strategy, with the aim of moving forward the Net Zero target for Cambridgeshire County Council towards 2030. All spending and investment decisions will be made in the context of meeting the Net Zero strategy, and social and environmental criteria will be given equal weight to financial criteria in all contracting.

We will undertake a major tree-planting programme wherever appropriate across the county, and look for other ways to promote biodiversity and increase Cambridgeshire's natural capital. We support the principles of Cambridgeshire ACRE's Fens Biosphere project, and will actively work with them and with other partners to further develop these proposals.

2. Communities

We will tackle poverty, create opportunity, promote diversity, and do all we can to foster inclusion across the county. We will revive, further develop, and implement an anti-poverty strategy for Cambridgeshire.

We will encourage and participate in place-based partnerships with District Councils and the Greater Cambridge Partnership where possible, to avoid duplication in local arrangements. We will task officers to consult with District Councils and other partners on ways to devolve more of the Council's budget to be managed locally. The CJAC model in Cambridge, with County and District Councillors sitting on a committee together to make decisions for their area, has worked well in the past. This model could be expanded to include more services and to include parish councils.

We will continue to develop the concept of community hubs, and along with our partners seek to offer a broader range of services from them. We will aim to offer more accessible services such as youth services and children's centres, to provide more help for young people and families. We will keep the county's libraries open, in public ownership, and ensure their services remain free for everyone on Universal Credit.

3. Health and care

We believe all residents in need of care deserve this to be provided equitably and to be of high quality. We will launch a new initiative on early prevention strategies. We will champion the concept of independent living, using personal budgets and direct payments for those who choose, and explore directly provided residential care and community-based models where possible.

We will adopt a 'health in all policies' approach, as advocated by the World Health Organisation. Mindful of the importance of clean air for public health, we will increase air quality monitoring across Cambridgeshire, including in villages as well as in towns, cities, and along major trunk roads. We will also be watchful of the rise of 'long COVID' and its effects on public health.

4. Children and education

We will campaign to keep state nursery schools open, to keep schools in local authority control, and for fair funding for Cambridgeshire schools.

We will maintain free school meals for eligible children during school holidays, and work with schools and partners to widen the network of breakfast clubs in schools during term-time.

We recognise and are deeply concerned by the challenges for children with special educational needs to access Education Health & Care Plans, and will campaign hard for all children to receive the specialist help they need within state education.

We will seek to open up constructive relationships and engagement with local academy schools.

5. Transport

We will focus on modal shift to encourage more residents out of their cars, along with infrastructure development, the encouragement of sustainable travel, and securing safe routes and connections for pedestrians and cyclists. We will consult communities openly and transparently on highways projects that affect them. We will seek to invest more in road, footway, and cycleway maintenance and routine gully clearance, and end the freeze on residents' parking schemes.

We will continue to work on ways in which we can limit HGVs rat-running through villages and urban communities. In partnership with local communities, we will make the option of 20MPH zones more widely available, and easier to obtain.

6. Finance, growth and commercial investment

The new administration will immediately initiate a full review of Council finances, including major projects and the Council's Transformation Fund, and impose a temporary freeze on such schemes until the review has been completed.

One of the new administration's first tasks will be to work on a Covid Recovery Plan for the county, its businesses, and its citizens. It will also start a radical overhaul or replacement of the Council's development company 'This Land' with the aim of redirecting it towards building genuinely affordable housing and supported living facilities.

The Council will pay the Real Living Wage for all its employees and work towards achieving Real Living Wage Foundation accreditation including all contractors, with monitoring to ensure continuous progress towards meeting it. It will balance this with its wish to offer full opportunities to small and local providers to bid for and win contracts.

There will be a presumption that existing direct services will remain directly provided, and consideration will be given to returning contracted-out services as they come up for review or renewal. All spending decisions will be assessed for their impact on residents living in deprivation and on the population as a whole, with a commitment to fairness in overall allocation and to monitoring.

Our Joint Administration will come to power after years of Government cuts which leave our vital services chronically under-funded compared to the needs of the people we seek to serve. We will champion Cambridgeshire's case to receive adequate funding to deliver our services and to utilise all options available to us to invest in our services and our people. We will also seek economies and efficiencies where possible, and budget prudently to avoid making excessive demands on taxpayers.

7. Governance

The Government may initiate moves towards local government reorganisation. We recognise there may be different views about the ideal structures amongst the parties, councils at different levels, business and citizens. However, if the Government does move forward on this issue, we express our common view that it is best to devolve power as close as possible to people and local communities and for our Joint Administration to engage fully in the process and ensure that it is fully prepared to do so in advance.

We believe the Council must act openly and transparently in order to maintain the confidence of the public. We will therefore work with council officers to publish the long-awaited 'Farmgate' report to the greatest possible extent, and as soon as possible.

8. Work with the Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership

We will seek to form strong and positive partnerships as members of the Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership in the areas of public health, support for business, climate change, public transport, and building affordable, sustainable homes. We will work with the Greater Cambridge Partnership to achieve a sustainable bus network for Greater Cambridge.

