

James Palmer: his role in the Ely bypass scheme and the risks he poses as Mayor

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SUMMARY

This report examines how James Palmer insisted on prioritising speed over cost control for the massively overspent Ely bypass project - and how he plans to use the same high-risk approach in future.

As a Cambridgeshire county councillor and member of the Audit and Governance Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, I am concerned that Mayor James Palmer’s policy for the accelerated delivery of transport schemes poses a high risk of uncontrolled and higher costs and timetable delays, as experienced in the Ely bypass scheme. I have formed this view from studying a variety of published records, which are set out below.

In July this year, without much fanfare, the Combined Authority agreed a policy for the “accelerated delivery” of Mayor Palmer’s £5.3billion transport plan. The policy will “alter the conventional approach” to risk, funding and project management in order to deliver projects faster. In essence, speed will be prioritised over other considerations.

Speed is a dominating theme of Palmer’s mayoralty, with extraordinarily ambitious timetables set for new projects like the CAM Metro, and promises to speed up others like the Soham and South Cambridge railway stations. Moreover, Palmer has made clear in many public statements that he has no patience with any organisation or individual who will not join him in the fast lane.

Of course, the Mayor is right to be ambitious. However, evidence suggests that prioritising speed over cost is not just ambitious, but reckless. In 2015/16, Palmer pressurised Cambridgeshire County Council into adopting this approach for the procurement of the Ely bypass scheme. This meant that processes that would have established a reasonably accurate project cost were cut short in order to get an earlier start on site. Palmer was so keen to do this that, as Leader of East Cambs district council, he issued a threat that could have jeopardised the whole project. County Council officers

and other advisors frantically warned that the risks were too high, but they were overridden. The consequences of this decision – an unplanned £13million, 40-year debt burden on taxpayers and a delayed completion - were announced to the public in April this year.

Since April, Palmer has maintained that no mistakes were made. A year earlier he had promised to use lessons learned from Ely, but far from acknowledging the obvious ones - that dashing for speed is dangerous and expert advice is valuable - he has now moved to establish the accelerated delivery concept as formal Combined Authority policy.

In my view, this policy needs to be carefully re-examined and risk-assessed. If necessary it should be modified or scrapped to ensure that the authority takes a balanced approach to delivering projects, avoiding any repetition of the mistakes made with Ely. Speed is good, but not at any price.

BACKGROUND

James Palmer was elected Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in May 2017. Prior to this, he was Leader of East Cambs District Council and a County councillor.

The Ely bypass has been a high priority for the County and East Cambs councils for many years. From 2015, the project has been overseen by a Project Board of councillors from both councils, with formal control in the hands of the County Council's Economy and Environment Committee. Despite protests from opposition County councillors, only Conservative councillors were given places on the Board and the public is excluded. James Palmer was a Board member during 2015-16, when critical decisions were made about the procurement of the design and construction contract.

In April 2018, the County Council announced that the scheme was 36% overspent, with costs increasing from £36million to £49 million during the construction phase. Cambridgeshire taxpayers will foot the bill through a 40-year loan with repayments starting at £686,000 per year. The project will open a year behind its original schedule.

NOTE: The County Council has very recently run into higher than expected costs on another major project, the Kings Dyke scheme. The cost increase is a concern of course, but the fact that it has been quantified and reported now, before the council makes any legal commitments, is significant and distinguishes this situation from what happened with the Ely bypass. With Ely, pressure for a speedy start led the council to enter a construction contract without waiting for an accurate cost estimate. In so doing, the council lost control of its costs, putting its future financial position at risk. For Kings Dyke, without Palmer's influence, it seems that the council has now returned to standard practice.

EVIDENCE (NB fuller versions in Appendix)

The Commentary on Page 3 refers to the following records. The Appendix on Page 6 gives fuller versions of the records listed here. Where they are marked (FOI) the records were released through a Freedom of Information Act application.

