

AGENDA

CABINET

THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2019

4.00 PM

**RICHARD YOUNG ROOM, BOATHOUSE,
WISBECH**

Committee Officer: Linda Albon
Tel: 01354 622229
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- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm and sign the minutes of 21 February 2019.
- 3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified
- 4 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting
- 5 Economic Growth - update from the O&S Review (Pages 7 - 20)

For Cabinet to consider the Economic Development Review Report which resulted from the recent Member led review and has been subsequently endorsed by the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel during their meeting on 18 March 2019.

- 6 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 21 - 22)

For information purposes.

7 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

CONFIDENTIAL - ITEMS COMPRISING EXEMPT INFORMATION

To exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: "that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated."

8 Chatteris Land Agreement (Confidential Item)

To consider a developer agreement in Chatteris.

Tuesday, 9 April 2019

Members: Councillor C Seaton (Chairman), Councillor D Oliver (Vice-Chairman), Councillor M Buckton, Councillor A Hay, Councillor Mrs D Laws and Councillor P Murphy

CABINET



THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2019 - 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Seaton (Chairman), Councillor D Oliver (Vice-Chairman), Councillor M Buckton, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor A Hay, Councillor Mrs D Laws and Councillor P Murphy

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor W Sutton

CAB34/18 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting 17 January 2019 were confirmed and signed.

CAB35/18 FINAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019-20

Members considered the Final Business Plan 2019-20 presented by Councillor Seaton.

Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Council the approval of the Final Business Plan 2019-20.

CAB36/18 CORPORATE BUDGET 2019 & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members considered the Corporate Budget 2019 and Medium Term Financial Strategy report presented by Councillor Hay.

Councillor Buckton proposed an amendment. He proposed that Recommendation 3(x) of the report in the Cabinet agenda be amended to read:

3(x) *one of the following two options proposed in respect of Fenland District Council's Band D Council Tax is agreed for 2019/20:*

(a) Council Tax be set at £265.59, an increase of £5.13 (1.97%) on the current year (2018/19) requiring no contribution from General Reserves or unidentified savings to set a balanced budget;

or

(b) Council Tax be set at £260.46, the same level as the current year 2018/19 (no increase) and if the Council approves this option then a contribution of £150,720 is made from General Reserves in 2019/20 to secure a balanced Budget.

Councillor Cornwell seconded the amendment.

Councillor Hay pointed out that should it be decided to set Council Tax at the same level as the current year, this would lead to a shortfall of £708,000 in 2020/21.

Cabinet AGREED to the proposed amendment of Recommendation 3(x).

Cabinet AGREED to approve:

- (i) The revised estimates for 2018/19 as set out in Section 7 and Appendix A showing an estimated under-spend at outturn in the region of £103,000/

and to recommend that Council approve:

- (ii) the General Fund revenue budget for 2019/20;
- (iii) the adoption of the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- (iv) the Capital Programme and funding statement;
- (v) the adoption of the Business Rates Relief scheme;
- (vi) the expenses detailed in Section 10 to be treated as general expenses for 2019/20;
- (vii) the Port Health levy for 2019/20;
- (viii) the adoption of additional Council Tax premiums on Long Term Empty Properties as detailed in Section 12;
- (ix) the Treasury Management, Capital Strategy Minimum Revenue Provision, Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2019/20;
- (x) one of the following two options proposed in respect of Fenland District Council's Band D Council Tax for 2019/20:

(a) Council Tax be set at £265.59, an increase of £5.13 (1.97%) on the current year (2018/19) requiring no contribution from General Reserves or unidentified savings to set a balanced budget;

or

(b) Council Tax be set at £260.46, the same level as the current year 2018/19 (no increase) and if Council approves this option then a contribution of £150,720 is made from General Reserves in 2019/20 to secure a balanced budget.

[Councillor Hay abstained from voting on the proposal to amend Recommendation 3(x)]

CAB37/18 COUNTY-WIDE HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AND REPAIRS POLICY

Members considered the County-wide Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy report presented by Councillor Mrs Laws.

Councillor Cornwell commented that this policy is a step forward. It gives the important message that it does not matter where you are within the county, all will receive the same level of support, and it removes the risk of any one area being treated differently.

Cabinet APPROVED the County-wide Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy.

CAB38/18 FENLAND LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE

Members considered the Fenland Local Plan Review and Update report presented by Councillor Mrs Laws.