Annex A: Working arrangements

1. Leadership Team

- 1.1. The Liberal Democrat Group will receive the Leadership of the Council, and the Labour Group will receive the Deputy Leadership of the Council.
- 1.2. The Leader and Deputy Leader will seek to work in close cooperation at all times, and to undertake liaison meetings with officers and other internal meetings jointly, sharing information, and undertaking consultations on any decision-making.
- 1.3. For external communications—including policy announcements, media initiatives and external representations—the Leader and Deputy Leader will rotate on approximately a 2:1 basis by mutual agreement.
- 1.4. The Leader and Deputy Leader will jointly act as the representative voice of the Council with outside organisations—including Central Government, Local Authority Associations and Council partners—and positively promote the Council as a whole to the media. Internally the Leader and Deputy Leader will jointly represent the Council's leadership to the Strategic Management Team (SMT) or Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
- 1.5. As Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Strategy & Resources Committee, the Leader and Deputy Leader will cooperate closely in undertaking the business of the Committee and jointly provide political leadership for the Committee in developing and delivering Council-wide strategy and good financial management.
- 1.6. The Joint Administration aims to work together in a spirit of equal partnership, to ensure the Joint Administration is effective, coherent and stable. Both parties accept joint responsibility to promote a good working culture, not simply between Leader and Deputy Leader, but through their leadership of their respective parties.

2. Appointments

- 2.1. Committee Chair and Vice Chair positions will be distributed on a 4:2:1 basis, with the Vice Chair being from another party to that of the Chair. Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs will fully engage with officers and committee activities on a joint basis, including all pre-meetings.
- 2.2. All external appointments will be made on the same 4:2:1 basis. Officers will maintain a register and new appointments will be allocated on a 'next turn' basis.
- 2.3. A member of the Independent Group will Chair the Council for the first two years.
- 2.4. The Liberal Democrat Leader of the Council or their nominee will be the Council's member of the Combined Authority Board. The Deputy Leader or their nominee will be the alternate, and will attend a minimum of 25 per cent of Combined Authority Board meetings. The representative and alternate will meet in advance of Board meetings to agree a common approach for forthcoming issues, and agree not to vote if there is disagreement. The distribution of positions for the current three committees will be two Liberal Democrats (Housing & Communities Committee, and Skills Committee) and one Labour member (Transport & Infrastructure Committee).
- 2.5. The Labour Deputy Leader of the Council or their nominee will be the Council's representative to the Greater Cambridge Partnership Board. The Liberal Democrat alternate will attend a minimum of 25 per cent of Board meetings. The representative and alternate will meet in advance of Board meetings to agree a common approach for forthcoming issues, and agree not to vote if there is disagreement. Representation on the Greater Cambridge Partnership Assembly will be two Liberal Democrats and one Labour member.
- 2.6. A moratorium will be placed on any new senior (Director level and above) appointments shared with Peterborough; all new senior appointments will be made for Cambridgeshire County Council only.

3. Communications

- 3.1. All speeches, presentations and other communications will refer to the County Council using the terminology 'Joint Administration'.
- 3.2. Announcements—including news releases, response to interview requests—at Committee level will be made by Committee Chairs according to subject area. Announcements on behalf of the Council as a whole will be made by the Leader or Deputy Leader on the basis indicated in 1.3 above.

4. Budget-making

- 4.1. A working group will be established consisting of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the three groups within the Joint Administration to undertake all engagement with officers in the preparation of each successive budget, with papers commonly shared with all members of the working group. Budget proposals will be tabled at the Strategy & Resources Committee to restore the right of Opposition members to scrutinise proposals.

5. Committees

- 5.1. The Committee structure as at Annex A below will be implemented, with a committee size of 15 members for the main service committees, to allow for a Labour membership of two on each committee, and Independent representation of one per committee.
- 5.2. Positions on non-service committees will be allocated to as closely as is reasonable to a 4:2:1 apportionment between the groups in the Joint Administration.
- 5.3. The Council and its committees will move to quarterly meetings, with additional reserve days for additional meetings if necessary.

6. Voting

- 6.1. All parties in the Joint Administration agree to Whip in support of the Budget, confidence motions and on issues covered by this Agreement and where there is consensus between Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Independent groups when agreed at Committee level. On issues outside the Agreement or where there is no consensus, Groups will determine their own Whips.

7. Monitoring the operation of the Agreement

- 7.1. Periodic meetings of the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of all party groups within the Joint Administration will be convened to review the implementation of the agreement. Any disputes will be resolved informally if possible between parties, but meetings of this review group can be called at a maximum of one week's notice at any party's request including Independent members. Amendments to this Agreement will be made only by joint agreement of all parties.
- 7.2. This Agreement will run until the 2023 County Council AGM, with six monthly reviews of how the agreement is working and the option to renew following 2023.

8. Maintaining the spirit of the Agreement

- 8.1. All parties commit to seek to act in good faith according to this agreement, to maintain constructive dialogue, to be open to alternative views, to be open and inclusive in sharing information with each other and to ensure 'no surprises'. Where there is genuine disagreement, expression of alternative viewpoints is accepted, without compromising the principles of this Agreement.

Annex B: Committees

	Chair	Vice Chair
Strategy & Resources	Liberal Democrat (Leader of Council)	Labour (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Adults & Health	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Children, Young People & Skills	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Communities, Social Mobility & inclusion	independent	Labour
Environment & Green Investment	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Highways & Transport	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Combined Authority	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Greater Cambridge Partnership	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Lead on Fire Authority	Liberal Democrat	TBA
Health and Wellbeing Board	Liberal Democrat	[Member from Peterborough]
Chair of Council	Independent	Liberal Democrat
Chair of Planning	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Chair of Audit and Accounts	Liberal Democrats	Conservative
Chair of Pension Fund	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Constitution & Ethics	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Staffing & Appeals	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Service Appeals	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Pension Investment Sub Committee	Liberal Democrat	Labour
Corporate parenting sub committee	Independent	Liberal Democrat

Signed by:

CLlr Lucy Nethsingha, Leader, Liberal Democrat Group

CLlr Elisa Meschini, Leader, Labour Group

CLlr Tom Sanderson, Leader, Independent Group

Friday 14 May 2021