



**CITY OF ELY
COUNCIL
SESSIONS HOUSE
LYNN ROAD
ELY
CAMBS CB7 4EG**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING & MAYOR MAKING
HELD AT 7.00 PM ON MONDAY, 12TH MAY 2025 AT THE MALTINGS, SHIP LANE, ELY**

PRESENT:

The Mayor, Cllr C Phillips
Cllr M Banyard
Cllr D Warman
Cllr R Trent
Cllr S Sandhu

Cllr R Denness
Cllr Ní Dhónaill
Cllr L Fox
Cllr R Ward

Cllr R Morgan
Cllr K Holtzmann
Cllr R Moss-Eccardt
Cllr C Whelan

Invited guests and dignitaries were also present

1. Election of the Chairman who shall thereupon, in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1972, become the Right Worshipful the Mayor of the City of Ely for the ensuing year 2025/2026

Cllr Warman proposed Cllr Michael Banyard to become The Right Worshipful the Mayor of the City of Ely for the ensuing year 2025/2026. She said that although Michael had only been with the council for a few years, he had during that time showed that he is thoughtful, kind and passionate about the City and its residents. He is always willing to engage with and help parishioners, as well as assisting fellow councillors. She had the pleasure of working with Michael as Vice-Chair of the Tourism Committee. He is always willing to go the extra mile in order to help the Committee and more than happy to help with any request she may have. He proactively engages with the Visit Ely team on a regular basis when she is unable to. She felt that he would be an excellent Mayor and would be an asset and positive image for the City.

Cllr Trent said he was delighted to second Cllr Warman's nomination.

There being no other nominations and by unanimous agreement, Cllr Banyard was duly elected as the Chairman and Mayor.

2. Reading and Signing of the Declaration of Office and Swearing the Oath of Allegiance by the Right Worshipful the Mayor of the City of Ely

Cllr Banyard read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. He then swore the Oath of Allegiance.

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3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Wade, Cllr Novick, Police cadets, Mayor of Peterborough, Ely Museum Curator, Mr & Mrs P Banyard, Mr & Mrs N Puttergill, Bishop of Ely, Mayor of Cambridge, County Cllr Piers Coutts, Chair of Soham Town Council, Mr I Lindsay, Mayor of Ramsey, Mr & Mrs M Chinery-Colyer, Charlotte Cane MP, Mayor of St Neots, Mr & Mrs D Potts, Mayor of Downham Market, A Clarke, Mayor of St Ives, PCC D Preston, RAF Mildenhall, Mr P Eden and Col Arthaud, RAF Lakenheath.

4. Out Going Mayor's Report for 2024/2025

Cllr Phillips welcomed everyone, noting the significance of the evening as a changing of the guard. He expressed his gratitude for the privilege of serving as Mayor of Ely for a second year, appreciating the support he had received. Emphasizing the importance of service, he hoped he and Mary had fulfilled their roles well, following in the footsteps of past Mayors over the Council's fifty-year history. Reflecting on a past moment with the RAF Cadets, he shared a light-hearted exchange with a young boy who mistook his ceremonial role for military command.

He expressed gratitude to the Clerks—Town Clerk Tracey Coulson and her deputies, Sarah Jay and Marianne Pickering—for their unwavering support, professionalism, and guidance. A special thanks went to Marianne Pickering, who expertly managed the Mayor's engagement diary, ensuring they were always in the right place at the right time—a remarkable achievement!

He thanked Anna Bennett and the Visit Ely team, recognizing their growing role in promoting tourism and organizing events like Eel Day and the VE80 celebration. Over two years, he witnessed their dedication to putting Ely on the map as a major tourist destination. He also praised his friend Matthew Routledge, who recently became Town Crier and delivered an excellent Cry for VE Day from the Sessions House steps.

He thanked his fellow councillors—14 individuals from diverse backgrounds, all committed to Ely's history, community well-being, and vision for a lively, inclusive, and progressive city. He welcomed new councillor Satwinder Sandhu, who joined last September, bringing a passion for community and economic growth. He also acknowledged Sue Austen, who stepped down in May last year for health and family reasons, praising her service as Mayor from 2020 to 2022 during the challenges of Covid and her dedication to the Council over multiple terms. Her kindness and commitment are deeply missed.

He expressed gratitude to Cllr Mike Banyard, who takes over as Mayor, having worked closely alongside him as Deputy Mayor over the past year. Their longstanding friendship, dating back to their time at St John's Cathedral in Hong Kong, remained strong throughout their collaboration. He praised Cllr Banyard as a wise and capable leader and looked forward to supporting him as he shaped his role. He also noted the new robes and chain of office, generously gifted by the King's School, and extended best wishes to Cllr Denness as she begins her term as Deputy Mayor, hoping her year would be a rewarding experience.