Cabinet AGREED to endorse the following for consideration and agreement by Council that:

- a full review of the local plan is commenced soon after the local elections in May 2019 but with technical reports being commissioned before then
- the Corporate Director (Growth and Infrastructure) is delegated to appoint PCC Planning Policy team via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to carry out the required Local Plan review and to engage the relevant specialist advice related to the evidence documents within the allocated budget

- the Local Development Scheme is the timetable for the production of the new local plan, which will include the required consideration of Cabinet and Council at appropriate stages of the review.

CAB39/18 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Seaton presented the Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

CAB40/18 COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW - CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW MARCH AND WISBECH

Members considered the Comprehensive Spending Review report into the relocation of the One Stop Shops in March and Wisbech presented by Councillor Hay.

Councillor Seaton advised that there needs to be a proposal for which of the available options Cabinet needs to debate. Councillor Hay proposed a debate on moving to the Boathouse in Wisbech and to Fenland Hall in March.

Councillor Buckton seconded the proposal.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Oliver commented that it makes sense to move into our own properties; with decreasing footfall it would not be wise to enter into contracts with other partners.
- Councillor Seaton agreed, saying it would be best to utilise our own assets in the best possible way.
- Councillor Hay commented that moving into Fenland Hall would provide greater resilience as staff could be moved more easily between the contact centre and one stop shop area. There is not enough room at the library to house staff that currently work out of the March One Stop Shop, therefore some of these would have to be relocated to Fenland Hall anyway. She agreed with Councillor Oliver that footfall into the shops is on a downward trend and does not look likely to change; it would cost money for revisionary works in both March and Wisbech libraries, whereas any money needing to be spent at Fenland Hall or the Boathouse would be an improvement to our own properties.
- Councillor Buckton agreed with all that had been said, adding that using our own premises will give us greater flexibility to adjust the service that we provide as demand changes.

Cabinet AGREED to approve:

- **relocation of the March One Stop Shop to Fenland Hall;**
- **relocation of the Wisbech One Stop Shop to The Boathouse;**
- **to delegate the delivery of the preferred options to the Corporate Director and Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that Appendix A of the report involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972).

2.31 pm

Chairman

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Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	CABINET	
Date:	18 April 2019	
Report Title:	Economic Development - Member Led Review	

1 Purpose / Summary

For Cabinet to consider the Economic Development Review Report which resulted from the recent Member led review and has been subsequently endorsed by the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel during their meeting on 18 March 2019

2 Key issues

- The aim of the Council as detailed within the Business Plan is “to improve the quality of life for people living in Fenland” and one of its three key outward facing priorities is “Economy”
- The economic prosperity of the District is a key cornerstone to delivering Fenland's growth aspirations as a pro-growth authority in the region.
- Members previously considered a report (Cabinet/Council May 2018) in relation to Economic Development followed by a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny. The report outlined a shared service proposal for the Economic Development Team in conjunction with the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) which was not supported by Members
- It was proposed by Cabinet that an Economic Development Member Led Review, headed by selected members (the review team) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be undertaken to consider the wider entirety of the Economic Development service and the Council's Economic Development activities.
- The scope of the review was further extended following receipt of a letter from the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The letter requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the fact that four of the five trading accounts disclosed in the Council's accounts, namely Markets, The Port, Economic Estates as well as the Light Industrial Units and Business Centres appear to require financial subsidy rather than being cost neutral. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered a report in relation to the trading accounts during their meeting on 10 December 2018. During that meeting the panel agreed that due to the close links with the Fenland Economy the Trading Account considerations should be included in the scope of the Economic Development Member Led Review.
- The findings and recommendation of the above trading account discussions were reported back to Corporate Governance Committee on 19 March 2019.
- The Member Led Review Group commenced a demanding schedule of four separate meetings commencing in January 2019 and concluding March 2019 and benefitted from contributions from internal and external stakeholders in addition to other public sector organisations, which have been invaluable in helping to inform the resulting review recommendations.

- The Review Team concluded that the review has been extremely positive, with many opportunities identified for Fenland which will have a beneficial impact on local residents.