- 1) 13th Aug 2015 (FOI) Minutes of a Project Board meeting confirming that **“Board members were warned of and recognised the risks”** they were taking.
- 2) 1st Sept 2015 Palmer tweet: **“Another day at Shire Hall. I wonder who I’ll upset today?”**
- 3) 15th Sept 2015 (FOI) Email from the Project Manager explaining the **risks of rushing the contract tender and design stages of the project** as the Project Board were proposing.
- 4) 15th Sept 2015 (FOI) James Palmer’s one-line reply to the above: **“I have to wonder what the point is of involving members at all”.**
- 5) 17th Sept 2015 (FOI)Reply to James Palmer from County Council Head of Major Infrastructure Delivery **reiterating the advice.**
- 6) 20th Sept 2015 (FOI) Email sent by a senior official at East Cambs District Council stating that **the £1million contribution by East Cambs would be withdrawn if the bypass was not completed by November 2017.**
- 7) 14th May 2016 (FOI) Palmer’s email to the County Council’s transport director suggesting that **the council needed to be more “professional and ambitious”.**
- 8) 20th April 2017 As candidate for Mayor, Palmer states that **“lessons learnt in delivering initiatives such as the Ely bypass will be, if successful, something he takes into the role”.** And he boasts: **“If I say I’m going to do it, then my record suggests I’ve done it.”**
- 9) 11th April 2018 Palmer **declines to apologise** over the Ely bypass.
- 10) 12th April 2018 Economy and Environment Committee report with council officers’ description of **the approach to risk, the priority given to speed, the lack of a contingency budget and the inevitability of an overspend.**
- 11) 12th April 2018 Response to a public question put to the Economy & Environment Committee confirming that **at the time of the award of contract (July 2016) it was known that the budget would be overspent.**
- 12) 30th May 2018 Cambridge Independent: Palmer claims his record was built on **the delivery of infrastructure at pace.**
- 13) 25th July 2018 Combined Authority Board report promising to **“alter the conventional approach to the delivery of transport infrastructure”** including a **“more risk-based approach”**, in order to accelerate delivery.

- 14) 10th Mar 2018 Cambridge Independent: Palmer **criticises Network Rail** and promises accelerated delivery of Cambridge South railway station.
- 15) 23rd May 2018 Cambridge News: Palmer **criticises the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)** for lack of progress with projects.
- 16) 29th May 2018 Hunts Post: Palmer **criticises Highways England and the Department for Transport** for delay with A428 dualling – even though **Jonathan Djanogly MP acknowledges that further analysis is required.**
- 17) 25th July 2018 Cambridge Independent: Palmer **criticises the GCP** over the timetable for the CAM Metro and promises accelerated delivery.
- 18) 22nd July 2017 Cambs Times: Palmer attacks John Bridge, Chairman of Cambs Chambers of Commerce, over the Wisbech to March railway line. **“I went to see him and told him how naïve I thought he was”.**

COMMENTARY

Public controversy around Mayor Palmer and the operation of the Combined Authority has been intense in recent weeks, not least over the sudden departure of the Chief Executive. But, behind closed doors in Cambridgeshire’s councils, concerns have been raised about aspects of Palmer’s approach over a much longer period. Gossip is all very well, but it is necessary to look at the facts to know whether these concerns are justified, and I seek to do that in this paper using a variety of published records including documents released through an FOI application.

A good deal of the evidence is in Palmer’s own words and can be shocking to read. Two examples come from a period in 2015-16 when, with others on the Ely bypass Project Board, he was piling intense pressure on County Council officers to prioritise speed over cost in the procurement of the design and construction contract (see **Doc1**). The first is his tweet (**Doc2**: “I wonder who I will upset today”). It is that this was a man spoiling for a fight; from the timing, it is certainly possible that the fight was about the Ely bypass.

The second example (**Doc4** “I have to wonder what the point is of involving members at all”) came a fortnight later: a sarcastic and dismissive one-line email reply to a long and detailed email from the County Council’s Ely project manager, warning that the speed-first approach to procurement was too risky (**Doc3**). Palmer’s reply was fired off only a couple of hours after the officer’s email was sent. To react so insolently to professional advice, especially on a matter involving large sums of public money, seems to me deplorable in the extreme. I include **Doc5**, an email sent soon afterwards by a more senior officer, as an indication of the way that officers felt obliged to appease Palmer – although to his credit the writer was still brave enough to reiterate his colleague’s advice.

Palmer’s tendency to lash out against unwelcome advice or challenge and the people offering them is a common thread in the record. We see it in his next move a few days later: East Cambs District Council’s extraordinary and sudden threat to withdraw its £1m contribution towards the bypass if construction was not complete by November 2017 (**Doc6**). Clearly, this impetuous act could have endangered the bypass project at a crucial moment, or jeopardised the finances of the County

Council. Presumably, it was intended to boost Palmer's campaign to ensure an early start on site, on which he had made a minor concession earlier in the same email (about one element of the process he and County Council officers were disputing).

