



**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, 11TH MAY 2026 AT THE MALTINGS, SHIP LANE, ELY**

PRESENT:

The Mayor, Cllr M Banyard
Cllr C Phillips
Cllr R Trent
Cllr M Hucker

Cllr R Denness
Cllr D Warman
Cllr C Whelan

Cllr R Morgan
Cllr R Moss-Eccardt
Cllr C Bebu-Vijianu

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 2026/2027

Cllr Banyard proposed Cllr Rebecca Denness to become The Right Worshipful the Mayor of the City of Ely for the ensuing year 2026/2027, in the absence of Cllr Rebecca Ward, who had originally proposed her. He said he was delighted to nominate Cllr Denness as the next Mayor of Ely, and Chair of the City Council. Cllr Ward was the nominator, but she is a busy GP in one of our surgeries here in Ely, and had been called to work this evening.

It had been a real pleasure to work with Cllr Denness as Deputy Mayor during this past year. She had been hugely supportive, and in our regular meetings, had always offered astute and sound advice. She has the life of this community of the City of Ely, and its associated villages, Stuntney, Prickwillow, Chettisham, Queen Adelaide and Shippea Hill, very much in her heart. She had served this council very well in her seven years as Councillor, and had been Chair of the Climate and Environment Committee, represented the Council on various organisations, including the Needham's Trinity charity, the Ribe Association among others, and on the City of Ely Allotments & Gardens Association, which she had steered, as Interim Chair, through challenging times this past year. Her clear vision, willingness to challenge constructively and with care for individuals had been very successful.

He had every confidence that she would be a very good Mayor and would chair Council meetings well. He thereby nominated Cllr Denness to be Mayor and Chair for 2026/2027.

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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 2026/2027 continued

Cllr Warman said she was delighted to second Cllr Banyard's nomination. During her years on the council Rebecca has gone about her roles on various committees, with quiet confidence and tenacity. She had made significant improvements and impact to the City of Ely Council environment policies since taking on the role of Chair of the Climate and Environment Committee. She felt Rebecca would be a passionate, inclusive and thoughtful mayor who would ensure residents views are heard and listened to.

There being no other nominations and by unanimous agreement, Cllr Denness 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 Denness read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. She then swore the Oath of Allegiance.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Ward, Cllr Ní Dhónaill, Cllr Coutts, Cllr Wade, Ely Town Crier, Mr Landon Cloe, Mayor of March, Mayor of Huntingdon, Mayor of Peterborough, Chair of Fenland District Council, Chair of East Cambs District Council, Canon Reveley, Cllr Wiles, Downham Market Town Council; Ms A Dunning, PCC D Preston, Ms P Hutchinson, Mr N Grimston, Royal British Legion; Mr S Warburton, Ely College; Ms H Burke, Mayor of St Ives Town Council, Chair of Huntingdon District Council, Mayor of Cambridge, South Holland District Council, Spotted in Ely and Charlotte Cane MP.

4. Out Going Mayor's Report for 2025/2026

Cllr Banyard welcomed distinguished guests including the Deputy Lieutenant, High Sheriff, neighbours Mayors/Chairs, and attendees to the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making ceremony. He described his year as Mayor as a great honour and privilege, thanking the Mayoress, Helen, for her strong support.

He reflected on the difficult loss of the Mayor's Chaplain, Canon Dr Jim Garrard, and thanked those who have stepped in to support the city's religious and civic life. He highlighted Ely's long-standing tradition of inclusivity and diversity, stressing the Council's commitment to ensuring everyone feels welcome and valued despite wider societal challenges. He praised the City Council staff, volunteers, and teams for their dedication in running events, services, and facilities across Ely.

He welcomed the two new councillors, which now brings the Council back up to the full complement of 15 councillors, thanked all council members for their voluntary contributions, and noted ongoing work on governance matters and an upcoming Strategic Plan. He mentioned a notable personal milestone within the Council—celebrating the birth of a child to a serving councillor.

He reflected on successful fundraising efforts for his local charities, Ely Food Bank and VCAEC, raising over £3,500 through community supported events. The Mayor had attended over 120

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engagements across Ely and neighbouring areas. Memorable moments were major community events such as Pride and Aquafest, celebrating Ely's inclusivity and strong community participation. He had

4. Out Going Mayor's Report for 2025/2026 continued

been involved in promoting local, independent traders through pre-Christmas video campaigns with Spotted in Ely. He celebrated Ely's vibrant arts and culture scene, including festivals, concerts, school visits, and performances. He noted visits to MAGPAS and experiences observing their emergency helicopter operations. He praised a recent local theatre production of *Evita*. He reflected on Ely's railway history, marking 180 years since its arrival and noting historical significance.