3. Recommendations

- For Cabinet to consider and approve the Economic Development Review Recommendations which are outlined below. Should Cabinet be minded to endorse the review recommendations they will then be reflected the future Investment Strategy and Business Plan accordingly:
- The organisation should have a greater focus and emphasis on Economic Growth across the district as opposed to Economic Development. Evidence obtained as part of the review has clearly indicated that there is more added value to be gained within Fenland from focussing more on intrinsic economic growth from our current position. Such an approach can align to the delivery of housing and infrastructure along with jobs/skills creation therefore taking a more proactive approach to improving economic prosperity in the district. Intrinsic Economic Growth can be both influenced and complimented by the activities of Fenland District Council and further enhanced by the adoption of an effective Investment Strategy, which needs to align with the wider Economic Growth ambition for the area.
- The Investment strategy could benefit from two approaches namely a purely commercial element focussed on raising revenue for the Council, with the second element having a greater focus on regeneration therefore having a positive impact on the local community that a public sector organisation can lever as opposed to a purely commercial focussed business.
- The Review Team acknowledge that the emergence of the CPCA has the capacity to bring with it significant opportunities for the area not least because of the scale, capability and significant funding streams available. It is vital therefore that Fenland proactively influence the development of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Skills Strategy, Mayoral Development Corporation and Growth Fund to maximise the potential benefits for the area.
- The Council needs to align any future Economic Growth Service with the CPCA to ensure the realisation of any mutual benefits in addition to the avoidance of any duplication of effort.
- The Review Team acknowledges that the Council needs to become more commercialised in its approach to Economic Growth, with change of focus from transactional activity to one with a strategic emphasis towards growth.
- The Review Team recommends that future structures for the delivery of an Economic Growth Service should be explored including consideration of a closer alignment with the Planning team to ensure a greater focus on Economic Growth.
- The CPIER Report provides a shared common understanding of the position from which to work in promoting Economic Growth in Fenland.
- Whilst the CPIER Report highlights the difference between the economic drivers in Whittlesey and those in the rest of the District, it is important to recognise that all parts of the District are distinct and that a "one size fits all" approach to Economic Growth in Fenland would be sub-optimal and potentially counter-productive. The Council should engage with local partners to help inform the solutions to ensure a non-standard approach reflective of each area is achieved
- The Review Group recognises that the impending review of the Local Plan is of crucial importance in fostering medium and long term Economic Growth in Fenland

as the extension of the current economic base will involve land that is not currently used for industry or homes.

- The Review Group is aware that there is advantage to the Council and district of having larger-scale commercial developments within the area as they have the scope to contribute significantly to Economic Growth across Fenland whilst also supporting the financial security of the Council.
- The Review Group understands that there are few if any medium sized office space facilities within the district therefore providing less opportunity for small office-based businesses in Fenland to expand without moving away. There are opportunities to include this consideration within the Investment Strategy and the impending review of the Local Plan.
- A future Economic Growth Service could more actively target, encourage and support initiatives in agriculture-related industries, including processing, manufacture and transport being the leading sector in the district.
- Fenland can benefit from its geographical proximity to the growth area of Peterborough with its industrial base and the evolving University. Whilst the district is further away from the growth area around Cambridge, the much greater quantity of Economic Growth in Cambridge with the problems associated with 'over heating' which have arisen provides opportunities in Fenland, which should be exploited in terms of business relocation, skills and homes.
- In relation to the matter raised by the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee in relation to the Trading Accounts regarding Markets, The Port, Economic Estates as well as The Light Industrial Units and Business Centres, The Review Team recognises that because the Trading Account disclosures in the financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting standards, the figures shown will differ from those included in the Council budget and internal in-year reporting. This is principally because the financial statements include charges for depreciation, some of which is calculated on a whole cost basis with no actual costs to FDC, and some of the movements in the value of land and property used to deliver those services associated with each Trading Account. In Local Authority accounts legislation requires that such charges are reversed out at the year-end so that they do not impact on the Council's General Fund balance or the Council Taxpayer.
- The Review Team considers that the support costs attributed to the Markets, Light Industrial Units and Business Centres are high and therefore a review of how support costs are attributed should be undertaken by Officers to inform decision making in 2020/2021 onwards.
- The Review Team accept that further options in relation to the Port of Wisbech will be presented to Cabinet later this calendar year.
- The provision of the Markets service represents an economic opportunity and as such should be considered by the Council and our partners and included within the scope of the future Transformation and Efficiency Plan (TEP) regarding the future provision of the service
- Look to consider business partnering (via account manager) as BCKLWN and ECDC and to drive forward proposals to focus on specific Economic Growth areas in the District in collaboration with partners.