He expressed deep gratitude to Mary Rone, who served as Mayoress for two years, noting her kindness, generosity, and genuine interest in people. He reflected on their strong partnership, believing they had become a formidable team, and sincerely thanked her for all she had done.

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4. Out Going Mayor's Report for 2024/2025 continued

Over the past year, they had attended over a hundred events, supporting fellow officials in nearby towns and speaking about the work of the Mayor and Council. They represented Ely at USAF base events, including Lakenheath High School's Graduation Ceremony, and were honoured to present certificates to young personnel who helped put up Ely's Christmas Lights. They had performed civic duties on occasions like Remembrance Sunday and VE Day celebrations and supported Armed Forces Day and the Cadets.

Music and culture played a significant role, with concerts at the Cathedral and St Mary's Church, as well as their enthusiastic participation in Ely Folk Festival. They embraced major community events such as Eel Day, Aquafest, and Pride, underscoring their commitment to community spirit. A particular privilege was preaching at the Civic Service for a second time and visiting groups where volunteers dedicate themselves to strengthening Ely.

A sentiment repeated from last year remains true: in every community visit—whether to the Foodbank, Cadets, Rich Tea Club, or Ely Baby Bank—they gained more than they had given, reflecting the deep generosity of the city. On a charitable front, the Mayor's Charity raised over £8,000 for the NSPCC through fundraising events and donations. Working alongside the dedicated local group reinforced the vital principle that every child's well-being matters.

He had continued to work with the faith groups in the city and expressed gratitude to Ely's Muslim community for their generous hospitality, especially during the holy month of Ramadan. He highlighted the community Iftar meal, where people from diverse backgrounds shared food, friendship, and conversation, making for a memorable evening. He also attended another Iftar meal with the Dean, organized by Cambridge City Council and the Cambridge Muslim Association, bringing together multiple faith communities and local political figures. He hoped this initiative would become a regular feature in the calendar.

He reflected on the future of local government, noting the major reorganisation 50 years ago that replaced Urban and Rural District Councils with District and Metropolitan Councils. While some changes succeeded, others fell short. Now, further reforms are on the horizon, with "Unitary Authority" widely discussed. Uncertainty remains about how this will unfold in Cambridgeshire—potentially increasing efficiency but possibly diminishing local decision-making. Regardless, change is inevitable for Ely and the City Council, likely bringing greater responsibility and shifts in community governance. He urged the current Council and the one to be elected in 2027 to prepare for the evolving landscape.

He also reflected on his future, considering suggestions like books, music, and travel, but found inspiration in John Lewis, the Civil Rights leader and U.S. Congressman from Georgia. Lewis urged people to "make good trouble... make necessary trouble," a principle that resonates amid rising populism, polarization, and post-truth politics. He invited others to join him in pursuing this idea together.

He shared a poignant moment from a fundraising concert, where a young pianist delivered a breathtaking Chopin performance. In the brief silence before the audience erupted in applause, the musician let out a heartfelt "Phew"—a fitting expression of relief and accomplishment. Reflecting on his own time as Mayor, he likened the experience to playing music to the best of his ability. And now, he and Mary can finally say... "Phew."

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5. Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor

Cllr Banyard praised the outstanding service of both Cllr Phillips and Mayoress Mary Rone over the past two years, noting Mary's continued support after Cllr Phillips' re-election. He described her as an inspired choice, recognizing her deep knowledge of the city, extensive connections, and ability to engage with anyone—illustrated by her lively conversation with the Archbishop of York enroute to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. As a token of appreciation, Cllr Banyard presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

Cllr Phillips was praised as an inspirational leader, known for his political insight and ability to quickly assess ideas from fellow councillors. His leadership was credited not to luck, but to his experience, patience, encouragement, hard work, and skill in effective decision-making—making the council both productive and educational.

Following the 2023 election, where only nine councillors stood for 15 posts, he successfully brought together a cohesive and engaged council through co-option, ensuring all voices were heard and valued. Subsequent by-elections further enriched the council's experience and diversity. His commitment extended to his mayoral charity, the NSPCC, which proved highly successful. He was recognized as an inspiration to all.

Cllr Phillips was widely praised for his ability to make every councillor feel valued, fostering strong relationships and navigating challenges with diplomacy. Managing the ambitions of newly co-opted councillors while ensuring a cohesive and effective council was no small feat, but he succeeded in balancing expectations with practicality.