The pressure on officers (**Doc7**) continued right up to the award of the contract in 2016 when the fate of the project was sealed. By April 2018 the consequences were clear. **Doc10**, an extract from the committee report announcing the overspend, confirms the approach to risk that had earlier been applied to the project and the priority given to speed over cost. It also confirms that no contingency budget had been allocated, so "additional funding would be needed". **Doc11** reiterates that it was known at the time the contract was awarded that there would be an overspend. It is therefore quite clear that, unknown to the general public or opposition councillors or the scheme's government backers, an unquantified burden on the County Council's future financial position had been baked into the scheme from the outset.

It is worth reiterating this situation. For the sake of speed and against the advice of professional advisors, councillors pushed the council into a major construction contract with only a vague idea of cost and no client contingency fund, knowing that at some point in the future the chickens would come home to roost.

Of course, James Palmer cannot have been solely responsible for these decisions. They were taken collectively by the Project Board or the Economy and Environment committee. My conclusion from the available evidence is that Palmer was the driving force behind the rush for speed and that he used his status as Leader of East Cambs District Council to lead where others followed. No-one has seen fit to apologise, indeed Palmer has actively refused to do so (**Doc9**). Only a month after the Ely overspend was announced he was claiming that his credentials included "the successful delivery of new infrastructure at pace" (**Doc12**). Clearly, he was sticking to his boast from a year earlier: "If I say I'm going to do it, then my record suggests I've done it." (**Doc8**). That is some claim.

This lack of humility is unfortunate because during his election campaign for the Mayoralty Palmer promised that "lessons learnt in delivering initiatives such as the Ely bypass will be, if successful, something he takes into the role" (**Doc8**). His election campaign was indeed successful, but as it turned out the same cannot be said for the Ely bypass. The lessons Palmer needs to learn from that escapade are that speed is not everything, big risks can lead to big losses and amateurs need to pay attention to expert advice.

And yet, worryingly, Palmer has now set the Combined Authority on the same high-risk pathway for its massive £5.3billion transport infrastructure programme. Within a few months of the Ely overspend announcement, the Combined Authority Board had adopted the concept of "accelerated delivery", which would allow the Authority "to alter the conventional approach", including new approaches to risk and project management (**Doc13**). To all intents and purposes, this is a plan to repeat the Ely experiment on a much larger scale.

A pre-occupation with speed is a key feature of Palmer's comments to the media, frequently associated with uninhibited attacks on important partners and stakeholders. **Docs 14, 15, 16 and 17** are among numerous examples in which he has doled out a tongue lashing to organisations like

Network Rail, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), the Department for Transport and Highways England, mainly focused on their inability to deliver fast enough. Doc16, regarding the A428 dualling, illustrates Palmer’s fixation on this subject: even as Jonathan Djanogly MP acknowledges the need for more assessment before the scheme can progress, Palmer’s contribution on the subject is a demand for more speed. Individuals are also vulnerable to personal attack for challenging Palmer’s view of the world, as in the contempt shown for John Bridge, chairman of Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce, over the Wisbech to March railway line (**Doc18** “I went to see him and told him how naïve I thought he was”).

Conclusion

Mayor Palmer holds it in his hands to be a force for good for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, but his “accelerated delivery” strategy could be very dangerous. The strategy needs to be reviewed and modified to make sure that his laudable aspiration to get a move on does not result in a repeat of the reckless gamble taken with the Ely bypass, in which he played a significant role. At Ely, the sums were in the tens of millions – in future the risk could rise to hundreds of millions.

There is a danger also that Palmer will put his mission at risk through his poor relationships with key partners. In the end, these will slow progress down (as in the case of the forced “pause” on GCP projects) or even prevent schemes from getting off the ground altogether. It is one thing not to suffer fools gladly, but when your public statements routinely lambast the very people you depend on, the situation is not productive. As concerns around the Mayoralty increase – whether from the government regarding relationships with the GCP or from Chief Executives of the Combined Authority’s constituent councils – the time to find a better, safer, more collaborative way forward is now.

APPENDIX

NB Where extracts, rather than full documents, are given below, I can supply the full document on request.

FOI application to Cambridgeshire County Council, June 2018
 “Please would you supply the following information related to the Ely bypass scheme and dating from 1st January 2013 to the present day: 1) all email and other correspondence between council officers and James Palmer in any of his roles as a Cambridgeshire county councillor, East Cambridgeshire district councillor and Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; 2) the notes and minutes of all meetings at which James Palmer was present.”