Wards Affected	All
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Forward Plan Reference	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr David Oliver - Portfolio Holder for Growth, Community Safety, Heritage & Transport Cabinet Members
Report Originators & Contact Officers	Paul Medd - Chief Executive Gary Garford - Corporate Director Justin Wingfield - Head of Business and Economy Anna Goodall - Head of Governance and Customer Services
Background Paper(s)	Member Led Review of Economic Development - Overview and Scrutiny 18 March 2019

Agenda Item No:	Item 7	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	18 March 2019	
Report Title:	Member-Led Review of Economic Development	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by the Member Led Review Group on behalf of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Panel. The Member Led Review Group has undertaken a wide-ranging review of the Council's Economic Development, Regeneration and Growth activities involving a variety of relevant stakeholders. This report explains the background to the review, its objectives and methodology, together with a summary of each meeting, including learning outcomes and subsequent conclusions and recommendations.

2 Key issues

- 2.1 The aim of the Council as detailed within the Business Plan is "to improve the quality of life for people living in Fenland" and one of its three key outward facing priorities is "Economy"
- 2.2 The economic prosperity of the District is a key cornerstone to delivering Fenland's growth aspirations as a pro-growth authority in the region.
- 2.3 Members previously considered a report (Cabinet/Council May 2018) in relation to Economic Development followed by a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny. The report outlined a shared service proposal for the Economic Development Team in conjunction with the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) which was not supported by Members.
- 2.4 It was proposed that an Economic Development Member Led Review, headed by selected members (the review team) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be undertaken to consider the wider entirety of the Economic Development service and the Council's Economic Development activities.
- 2.5 The Member Led Review Group commenced a demanding schedule of four separate meetings commencing in January 2019 and concluding March 2019 and benefitted from contributions from internal and external stakeholders in addition to other public sector organisations, which have been invaluable in helping to inform the resulting review recommendations.
- 2.6 The Review Team concluded that the review has been extremely positive, with many opportunities identified for Fenland which will have a beneficial impact on local residents.

3 Recommendations that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Endorse the work of the Economic Review Team and approve the review conclusions & recommendations for consideration by Cabinet on 18 April 2019.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr David Oliver - Portfolio Holder for Growth, Community Safety, Heritage & Transport
Report Originator(s)	Anna Goodall - Head of Governance and Legal
Contact Officer(s)	Anna Goodall - Head of Governance and Legal Paul Medd - Chief Executive Gary Garford - Corporate Director Justin Wingfield - Head of Business and Economy
Background Paper(s)	

Report:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of the Council as detailed within the Business Plan is “to improve the quality of life for people living in Fenland” and one of its three key outward facing priorities is “Economy” with the current objectives of:
- Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland
 - Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland
 - Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across Fenland
- 1.2 In order to ensure that Fenland is an attractive place for people to live & work and to underpin sustainable growth, it is essential to ensure that new businesses are attracted into the area. Increasing the number and range of businesses and jobs within the district contributes towards creating higher skilled and better paid employment opportunities, with a significant proportion of that wage growth, expenditure and additional Business Rate revenue being spent and generated within the district, directly contributing towards the economic prosperity cycle.
- 1.3 The economic prosperity of the District is a key cornerstone to delivering Fenland's growth aspirations. As a pro-growth authority, Fenland District Council has a significant pipeline of projects and future growth activity which is predicated on unlocking substantial and sustainable housing and job growth already committed within our adopted Local Plan. It is anticipated that 11,000 new dwellings will be delivered by 2031, allied to providing 7,000 additional jobs in the area which will ensure existing and new residents have local job opportunities. In addition there is the potential for an additional 10,000 - 12,000 new homes as part of the Wisbech Garden Town project, and securing investment into much needed and significantly improved road, rail, digital connectivity and infrastructure.
- 1.4 Inward investment across the district facilitates business growth as well as creating jobs, enhancing skills and bringing financial investment into the area. Not only will business growth create broader prosperity but it will also create direct financial benefit to the Council and its residents from additional NNDR (Business Rates) income, which can be used to support existing and future Council services.

- 1.5 The Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2012 – 2031 aims to influence the shape and direction of the local economy and whilst we recognise that the district is not an isolated economy, we understand that other economic factors whether regionally, national and international will impact on the productivity and competitiveness of the district. It is how we adapt to these challenges and seize the opportunities that will define the vision and ambitions and in turn shape the future of our district.