His commitment to diversity and inclusion was particularly noteworthy, with his work in the cemetery serving as a key example. His advocacy for the Islamic community and the establishment of a dedicated Muslim section not only strengthened local ties but also set a precedent being adopted elsewhere. His efforts left a lasting impact on Ely and beyond.

Cllr Phillips was recognized for his selfless approach to the mayoral role, using the position to support and uplift those making meaningful contributions to the community. His leadership ensured that both individual and collective efforts were valued and central to Ely's progress.

In appreciation, a vote of thanks was proposed, acknowledging his lasting impact and exemplary service. Cllr Trent seconded the motion, and it was unanimously supported by all councillors, marking a fitting tribute to both Cllr Phillips and Mayoress Mary Rone for their dedication over the past two years.

Cllr Banyard and the Clerk left the hall and entered the robing room. Cllr Banyard was invested with the robes and the Chain of Office. The Town Crier announced the new Mayor and Cllr Banyard and the Clerk re-entered the hall.

6. Statement of Acceptance of Office by the Newly Elected the Right Worshipful Mayor of the City of Ely

Cllr Banyard reminisced about his first arrival in Ely in July 1969 as a young teacher, unfamiliar with the city. Upon taking a taxi to Needham's School, he found himself unable to pay the fare due to a lack of change. In a gesture of kindness, the taxi driver, Freddie Parr, assured him he could pay next 6.

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Statement of Acceptance of Office by the Newly Elected the Right Worshipful Mayor of the City of Ely continued

time—confident he would return. This warm welcome left a lasting impression, highlighting Ely’s community spirit. At the time, the city had just over 8,000 residents, with Fen, Suffolk, and Norfolk accents filling its streets.

First impressions matter, and for Cllr Banyard, the warm welcome he received in Ely decades ago shaped his journey, leading to a lifelong connection with the city. At the Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Making, he extended greetings to distinguished guests, including Deputy Lieutenant Dan Schumann, High Sheriff Frances Stanley, and Sebastian Kindersley, soon to retire as Chair of the County Council. He also welcomed past Mayors and Mayoresses, councillors, and honoured attendees, expressing appreciation for both long-standing and newer friendships. Special recognition was given to Reverend Canon Dr Jennifer Wright, the new residentiary Canon at the Cathedral. He acknowledged the honour of being nominated as Mayor for the coming year, thanking his fellow councillors for their support. Committed to fulfilling their hopes and aspirations, he pledged to help Ely thrive as a welcoming and inclusive city, ensuring all residents feel valued and empowered to flourish.

He acknowledged the dedication of Ely’s councillors, each bringing unique expertise to serve the city. He praised the council staff for their efficiency, with Clerks led by Tracey Coulson providing invaluable local government knowledge. Estates team leader Richard Delahaye was recognized for overseeing cemetery improvements, including the creation of a sensory garden.

Visit Ely, under Anna Bennett’s leadership, plays a vital role in tourism, organizing key events like Eel Weekend, Apple Day, and Armed Forces Day. He highlighted the upcoming 200th anniversary of Ely’s railway, with permanent station displays in development. Strengthening ties with local attractions, particularly the Cathedral, remains a priority, with thanks extended to Dean Bonney and the Chapter. Canon Jim Garrard was welcomed as the new Mayor’s Chaplain.

The city’s Events team, including new Town Crier, Matthew, was commended for their work, notably his participation in VE80 commemorations. Historical re-enactments continue at Sessions House, further enriching Ely’s cultural landscape. He thanked Matthew for leading the cry that evening.

The Maltings, under the capable leadership of Lola Howell, remains a key community venue, hosting music events, the annual pantomime, and cinema screenings. With new management and council support, it will continue to be an important centre for entertainment in Ely.

We support the Ribe Association, which manages the twinning link between Ely and Ribe, celebrating 70 years of links in 2026. Plans are well advanced to celebrate. The Allotments Society, keeping a careful eye on our lands, providing space for so many to grow their own. And village councils in Prickwillow and Stuntney play a major role in those communities. We manage the CCTV around the city and are responsible for the Christmas lights. So, we are heavily involved in the life of the city. Our museum displays so many parts of our history too.

The Mayor has selected two local charities to support this year: Volunteer Community Action, East Cambridgeshire, based at Centre E, which provides invaluable assistance to many, and the Food Bank, still a crucial resource for those in need. Fundraising efforts will include a charity quiz night and a concert with the Ely Consort in November. Additional opportunities may arise, particularly around Chinese New Year, with the annual pantomime also contributing to charitable support.

