

AGENDA

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2019

2.30 PM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL,
COUNTY ROAD, MARCH PE15 8NQ**

Committee Officer: Izzi Hurst

Tel: 01354 622281

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- 1 To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Previous Minutes. (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of 15 July 2019.
- 3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified.
- 4 Members to declare any interests under the Local Code of Conduct in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting.
- 5 Update on previous actions. (Pages 7 - 10)

Members to receive an update on the previous meeting's Action Plan.

- 6 Progress of Corporate Priority - Communities. (Pages 11 - 46)

This report sets out the Council's progress in delivering the corporate objectives from April 2019 to July 2019. This is to ensure that members have the most up to date information possible.

7 Council Tax Support - 2020/21 scheme. (Pages 47 - 58)

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. This report advises Overview and Scrutiny of the progress of the 2019 annual review and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.

8 Annual Ombudsman Letter and 3Cs process. (Pages 59 - 72)

Report - To update Members on the annual statistics in relation to the Local Government and Health and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) and the Council's corporate '3Cs' procedure. This explains how we deal with the comments, compliments, correspondence and complaints we receive.

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 paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated.

Letter - CONFIDENTIAL

9 Future Work Programme (Pages 73 - 78)

To consider the Draft Work Programme for Overview & Scrutiny Panel 2019/20.

10 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent.

Wednesday, 21 August 2019

Members: Councillor A Miscandlon (Chairman), Councillor A Hay (Vice-Chairman), Councillor G Booth, Councillor A Bristow, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor D Mason, Councillor M Purser, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor D Topgood, Councillor B Wicks and Councillor F Yeulett

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 15 JULY 2019 - 2.30 PM



PRESENT: Councillor A Miscandlon (Chairman), Councillor A Hay (Vice-Chairman), Councillor G Booth, Councillor A Bristow, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor D Mason, Councillor M Purser, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor Wicks and Councillor F Yeulett

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Humphrey

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sam Anthony (Head of HR and OD), Anna Goodall (Head of Governance and Customer Services), Izzi Hurst (Member Services & Governance Officer) and Mark Saunders (Chief Accountant)

OSC8/19 PREVIOUS MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2019 were confirmed and signed subject to the following comments;

1. Councillor Booth highlighted that the minute OSC2/19 should reflect that he had proposed the signing of the previous minutes and this had been seconded by Councillor Miscandlon.
2. Councillor Mrs Hay highlighted a typographical error in relation to minute OSC5/19 Point 17; the wording 'he added that the Council' needs to be removed from the statement.
3. Councillor Booth highlighted a typographical error in relation to minute OSC5/19 Point 42; the wording should read LGO and not LOG.
4. Councillor Booth highlighted a typographical error in relation to minute OSC5/19 Point 42; the repetition of the word 'at' in the statement.

OSC9/19 UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTIONS.

Members were provided with an update on the status of the actions raised at previous meetings of the Committee.

1. Members asked that future actions are labelled with identifiable numbers to assist referencing. Izzi Hurst agreed to this.
2. Councillor Booth asked for a further breakdown in relation to the Planning Enforcement action taken relating to planning breaches reported in the previous Action Plan.

OSC10/19 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - 2020/21 SCHEME

Members considered the Council Tax Support – 2020/21 scheme report presented by Mark Saunders.

Councillor Miscandlon informed members that the relevant Portfolio Holders, Councillor Boden and Councillor Mrs French, were not in attendance at today's meeting.

Councillor Miscandlon proposed that the item be deferred to a later date to allow Councillor Boden

and Councillor Mrs French to attend.

Members asked questions, made comments and received response as follows;