2 Background / introduction

- 2.1 Members previously considered a report (Cabinet/Council May 2018) in relation to Economic Development followed by a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny. The report outlined a shared service proposal for the Economic Development Team in conjunction with the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN). The proposal required some additional investment from Fenland however this investment would result in a larger team with a wider skill set than Fenland could potentially achieve in isolation. The proposal would have seen the team expand its resources to include a shared Head of Service, a dedicated account manager to work much more closely with Fenland businesses, together with a shared intelligence officer and a shared inward investment officer.
- 2.2 The report proposals did not meet with general member approval and therefore it was proposed that an Economic Development Member Led Review, headed by selected members (the review team) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be undertaken to consider the wider entirety of the Economic Development service and the Council's Economic Development activities. The review was tasked with examining the primary economic and growth objectives of the Council and the service priorities as well as the resources and skills which are required in order to achieve these objectives.
- 2.3 Prior to the publication of the Economic Development Shared Service Proposal report the Economic Development Service had been provided by a 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Fenland District Council Officer post in addition to 0.6 FTE (funded by a frozen 1FTE post) delivered in conjunction with Opportunity Peterborough by virtue of an annually renewable Service Level Agreement. In addition the service was supported by the Head of Business and Economy. The contract with Opportunity Peterborough came to an end in February 2018 and a temporary four month extension was agreed ending in June 2018, therefore it was considered an opportune time to review future arrangements. Recently it has become increasingly apparent that Economic Development and Growth has grown in importance particularly with the formation of the CPCA. In addition Members recognise that with a reduction in core Council funding, increased investment, commercialisation and revenue creation - of which Business Rates growth and retention play a vital part - are key tools to creating a sustainably funded council.
- 2.4 The creation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) following the devolution deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has also offered significant opportunities for Fenland with support for major growth initiatives and infrastructure across several key projects, including Wisbech Access Study, March Access Study, Wisbech Garden Town, Fenland Railway Stations, Growing Fenland Market Town Economic Masterplans and the recent Growth Prospectus Programme. All these initiatives required input and development from the Councils various regeneration related teams and in particular the Economic Development service.
- 2.5 The recent publication in September 2018 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) helps map the future of the region economically, with a focus on The Fens as one of the three sub-economies, the others being the Greater Cambridge area and Greater Peterborough area. The majority of Fenland falls in The Fens sub-economy with Whittlesey located in the Greater Peterborough sub-economy. It has never been more important to grasp these opportunities and the

challenge is what role does Fenland wish to play in this to inform, shape and deliver the emerging Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

- 2.6 Since the expiry of the arrangement with Opportunity Peterborough in June 2018 the Economic Development Service has been reduced to a 0.5FTE Officer (with a frozen 1FTE post), which has undoubtedly had implications for the successful delivery of the service, particularly at a time when the prosperity of the Fenland Economy remains a key priority for the District Council.

3 Review Objectives

- 3.1 The Member Led Review Group agreed that the review would present a series of findings and associated recommendations to the wider Overview and Scrutiny Committee but ultimately to Cabinet. It was agreed that any recommendations would be practical and constructive, with the aim of ensuring the continued effective delivery of the Economic Priority from the Business Plan.

The agreed original Aims and Objectives were as follows:

- To examine the current Fenland economic landscape, including the different issues and opportunities across the four market towns and rural areas. Examine the Councils' and partners future aspirations and objectives for both the region and Fenland.
- To consider Economic Development opportunities in Fenland, the role the Council wishes to take and how and future service provision can support the realisation of these opportunities.
- To consider feedback from key internal and external stakeholders received in relation to the Economic Development Service.
- To examine the current approach to Economic Development of other equivalent Local Authorities and the associated performance metrics and outcomes.
- To consider the key service objectives and the skills and resources requirement to deliver those objectives.

- 3.2 In November 2018 the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Chris Boden, received a letter from the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor John Clark. The letter requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the fact that four of the five trading accounts disclosed in the Council's accounts, namely Markets, The Port, Economic Estates as well as the Light Industrial Units and Business Centres appear to require financial subsidy rather than being cost neutral. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered a report in relation to the trading accounts during their meeting on 10 December 2018. During that meeting the panel agreed that due to the close links with the Fenland Economy the Trading Account considerations should be included in the scope of the Economic Development Member Led Review. The scope of the Review was expanded to include a sixth point namely:

- To include the consideration of the Trading Accounts and what if any action is required to address the apparent financial subsidy.