Ref	Date and summary	Document
1	13 th Aug 2015 Project Board Minutes confirming that Board members recognised the risks they proposed to take.	<u>Procurement (Update by AF)</u> Consultants, WYG, have been appointed to draft contract documentation and progress is being made. Pre-qualification questions were being tailored to suit specific project requirements such as poor ground conditions and working over railways.

		<p>BS [County Council Project Manager] outlined various options for a design & build process, expressing the officer view that option 1 appeared to offer the best balance. Board members recognised the risks associated with the options but stressed the need for any early start on site and the need for completion before the end of 2017.</p> <p>From the discussions the option of a 5 week tender period with a 2 week evaluation period followed by a 3 month design period emerged and it was proposed which WYG would be asked to critique this option variation for further feedback to the Project Board</p> <p>BS emphasised that the more the tender and design periods were shortened, the greater the likelihood of an increase in target cost between tender submission and the end of the design period.</p> <p>From a financial perspective, CM [CCC finance officer] was content with this approach provided councillors recognised the associated risks.</p>
2	<p>1st Sept 2015</p> <p>Tweet by James Palmer</p>	<p>Another day at Shire Hall. I wonder who I'll upset today?</p> <p><small>James Palmer (@jpalmer) · 1 Sep 2015</small> Another day at Shire Hall. I wonder who I'll upset today? #outspoken</p> 
3	<p>15th Sept 2015</p> <p>Email from CCC Ely bypass Project Manager explaining the risks of rushing the contract tender and design stages of the project as the Project Board were proposing to do.</p>	<p>From: Stinton Brian [mailto:Brian.Stinton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk] Sent: 15 September 2015 10:55 To: Shuter Mathew Cllr; Mike Rouse (SMTP); Emma Grima; James Palmer (SMTP); Preston Richard; Malyon Chris Cc: Bates Ian Cllr; Lis Every Cllr; Goodland Debbie; Frost Alistair; Walmsley Stuart; Pascual Tanya; Menzies Bob; Hughes Graham Subject: Procurement of Ely Southern Bypass-Comments on Timescale</p> <p>Dear Board Members,</p> <p>At the last meeting, the issue of procurement and design timescales was discussed at some length and the view of some members of the Board was that the shortest possible time scales should be allowed for both the Invitation to Tender (ITT) and the Detailed Design period allowed in the awarded contract, with the aim of facilitating the earliest possible completion.</p> <p>Officers highlighted significant risks in following this route and recommended that longer periods of time should be allowed for both of these phases. The board wished to continue on the shortest timescale but an agreed action was to seek comments on short timescales from the specialist consultant, WYG, commissioned to prepare the contract. WYG has expressed the view that the timescales are too short to be considered reasonable and present significant risks to costs and programme.</p>