He highlighted improvements to local play areas, especially accessibility upgrades in Prickwillow. He recalled a memorable visit to twin town Ribe, celebrating cultural links and upcoming anniversary events which will be held to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the twinning. He made a light-hearted remark about future post-mayoral retirement plans and gave heartfelt thanks to his wife, Helen, for her unwavering support and contribution throughout his mayoral year. He concluded by his son, presenting her with a bouquet of flowers, on his behalf.

5. Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor

Cllr Warman said she would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing mayor, Michael Banyard for his service throughout the last 12 months. Mike had carried out the role of Mayor with humour, integrity and passion at all times, despite there being a few challenging issues to overcome during his tenure as mayor. He showed that he is thoughtful, kind and passionate about the City and its residents. Mike had carried out a large amount of work together to help residents, including most recently working closely with external stakeholders to put together a sustainable bus network proposal for the City of Ely, to the combined authority.

It had been an interesting hearing, at each Full Council meeting, the large number of events that Mike had been invited to represent the City. As well as the serious side to this, she believed a lot of fun had been had and food consumed!

As always Mike has had time to listen and help his fellow councillors, both new and old, those of us who have been on the council for some times and more recent members. He had shown kindness and compassion for any issues that had been raised to him. She thanked him again for his service to Ely.

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

The Ely College Choir sung Ubi Caritas (Ola Gjeilo), Locus Iste (Bruckner) and the Long Day Closes (Sullivan) whilst the Chairman was being invested with the robes and chain of office.

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

Cllr Rebecca Denness introduced herself as the new Mayor of Ely and began by thanking the Ely College Choir for helping celebrate this important evening for Ely and herself. She welcomed dignitaries and guests. She expressed her thanks to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Mike Banyard, and Mayoress Helen Banyard for their hard work in supporting community groups in Ely and beyond through their attendance at many local events. She noted that council colleagues had valued Mike's sensitive and thoughtful leadership during his time as Deputy Mayor and Mayor.

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

She also thanked Cllr Chris Phillips, noting their friendship since 2019 and his willingness to serve a second year as Mayor alongside Mary Rone when she stepped aside to stand in the 2024 General Election. She expressed gratitude to both Chris and Mike for their kindness, wisdom, friendship, and support.

She highlighted what made Ely special, including its traditions, community spirit, and accessibility, and outlined the dual role of Mayor: representing Ely at events and chairing the City Council. She emphasised the Council's commitment to diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and representing the community's voice.

The Mayor announced her two chosen charities: Ely Food Bank, acknowledging the growing need and expressing support for those struggling, and the Friends of the Princess of Wales Hospital, which helped fund local healthcare equipment.

She celebrated progress for women, noting that Ely had both a female Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and reflected on the importance of continuing to defend women's rights. She also commented on immigration, encouraging informed decision-making and critical thinking about political narratives.

Finally, she thanked the City of Ely Council staff for their essential work and expressed her enthusiasm for working with them during her mayoral year.

7. Election of the Vice Chairman who shall become the Deputy Mayor of the City of Ely for the ensuing year 2026/2027

Cllr Trent said he was delighted to be proposing Cllr Christine Whelan as Deputy Mayor for the ensuing year 2026/2027. He said she was a valued member of the Council, as well as being an elected member of both the District and County Council. He felt Christine epitomises what a good local councillor should be; always being available and ready to work hard for the good of the community. He said she was a friend as well as valued colleague. He acknowledged Christine's support as a mentor and expressed confidence that she would be a capable and respected Deputy Mayor, and a future Mayor of Ely.

Cllr Phillips said it was with great pleasure that he second the nomination of Cllr Christine Whelan as Vice Chairman of the Council and by virtue of that office to be the new Deputy Mayor. He had known Cllr Whelan for a good few years now and was very aware that she would bring enormous enthusiasm to her new roles and would dedicate her time in office toward encouraging the community to continue to grow as a city where all are welcomed and affirmed.

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

She read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. Cllr Whelan then presented her consort with the Beckett Brooch.

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8. Appointment of Council Ambassador

The Chairman proposed the appointment of Cllr C Phillips and Cllr M Banyard as the Council's Ambassadors for 2026-2027. This was seconded by Cllr Whelan and unanimously agreed.

9. Committees and representatives to other organisations

Appointments as detailed separately, were proposed by Cllr Denness and seconded by Cllr Moss-Eccardt and were unanimously approved.

10. Authorisation of Signatories

Signatories as detailed below, were proposed by Cllr Denness and seconded by Cllr Bebu-Vijianu and were unanimously approved.

Barclays Bank account – any two of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Cllr Banyard.

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

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

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