- 3.3 The Economic Development Member Led Review Group was made up of Members of the existing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and comprised of:

- Councillor Boden - Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman
- Councillor Humphrey – Overview and Scrutiny Panel Vice Chairman
- Councillor Sam Clark
- Councillor Tierney

- Councillor Booth
- Councillor Benney (joined the Review Group as an observer)
- Councillor Oliver was also requested to attend as the current Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy and Growth

The meetings were also supported by The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Growth and Infrastructure), Head of Business and Economy, Head of Governance and Legal, along with other invited Officers and Member Support Team.

4 Review Approach and Methodology

4.1 The following approaches were used to gather evidence for this review:

- Consideration of the current economic landscape in the region and Fenland to set the context of the Member Led Review
- Consideration of the approach other Local Authorities, these included East Cambs DC and Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, of a similar nature to Fenland have taken to Economic Development.
- Consider whether, given the unique nature of each of the four market towns in the district in addition to the rural villages, if the delivery of Economic Development ought to reflect these differences and opportunities at a local level.
- Feedback gathered from the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Officers, External Stakeholders including local Business Leaders and small Business Representatives.
- Engagement with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and in particular engagement with representatives of the Business Board.
- Engagement with Mike Emmerich from Metro Dynamics as lead organisation on the CPIER report.

4.2 The Member Led Review Group commenced a demanding schedule of meetings commencing January 2019 and concluding March 2019. The Chairman, in conjunction with the wider Review Group, would like to acknowledge and thank the beneficial contributions from internal and external stakeholders in addition to other public sector organisations, which have been invaluable in helping to inform the resulting review recommendations.

4.3 Meeting 1 – (15 January 2019) The panel heard evidence from the Head of Shared Planning, Head of Business & Economy, Corporate Director for Growth & Infrastructure, the Corporate Director for Finance and the Council's Chief Executive. The meeting focussed on the current approach to Economic Development and the associated performance metrics and outcomes, including consideration of:

- The adopted Economic Development Strategy 2012-31;
- National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and exemptions;
- Potential impact of Central Government Business Rates Retention initiative;
- Council tax on residential properties;
- Effect of a new business on the Council's revenue;
- Business Rates discretion;
- Key points from the PAS review and growth ambitions of the Local Plan including the proposed review to begin in 2019;
- Enterprise Zones;

- In addition the Review Group also considered the correlation between outcomes (jobs, investment etc) and the financial impacts within the district as a result of Economic Development activity and conversely the impact of non-activity.

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Key learning points from the initial meeting included:

- An understanding of the Council's economic priorities supported by the adopted policy of an Economic Development Strategy.
- An understanding of the residential council tax bands which are most prevalent across the district
- The scale of businesses within the district which currently generate the greatest levels of NNDR and therefore income for the Council
- In order for growth in the district to lead to greater levels of prosperity this needs to include job opportunities and not just be limited to increasing the number of houses.
- Enterprise zones are now not supported by Government so recovery of business rate holiday funding by FDC is not possible.

4.4 Meeting 2 - (21 January 2019) the panel heard evidence from Toby Barlett, Director at Alan Barlett & Son, together with Mike Emmerich & Daniel Timms from Metro Dynamics. This meeting focussed on examining the current Fenland and regional economic landscape including the different issues and opportunities across the four market towns and rural areas. The meeting also considered the economic development opportunities in Fenland, the role the Council wishes to take and how any future service provision could support delivery of the aspirations and opportunities.

4.5 During the second meeting the Review Group received a presentation from Mike Emmerich and Daniel Timms in relation to the CPIER findings, Growing Fenland Masterplans, opportunities for Fenland as well as the approach to the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

4.6 In addition the Review Group also benefitted from a discussion with Toby Bartlett from Alan Bartlett and Sons Chatteris regarding their experience of Economic Development and the challenges and opportunities facing their highly successful agri-food business.

Key learning points from the second review group meeting included:

- An understanding that Whittlesey and The Fens represent two distinct economic areas within the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority area
- An understanding of the importance of the CPCA and its funding opportunities to Fenland and its economic future
- A requirement for an economic vision for the district aligned to regional strategies and opportunities
- Each of the four market towns have different characteristics and needs to enable them to maximise opportunities arising from economic growth
- A long term plan and approach to economic growth will yield ultimately the most beneficial outcomes.
- There are a limited number of different employment sectors across the district including agriculture and agritech companies. The competitive nature of the agriculture industry limits opportunities for further investment particularly in research and development therefore impacting wage growth.