	<p>In preparing comments, a number of contractors, who have expressed an interest in tendering for the scheme, were questioned on their ability to tender and design in the short timescale suggested by the Board. Contractors too commented that 5 weeks is too short to fully consider the requirements of the scheme and understand the risk involved so that they can price accordingly. An 8 week ITT period was considered to be the minimum that would be expected by the industry.</p> <p>In addition, the LGSS Procurement Team, which provides advice on procurement requirements and will lead on the ITT publication, also commented on the suggested tender timescale. The procurement team expressed strong concern over the suggested 5 week tender period and considered that for a contract of this value and scope an ITT period of 8-10 weeks would be considered reasonable and expected by suppliers. Allowing less than 8-10 weeks for the ITT is likely to result in requests for extensions in time, which it was considered would be difficult to resist, given the scope of the scheme and that EU procurement regulations, although stating minimum times, also requires that a reasonable tender period is afforded to bidders taking into account the nature of the work being tendered. Not agreeing to an extension carries a risk of legal challenge to the process.</p> <p>WYG, potential contractors and the Procurement Team have reiterated the significant risks associated with a short tender period and limited time for design. In summary these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurate target cost at tender stage, which will include very high allowances for risk • Inaccurate agreed construction cost after design phase, exacerbating tender cost inaccuracies and including high risk allowances • High potential for delays in the construction programme whilst design issues are resolved during construction • High potential for programme delays caused by requests for extension to tender period, with possible legal challenge if not granted • A longer construction programme as there is insufficient time to properly consider alternative construction methods, particular around the structures and earthworks and contractors build in time to the programme to cover uncertainties • Risk of disputes arising and ongoing action to resolve them <p>Although a short tender period and design phase appears to reduce the overall delivery time, in reality there is a strong likelihood that it will have the opposite impact as construction is delayed while issues are resolved, resulting in both a longer overall delivery than published, difficulty in controlling costs and a higher out-turn cost on completion. We would therefore have to advise that a longer tender and design phase is offered than that recommended by the Project Board.</p> <p>Three months is considered by the consultant to be the absolute minimum detailed design period but is considered undesirable as it would not allow the appointed contractor to complete the necessary design work and establish a construction methodology to provide a reliable confirmed target price prior to construction. However, it is expected that some design work will be undertaken in the ITT period so this may provide some scope to reduce the design period from the recommended 6 months to 4-5 months as a compromise. A 3 month design period carries the risk that a</p>
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		<p>contractor will seek additional time for the design if the programme is unachievable.</p> <p>The NEC contract and ECI arrangement in particular, promotes a cooperative approach between contractual parties. Establishing a good relationship with the supplier will be fundamental to successful delivery and placing unrealistic requirements on a contractor from the outset would undermine such a relationship. This can lead to contractual disagreements and difficulty in resolving them. In adopting the ECI model for the procurement, the E and E Committee had taken into account a review of previous procurement which recommended this procurement route. If insufficient time is allowed for tendering and design, the advantages in understanding and controlling costs and programme of this arrangement will be greatly reduced or lost.</p> <p>The estimated construction programme is between 12-18 months, but this will depend on the design detail and construction methodology adopted by the successful contractor. For the purposes of estimating dates, 18 months has been generally used as the longest likely construction period. Allowing sufficient time in the tender and design periods will allow the contractor opportunity to explore and adopt the most efficient delivery method, providing greater opportunity to minimise construction time. A reduction in the construction phase to 14-15 months would potentially result in construction being completed late in 2017, in line the provisional programme from November 2014, even allowing an 8 week tender period and 4 month design period.</p> <p>The responses reiterate the concerns in using a short procurement and design timescale raised by officers at the Board. Any degree of uncertainty, will in the least be reflected in the contractor's prices and issues resolved whilst construction is underway are likely to result in disputes and delays. The Consultant, the Procurement Team and the Delivery Team consider that these risks are too great and would not recommended that this route is followed. We should be grateful if you would consider the points raised above and confirm, in the light of the above comments, whether you feel that the issues raised should be mitigated by extending the tender period as advised.</p> <p>Yours sincerely Brian Stinton</p>
4	<p>15th Sept 2015</p> <p>James Palmer's reply of the same date, to 3 above</p>	<p>From: James Palmer [mailto:jpp.oakhouse@gmail.com] Sent: 15 September 2015 13:09 To: Stinton Brian Cc: Shuter Mathew Cllr; Rouse Michael Cllr; emma.grima@eastcambs.gov.uk; Preston Richard; Malyon Chris; Bates Ian Cllr; :Lis.Every@eastcambs.gov.uk; Goodland Debbie; Frost Alistair; Walmsley Stuart; Pascual Tanya; Menzies Bob; Hughes Graham Subject: Re: Procurement of Ely Southern Bypass-Comments on Timescale</p> <p>Brian</p> <p>I have to wonder what the point is of involving members at all.</p> <p>James</p>