1. Councillor Booth asked why Councillor Boden and Councillor Mrs French were not in attendance at the meeting. Councillor Miscandlon confirmed that he was unsure as to why they were not in attendance.
2. Councillor Booth highlighted that there are cost implications for both members and officers for deferring this agenda item.
3. Councillor Miscandlon stated that whilst officers are present at the meeting, it is essential that the relevant Portfolio Holders are in attendance to answer member's questions.
4. Councillor Cornwell asked that the matter be referred urgently to Cabinet at the meeting on Thursday 18 July 2019. Councillor Miscandlon agreed to refer the matter to Cabinet.
5. Councillor Yeulett asked if the matter could also be referred to Council for the Portfolio Holders to issue an apology to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
6. Councillor Booth asked officers what the impact would be in deferring this item to a later meeting date. Mark Saunders explained that this item was considered earlier in the Overview and Scrutiny's Work Programme last year, but was moved to an earlier meeting date to allow for a longer consultation period. He confirmed that considering the item at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 2 September 2019 would still allow officers time to accommodate any consultation period.
7. Councillor Yeulett asked if an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel needed to be arranged to consider this item. Mark Saunders confirmed that providing the meeting is held prior to a meeting of Cabinet, officers will have enough time to incorporate member's comments into the report considered by Cabinet.
8. Councillor Booth asked if officers could prepare comparative figures reflecting an 8.5% contribution rate. Mark Saunders agreed to include this information in the subsequent report.
9. Councillor Booth asked if the subsequent report could highlight any savings to the Council based on an 'average' Council Tax Support Scheme. Mark Saunders agreed to include this information.
10. Councillor Hay and Councillor Miscandlon apologised to officers on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for deferring this item to a later meeting date.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Hay and agreed that the item be DEFERRED in the absence of the relevant Portfolio Holders.

OSC11/19 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members agreed the Future Work Programme subject to the following comments;

1. Members agreed to move the 'Local Health Partnership Update' and 'Health and Wellbeing Strategy' from the meeting on 2 September 2019 to the meeting on 10 February 2020. Councillor Booth queried why this agenda item needed to be moved to a later meeting date. Officers confirmed that this was due to there being no NHS representative available to attend the meeting. Councillor Booth raised concern that there appeared to be a 'single point of failure' in relation to having no alternative NHS representative available to attend.
2. Councillor Mason suggested that as oppose to holding additional meetings for items that may arise throughout the year, these items could be considered during the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's agreed calendar of meeting dates. Officers agreed that this would be considered where possible.
3. Councillor Hay asked for an update on the Empress Swimming Pool in Chatteris and its status as an Asset of Community Value. Officers provided Councillor Hay with an update.
4. Councillor Hay asked that Cabinet reconsider the appeals process and delegation for

Assets of Community Value as Portfolio Holders are responsible for making decisions regarding Assets of Community Value and Cabinet are currently responsible for undertaking an appeals process which could be seen as a conflict of interest.

2.59 pm

Chairman

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Agenda Item 5

Outstanding actions from Overview and Scrutiny – September 2019

MEETING DATE AGENDA ITEM AND MINUTE NUMBER	RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	UPDATE	TIMESCALE
OSC9/19 ACTION 1	Councillor Booth asked for a further breakdown in relation to the planning enforcement action taken relating to planning breaches. (minute OSC5/19)	<p>Figures for enforcement cases closed in 2018/19:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No Breach Found 54% i.e. 'development' was not found to have taken place 39%, or where it had it variously was permitted development 7%, had planning permission / deemed consent 6%, had been in place for so long it was lawful 2% 2. Retrospective planning permission granted 17% i.e. having established that a breach had taken place, planning permission was applied for and obtained retrospectively 3. Breach resolved through the owner / occupier taking voluntary action to remedy the breach 13% 4. Breach resolved through the owner/ occupier taking the necessary action to comply with a formal notice issued by the Council 5% 5. Breach of planning control but the scale of the breach is such that it does not warrant the serving of a notice and or if planning permission were applied for it would be granted planning permission 5% 6. Cases closed due to lack of evidence 3% 7. Duplicate case entry 1% 8. Referred to a more appropriate FDC service area / external organisation 1% 9. Following investigation Certificate of lawfulness applied for by owner and 	COMPLETED