4.7 Meeting 3 – (11 February 2019) the panel heard evidence from Jo Evans, Economic Development Officer and Marketing Officer at East Cambridgeshire District Council

(ECDC), Dan Thorp Assistant Director at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and Tony Sinkinson, Regional Manager for Jack's Supermarket (Tesco). The focus of the third and penultimate meeting was in relation to feedback from external stakeholder in relation to Economic Development. The Review Team also received information from other public sector organisations regarding their approach to Economic Development.

- 4.8 During the meeting the Review Team received a presentation from Dan Thorp from CPCA in relation to the importance of the role of Fenland in Cambridgeshire, the emergence of the Growth Team within the CPCA, Funding opportunities for Fenland in addition to regional infrastructure developments.
- 4.9 Jo Evans, Economic Development and Marketing Officer from ECDC attended the meeting to provide the Review Team with a vital insight into the approach to Economic Development at ECDC.
- 4.10 Tony Sinkinson from Tesco's Head Office regarding the Jack's store at Chatteris attended the meeting and gave a presentation as well as engaging in a question and answer session regarding their experience of Economic Development.

Key learning points from the third meeting included:

- The CPIER report provides an in-depth analysis of the area's economy, which provides the foundation for the emerging Local Industrial strategy (LIS).
 - The growing Fenland project will provide information on each of the markets towns which will inform the development of the LIS
 - A new Growth Service will be developed by the CPCA tailored to each economic area within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area to provide greater support to businesses to enable their growth. This service will be operational by 2020 and could be complemented by FDC resource.
 - The concept of Mayoral Development Corporations (MDC) is that they provide a potential support mechanism to economic growth. MDC could offer support on developments with viability and financial issues and offers a mechanism to expedite these developments through the planning process.
 - The remit of East Cambridgeshire District Council's (ECDC) Economic Development Team is to promote East Cambs as a place to do business. The team has 3 full time equivalent staff. Work is also undertaken on inward investment opportunities, Enterprise Zones and member engagement with local businesses.
 - ECDC highly supports the work of the Economic Development team and their success is reflected in the increased income generated by business rates.
 - Evidence from Tony Sinkinson suggested that most businesses require local authorities to engage and assist with streamlining the development process
- 4.11 The fourth and final meeting – (4 March 2019). This meeting was conducted in two parts, in part 1 (the morning) the review panel heard evidence from Councillor Brian Long, Leader of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk. This meeting focussed on the receipt of further evidence from a public sector organisation regarding their approach to Economic Development and the impact of an investment strategy and the way it is resourced to deliver the Councils ambition.. The Review Team also received detailed information regarding the Markets, the Port and the Light Industrial Units and Business Centres in relation to the trading accounts.
 - 4.12 The final meeting part 2 (afternoon) summarised the key points from the previous Review Group meetings and translated these into recommendations arising from the review to be presented to the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the first instance and ultimately to Cabinet for consideration.

Key learning points from the fourth and final meeting included:

- The benefit an Investment Strategy has had for the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk as it has resulted in more businesses moving into the area as well as increasing housing growth
- BCKLWN has successfully taken on the role of house builder due to low viability in the private sector to which Fenland could learn from
- Understanding the organisational risk appetite will help inform any future approach to investment

5 Review Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 The Review Team concluded that the review has been extremely positive, with many opportunities identified for Fenland in which will have a beneficial impact on local residents.

2.1 The resulting recommendations arising from the Review of Economic Development are as follows:

- Whilst it is accepted that at the outset of the Review the emphasis was on Economic Development, however as the Review has progressed and the Review Group have received evidence from a number of sources it has become increasingly evident that the organisation should have a greater focus and emphasis on Economic Growth across the district as opposed to Economic Development. Evidence obtained as part of this review has clearly indicated that there is more added value to be gained within Fenland from focussing more on intrinsic economic growth from our current position. Such an approach can align to the delivery of housing and infrastructure along with jobs/skills creation therefore taking a more proactive approach to improving economic prosperity in the district. Intrinsic Economic Growth can be both influenced and complimented by the activities of Fenland District Council and further enhanced by the adoption of an effective Investment Strategy, which needs to align with the wider Economic Growth ambition for the area.
- The Investment strategy could benefit from two approaches namely a purely commercial element focussed on raising revenue for the Council, with the second element having a greater focus on regeneration therefore having a positive impact on the local community that a public sector organisation can leverage as opposed to a purely commercial focussed business.
- The Review Team acknowledges that the emergence of the CPCA has the capacity to bring with it significant opportunities for the area not least because of the scale, capability and significant funding streams available. It is vital therefore that Fenland proactively influence the development of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Skills Strategy, Mayoral Development Corporation and Growth Fund to maximise the potential benefits for the area.
- The Council needs to align any future Economic Growth Service with the CPCA to ensure the realisation of any mutual benefits in addition to the avoidance of any duplication of effort.
- The Review Team acknowledges that the Council needs to become more commercialised in its approach to Economic Growth, with change of focus from transactional activity to one with a strategic emphasis towards growth.
- The Review Team recommends that future structures for the delivery of an Economic Growth Service should be explored including consideration of a closer alignment with the Planning team to ensure a greater focus on Economic Growth.