5	<p>17th Sept 2015</p> <p>Reply to James Palmer from County Council Head of Major Infrastructure Delivery, seeking to placate Palmer, but reiterating the earlier advice.</p>	<p>From: Walmsley Stuart Sent: 17 September 2015 12:12 To: Palmer James Cllr <jpp.oakhouse@gmail.com>; Stinton Brian <Brian.Stinton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk> Cc: Shuter Mathew Cllr <Mathew.Shuter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Rouse Michael Cllr <m.rouse@homecall.co.uk>; emma.grima@eastcambs.gov.uk; Preston Richard <Richard.Preston@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Malyon Chris <Chris.Malyon@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Bates Ian Cllr <Ian.Bates@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; :Lis.Every@eastcambs.gov.uk <Lis.Every@eastcambs.gov.uk>; Goodland Debbie <Debbie.Goodland@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Frost Alistair <Alistair.Frost@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Pascual Tanya <Tanya.Pascual@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Menzies Bob <Bob.Menzies@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Hughes Graham <Graham.Hughes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk> Subject: RE: Procurement of Ely Southern Bypass-Comments on Timescale Dear Cllr Palmer,</p> <p>Thank you for your email correspondence in response to Brian's Ely Southern By Pass Briefing note. I was sorry to read your email regarding your role and the role of members in developing the stages of the scheme through the project board. I and all lead Project Managers working on the broad range of major capital projects across the county (including Ely Southern Section By Pass) do highly value fully engaging members throughout the process and to test the consultation, to agree on the detailed design and timings of planning needs. The Project Board is one way in which a collective view can be gathered. Whilst there are no formal decisions making roles of the Board (that rests in most cases with the E&E Committee) The view of the Board is important in the steering the advancement of an agreed scheme. The Ely Project Board has certainly taken on this responsibility and enabled some clarity and scrutiny in defining the shape of the scheme so far.</p> <p>However, the consideration of risk is extremely important by ensuring that the right contractor is appointed when it comes to procurement and agreeing a method of awarding contracts. There are large cost implications and loss of credibility with the public and the industry to consider if we get it wrong. Brian and the delivery team had considered this point, and taken views from the Board on what the procurement timescales and process. He took advice from the appointed consultant WYG, the county procurement officers to test with the potential providers on the impact shorter procurement timelines for larger based projects. Overwhelming, the message was to allow the full 8 week minimum tendering lead in times to develop an accurate cost. In some cases discretion can be adopted to limit the length the time of procurement and design stages. In my experience however, Ely By Pass is not such a scheme and the 8 week period for tendering is reasonable. It's worth mentioning that a proper tender period can save time and cost over the duration of the contract and we remain confident the scheme will conclude in Autumn 2017.</p> <p>I would be more than happy to run through the process with you in a separate meeting if you consider this would help. I also look forward to your continued input as we move towards critical stages of awarding the contract.</p> <p>Stuart Stuart Walmsley Head of Major Infrastructure Delivery</p>
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6	<p>20th Sept 2015</p> <p>Email sent by a senior official at East Cambs District Council stating that the council's £1million contribution would be withdrawn if the bypass was not completed by November 2017.</p>	<p>From: Emma Grima [mailto:Emma.Grima@eastcambs.gov.uk] Sent: 20 September 2015 18:38 To: Stinton Brian; Shuter Mathew Cllr; Rouse Michael Cllr; Palmer James Cllr; Preston Richard; Malyon Chris; Palmer James Cllr Cc: Bates Ian Cllr; Lis Every Cllr; Goodland Debbie; Frost Alistair; Walmsley Stuart; Pascual Tanya; Menzies Bob; Hughes Graham; John Hill Subject: RE: Procurement of Ely Southern Bypass-Comments on Timescale</p> <p>Dear Brian.</p> <p>Whilst I appreciate the risks you have identified in relation to shortening the tender period the County Council have failed to fully explain the risks (providing only a very brief summary with no submitted evidence) and have failed to compare the risk of the increasing costs of the bypass with each day this project is delayed. That being said, not wanting to get into long drawn out arguments over the tendering process (as this in itself will cause unnecessary delay) and the fact that you remain positive that an autumn 2017 completion can still be achieved, reluctantly, the Council agree to progress with the tender process as recommended in your email below.</p> <p>The District Council has committed £1 million of CIL funding to this project. This commitment has been made on a planned completion of Autumn 2017, i.e. no later than November 2017 (preferably sooner). Any slippage to this completion date will result in the District Council withdrawing this £1 million commitment. The District Council will not be releasing any of the £1 million commitment until after the bypass is complete and will only release money if the bypass is complete by November 2017.</p> <p>Regards Emma Grima Director (Commercial & Corporate Services)</p>
7	<p>14th May 2016</p> <p>Palmer's email to the County Council's transport director suggesting that the council needed to be more "professional and ambitious".</p>	<p>From: James Palmer [mailto:jpp.oakhouse@gmail.com] Sent: 14 May 2016 10:53 To: Hughes Graham <Graham.Hughes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk> Cc: Bates Ian Cllr <Ian.Bates@cambridgeshire.gov.uk>; Count Steve Cllr <Steve.Count@cambridgeshire.gov.uk> Subject: Re: Ely Bypass</p> <p>Graham</p> <p>As ever I remain eternally frustrated as to why we are using data from 2008 to bid for funding in 2016.</p> <p>The bypass was accepted as a scheme by the Secretary of State in October 2014, why is the data we are using from 2008?</p> <p>Despite the problems it does seem at least that government is keen for the scheme to go ahead but perhaps you will be able to tell me why it has taken so long to get to this stage? Why were we not ready to go to procurement in October 2014? Why are we using useless data that harms our bid?</p>