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6. Statement of Acceptance of Office by the Newly Elected the Right Worshipful Mayor of the City of Ely continued

He reflected on Ely's long history of leadership and defiance, beginning with St Etheldreda's founding of a double monastery in 673 AD. The city has hosted its share of rebels, including Hereward the Wake, who ensured Ely was among the last strongholds against the Normans, and Oliver Cromwell, who trained his Model Army on Palace Green before briefly ruling the kingdom and overseeing the overthrow of King Charles. Ely has also witnessed tragedy, from martyrs burned near the old library to the Littleport rioters, executed despite their desperate circumstances. He pondered the hopes and aspirations of those present, considering how Ely's legacy might continue to shape its future.

He posed thought-provoking questions about the future of Ely—what kind of city residents aspire to, the values they can embrace, and how collective efforts can shape its development. He acknowledged the city's strong educational foundation, highlighting the completion of Ely College and expressing appreciation to the King's School and Principal John Attwater for their generous gift of new mayoral robes, which enhance the role's presence. With a background in education, he looks forward to engaging with and supporting local schools, welcoming invitations to visit.

He shared a personal story about his extended stay at Addenbrookes Hospital, where he underwent a reversal operation in late January. Expecting a short recovery, he instead remained there until late February due to two severe infections that required constant monitoring and strong antibiotics. Most of February was spent in isolation, underscoring the challenges he faced during his recuperation.

He expressed deep gratitude for the exceptional care he received during his hospital stay, praising the dedication of the nursing and support staff who attended to him day and night. The team, representing diverse backgrounds from across the UK, India, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Poland, France, Germany, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Italy, and Spain, provided expert medical attention with unwavering kindness. Their compassion and professionalism made a lasting impact, and he cherished the meaningful conversations shared—sometimes in the quiet hours of the night—that brought comfort and encouragement.

He emphasized the importance of fostering an inclusive community where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and accepted. The City Council remains committed to inclusivity, actively supporting the annual Pride event, with past mayors attending and voicing their encouragement—a tradition he will proudly continue this year.

He expressed heartfelt gratitude to everyone in attendance, especially those who had travelled great distances to be there, recognizing their support as deeply appreciated.

He felt councillors should build on the strong foundations of those that have gone before them. With the City of Ely Council celebrating fifty years last year, he said we must ensure it remains a city we're proud of—a community where everyone is valued, now and for generations to come.

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7. Election of the Vice Chairman who shall become the Deputy Mayor of the City of Ely for the ensuing year 2025/2026

Cllr Ní Dhónaill said she was happy to be proposing Cllr Rebecca Denness as Deputy Mayor for the ensuing year 2025/2026. Cllr Denness had joined the council six years ago, representing the West Ward. She is the chair of the council's Climate and Environment Committee, and has brought her energy to initiatives such as the 20 is plenty campaign. As council representative on Ely Allotments and Gardens Association, she had even had to recently step up to lead that Association, after the stepping down of the Chair. She had also been involved in the East Cambs Access Group and other inclusivity initiatives, such as sitting on the Inclusivity Working Group for the council. On a personal note, she said that Rebecca had been very supportive of her being part of the council, as well as my wider political activities, which she was very grateful for.

Cllr Warman was pleased to second the proposal for Cllr Denness for Deputy Mayor. She had quietly and steadfastly worked as Chair of the Climate & Environment Committee, taking the council forward in its commitment to the environment. Cllr Denness is an asset to the council and she was sure she will be a calm and influential Deputy Mayor. Personally, she had known Rebecca for some time. She is kind, compassionate and committed to ensuring the City of Ely is an inclusive place to live. At one point she was vice chair of Tourism, it seems that this a familiar theme of the evening.

There being no other nominations and by unanimous agreement, Cllr Denness was duly elected as the Vice-Chairman and Deputy Mayor.

She read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

8. Appointment of Council Ambassador

The Chairman proposed the appointment of Cllr C Phillip's as the Council's Ambassador for 2025-2026. This was seconded by Cllr Denness and unanimously agreed.

9. Committees and representatives to other organisations

Appointments as detailed separately, were proposed by Cllr Denness and seconded by Cllr Morgan and were unanimously approved.

10. Authorisation of Signatories

Signatories as detailed below, were proposed by Cllr Moss-Eccardt and seconded by Cllr Fox and were unanimously approved.

Barclays Bank account – any two of the Mayor, Cllr C Phillips and Cllr R Denness.

Cambridge Building Society accounts – any two of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Cllr R Morgan and Cllr C Phillips.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

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