- The CPIER Report provides a shared common understanding of the position from which to work in promoting Economic Growth in Fenland.
- Whilst the CPIER Report highlights the difference between the economic drivers in Whittlesey and those in the rest of the District, it is important to recognise that all parts of the District are distinct and that a "one size fits all" approach to Economic Growth in Fenland would be sub-optimal and potentially counter-productive. The Council should engage with local partners to help inform the solutions to ensure a non-standard approach reflective of each area is achieved
- The Review Group recognises that the impending review of the Local Plan is of crucial importance in fostering medium and long term Economic Growth in Fenland as the extension of the current economic base will involve land that is not currently used for industry or homes.
- The Review Group is aware that there is advantage to the Council and district of having larger-scale commercial developments within the area as they have the scope to contribute significantly to Economic Growth across Fenland whilst also supporting the financial security of the Council.
- The Review Group understands that there are few if any medium sized office space facilities within the district therefore providing less opportunity for small office-based businesses in Fenland to expand without moving away. There are opportunities to include this consideration within the Investment Strategy and the impending review of the Local Plan.
- A future Economic Growth Service could more actively target, encourage and support initiatives in agriculture-related industries, including processing, manufacture and transport being the leading sector in the district.
- Fenland can benefit from its geographical proximity to the growth area of Peterborough with its industrial base and the evolving University. Whilst the district is further away from the growth area around Cambridge, the much greater quantity of Economic Growth in Cambridge with the problems associated with 'over heating' which have arisen provides opportunities in Fenland, which should be exploited in terms of business relocation, skills and homes.
- In relation to the matter raised by the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee in relation to the Trading Accounts regarding Markets, The Port, Economic Estates as well as The Light Industrial Units and Business Centres, The Review Team recognises that because the Trading Account disclosures in the financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting standards, the figures shown will differ from those included in the Council budget and internal in-year reporting. This is principally because the financial statements include charges for depreciation, some of which is calculated on a whole cost basis with no actual costs to FDC, and some of the movements in the value of land and property used to deliver those services associated with each Trading Account. In Local Authority accounts legislation requires that such charges are reversed out at the year-end so that they do not impact on the Council's General Fund balance or the Council Taxpayer.
- The Review Team considers that the support costs attributed to the Markets, Light Industrial Units and Business Centres are high and therefore a review of how support costs are attributed should be undertaken by Officers to inform decision making in 2020/2021 onwards.
- The Review Team accept that further options in relation to the Port of Wisbech will be presented to Cabinet later this calendar year.
- The provision of the Markets service represents an economic opportunity and as such should be considered by the Council and our partners and included within the

scope of the future Transformation and Efficiency Plan (TEP) regarding the future provision of the service

- Look to consider business partnering (via account manager) as BCKLWN and ECDC and to drive forward proposals to focus on specific Economic Growth areas in the District in collaboration with partners.

6 Next Steps

6.1 The Chairman of the Review group is keen that the review findings are circulated to all members, to ensure members have the opportunity to comment on the review findings before being considered by the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel and any subsequent Cabinet considerations and decision making.

- Review findings circulated to all Members 15 March 2019
- Review Considered by the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel 18 March 2019
- Final Review report to be considered by Cabinet 18 April 2019

If endorsed by Cabinet, the review recommendations will then be reflected the future Investment Strategy and Business Plan

**DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN –
Updated 04 April 2019**



(For any queries, please refer to the published forward plan)

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
20 June 2019	1. Annual Report 2018/2019 2. Treasury Management Annual Report 2018/19 3. Financial Outturn report 2018/2019 4. 24 High Street, Wisbech 5. Wisbech Garden Town Update 6. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC TBC
18 July 2019	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	TBC
19 Sep 2019	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	TBC
17 Oct 2019	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	TBC

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