		<p>I hope that if and when the funding is given and the scheme has started, we can look at the questions I have put to you and see where CCC can improve on their performance in future medium sized schemes.</p> <p>With Kings Dyke, Wisbech Rail, Soham Station, the A10, A428, A47 and many more I'm sure to come, it is imperative that CCC are as ambitious and professional as possible. These infrastructure projects are years overdue and must be sorted if we are to deliver the growth requires.</p> <p>James</p>
8	<p>20th April 2017 Wisbech Standard http://www.wisbechstandard.co.uk/news/james-palmer-conservative-palmer-pledges-a-lean-mean-and-trim-authority-1-4982957 Statement by Palmer about lessons from Ely bypass project</p>	<p>“If I say I’m going to do it, then my record suggests I’ve done it.”</p> <p>“Cllr Palmer, who has been leader for four years, says lessons learnt in delivering initiatives such as the Ely bypass will be, if successful, something he takes into the role.”</p>
9	<p>11th April 2018 Cambridge Independent http://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/south-cambridgeshire/bypass-delay-has-cost-us-13million-1-5472793 Palmer declines to apologise for Ely bypass overspend and delay.</p>	<p>Palmer: “While the Ely Bypass is very much a Cambridgeshire County Council-led project I make no apologies in my former role as leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council for pressing to get this project delivered as quickly as possible for Ely.</p>
10	<p>12th April 2018 Report to the CCC Economy and Environment Committee, Page 2 – CCC officers’ description of the approach to risk taken by the Project Board.</p>	<p>1.5 Following the long, iterative development and approval process, members on the Project Board discussed the risks in shortening the tender and design time but emphasised the importance of quick delivery of the scheme. The tender documents and contract were prepared to facilitate the earliest possible start on site and the contract was tendered on the basis of the indicative design developed for the planning application. Stage 1 would develop this into a more detailed engineering design, with Stage 2 being design completion and construction.</p> <p>1.6 The Stage 1 contract (developed design) was awarded in August 2016. The developed design was used to derive a Target Price for the full engineering design and construction. A Target Price of £27,470,909 for the design completion and construction was agreed and work on site commenced in January 2017. It was reported at the time that this sum held no risk or contingency and that additional funding would need to be sought to meet any increase in cost.</p>
11	<p>12th April 2018 Public question to and response from the Economy & Environment Committee - confirms that at the time of</p>	<p>Question: How does this committee justify its decision to pursue a high risk contract strategy, with no upper bound on the costs and no contingency to cover the inevitable overspend, which will now necessitate further cuts to council services to fund loan repayments?</p>

	<p>the award of contract (July 2016) it was known that the budget would be overspent.</p>	<p>Response: Delivery of the Ely Southern Bypass has been a top priority for the Council since 2011. The project is much needed to remove delays and congestion at the Ely Railway Bridge and Level Crossing, which are anticipated to become worse as both rail and road traffic increase. The project despite having a very high level of public support, has suffered a number of delays through the planning process. In these circumstances the Committee prioritised early delivery over cost certainty. It is in the nature of civil engineering contracts that there are risks and uncertainties, and thus all civil engineering contracts have some amount of client risk, and thus could be described as having no upper bound. What is important is to achieve the right balance of risk between the client and contractor. The Ely Southern Bypass contract has focused the contractor on achieving the earliest possible delivery.</p> <p>At the time of award it was recognised that contingency would be needed, but it was decided that rather than make an arbitrary allocation of funds from the capital programme it would be better to wait until there was a greater degree of cost certainty and make an appropriate allocation at that time.</p>
12	<p>30th May 2018 Cambridge Independent http://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/cambridge/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-combined-authority-aims-for-5-3billion-budget-1-5539398</p> <p>Palmer claims his record was built on the delivery of infrastructure at pace.</p>	<p>The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority meets today (Wednesday) to agree a budget that reaches a dizzying £5.3billion in four years' time.</p> <p>It is not confirmed where most of the money will come from, but a spokesperson for mayor James Palmer has said that "productive" meetings have been held in recent weeks.</p> <p>A £4.8billion transport and infrastructure spend, before inflation of around £350m is accounted for, makes up the bulk of the budget.</p> <p>Of this, £2.5billion would pay for an extension of the M11 to the A47, and £500million for phase two of the A10. An additional £1.5billion is lined up to pay for phase two of the mayor's proposed CAM Metro, which has been the cause of tension between the authority and Greater Cambridge Partnership this week.</p> <p>Mr Palmer said: "My record as a council leader was built upon the successful delivery of new infrastructure at pace."</p>
14	<p>10th March 2018 Cambridge Independent http://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/cambridge/mayor-james-palmer-criticises-network-rail-over-200m-cambridge-south-station-price-tag-1-5425847</p> <p>Palmer criticises Network Rail and promises accelerated delivery of Cambridge South railway station</p>	<p>Mr Palmer said he is not prepared to support plans for Cambridge South unless the 2022 delivery date is brought forward.</p> <p>He said: "No one will ever be able to convince me that 2022 is an acceptable target date for the completion of Cambridge South station.</p> <p>"Work should start as soon as possible and we should look to have it open by 2021.</p> <p>"My focus as mayor is to try to find a way of doing this. Undoubtedly this will involve challenging the status quo and the conventional way of delivering rail infrastructure."</p> <p>In a letter to Mr Johnson, the mayor says he wants to explore "innovative ways" of delivering rail infrastructure involving third parties.</p>

		Palmer: “My view is that Network Rail is a failing organisation and there are examples all over Cambridgeshire and Peterborough where its inefficiencies and inability to deliver rail infrastructure quickly has held back growth in our area,” he continued.
15	23 rd May 2018 Cambridge News https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/mayor-james-palmer-busway-cambourne-14697659 Palmer criticises the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)	Palmer: "The fact is that the GCP has failed to deliver any serious infrastructure improvements over the first four years of its existence, I struggle to see why there is any reason that things will be any different over the next four."
16	29 th May 2018 Hunts Post http://www.huntspost.co.uk/motoring/mayor-says-a428-upgrade-delay-is-unacceptable-1-5538457 Palmer criticises Highways England and Department for Transport for delay with A428 dualling – in contrast to Jonathan Djanogly MP who acknowledges that further work is needed before the scheme can progress.	Palmer: “Unlike other key roads in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, such as the A10, the A428 is the responsibility of Highways England. However, as Mayor I’m keen to put as much pressure on as possible to ensure that work on dualling starts by 2020.” Mayor Palmer said: “I was originally told that construction would start on dualling the A428/Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet in 2020. However, I was informed at the conference that it may have slipped back to 2021. I made clear to senior figures from the Department for Transport and Highways England that this is not acceptable. ... Huntingdon MP Jonathan Djanogly said that 18 months ago Highways England consulted on proposals to provide a dual carriageway on the A428 and responses raised concerns about how the scheme would fit in with a strategic study on improvements to the A1. [Djanogly] said: “This will require further analysis to fully understand the implications for the A428 scheme. This means that the preferred route announcement has not been possible in 2017 as originally envisaged.
17	25 th July 2018 Cambridge Independent (from paper copy) Palmer criticises the Greater Cambridge Partnership over the delivery timescale for the Cam Metro and promises accelerated delivery	Palmer: “I want to be clear that I see the delivery of the first phases of the metro by 2023, with full completion by 2028, as an absolute baseline, from which I will be pressing for additional time savings. “The report states a ‘normal’ delivery time of 2029 – 2040, but that timescale is simply not relevant to how the Combined Authority would go about delivering this scheme. “This paper was about highlighting how we will accelerate delivery of the metro...”
18	22 nd July 2017 Cambs Times http://www.cambstimes.co.uk/news/revealed-rift-between-cambridgeshire-chamber-of-commerce-boss-john-bridge-and-mayor-james-palmer-over-wisbech-to-march-rail-link-1-5118064	Mr Bridge, also a senior member of the Government funded Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) believes that it is economically unviable and is not deliverable. His comments – aired in a BBC interview– were immediately criticised by recently elected Cambridgeshire and Peterborough mayor James Palmer.

<p>Palmer attacks John Bridge of the Chambers of Commerce and LEP over the proposal to re-open the March to Wisbech railway line.</p>	<p>One of Mayor Palmer's first actions on taking office was to fund the £3.2 million Grip 3 study needed to progress the rail opening – a project the LEP had declined pending more detailed information.</p> <p>Mayor Palmer said he was “astounded” when he first heard of the criticism by Mr Bridge “and I went to see him and told him how naïve I thought he was”.</p>
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