		granted 1%	
OSC/10/19 ACTION 2	Councillor Booth asked if officers could prepare comparative figures reflecting an 8.5% contribution rate in relation to the Council Tax Support report.	Mark Saunders confirmed that he would provide this information to members at the meeting on 2 September 2019 when the Council Tax Support report is considered.	September 2019 meeting
OSC/11/19 ACTION 3	Councillor Booth asked if the subsequent report could highlight any savings to the Council based on an 'average' Council Tax Support Scheme.	Mark Saunders confirmed that he would provide this information to members at the meeting on 2 September 2019 when the Council Tax Support report is considered.	September 2019 meeting
OSC11/19 ACTION 4	Councillor Hay asked that Cabinet reconsider the appeals process and delegation for Assets of Community Value. Portfolio Holders are responsible for making decisions regarding Assets of Community Value whilst Cabinet are responsible for undertaking the appeals process. She highlighted that this could be seen as a conflict of interest.	<p>The policy was reviewed in November 2016 and changed to enable the original decision to be a decision for the relevant Portfolio Holder rather than cabinet. This therefore allowed the review process to be more streamlined to enable Cabinet to review the decision if appealed by the owner and provides a close fit to the non-statutory guidance. The Portfolio Holder would not participate in the decision making regarding the appeal.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny have the right to call in the review decision by Cabinet.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny commented on the new policy with amendments made prior to approval.</p> <p>If Overview and Scrutiny provided the appeal mechanism, then when it was referred back to Cabinet for a decision, O&S would not be able to call in the Cabinet decision due to a conflict of interest in the original decision. With Cabinet being the appeal mechanism this leaves O&S free to exercise their right of call-in unfettered by previous involvement in the process. Also, it adds time in to the process as O&S is not a decision making body; any recommendation</p>	COMPLETED

		would always have to be referred by to Cabinet. A streamlined process is in the best interest of all parties.	
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Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny	
Date:	2nd September 2019	
Report Title:	Progress in Delivering the Communities Corporate Objectives 2019-2020	

1 Purpose / Summary

This report sets out the Council's progress in delivering the corporate objectives from April 2019 to July 2019. This is to ensure that members have the most up to date information possible.

2 Key issues

- The work of early homeless prevention across the Fenland-led trailblazer project continues to make a valuable difference to people's lives and wellbeing with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 61 properties have been adapted to assist vulnerable and disabled residents stay in their homes since April 2019
- Homes in Whittlesey have been offered to 2 refugee families from Syria.
- Around 5,000 people in Wisbech participated in the I Love Wisbech Community Conversation.
- 87 people attended this year's first Golden Age Fair in Wisbech St Mary.
- Memberships at Freedom Leisure Centres have risen to over 6,000.
- Residents have saved around £35k on their energy bills.
- Active Fenland (the overarching brand for all sports development work) continues to deliver successful community projects and access funding opportunities.

3 Areas for focus

- Priorities for Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh
- Housing and Homelessness
- Culture Strategy

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Panel considers the progress made by the Council in delivering the corporate objectives in the Business Plan.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	

Portfolio Holder(s)	<p>All Cabinet; main responsibilities from:</p> <p>Councillor Sam Clark, Portfolio Holder for Social Housing & Leisure</p> <p>Councillor Susan Wallwork, Portfolio Holder for Communities</p> <p>Councillor Sam Hoy, Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Councillor Chris Seaton, Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility & Heritage</p>
Report Originator(s) And Contact Officer (s)	<p>Carol Pilson - Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk</p> <p>Phil Hughes</p> <p>Dan Horn</p> <p>Annabel Tighe</p>
Background Paper(s)	Business Plan 2019-2020

Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Progress of Corporate Priority - Communities

2 September 2019
(For performance from April to July 2019)

Portfolio Holders



**Councillor
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Ian Benney**

Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth



**Councillor
Sam Clark**

Portfolio Holder for
Social Housing &
Leisure



**Councillor
Susan Wallwork**

Portfolio Holder for
Communities



**Councillor
Mrs Jan French**

Deputy Leader of the
Council



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**

Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Peter Murphy**

Portfolio Holder for
Environment



**Councillor
Chris Seaton**

Portfolio Holder for
Social Mobility &
Heritage



**Councillor Steve
Tierney**

Portfolio Holder for
Transformation &
Communication

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities**Business Plan Priority:** Support vulnerable members of our community**Business Plan Action:** *Support residents to maximise their income by accessing the benefits they are entitled to. Process applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support efficiently and accurately through our shared service (Anglia Revenues Partnership; ARP)***Business Plan Action:** *Support residents in managing the effects of welfare reform changes by working with partners, including Jobcentre Plus and the Rural Citizens Advice Cambridgeshire, and helping them access Universal Credits online***Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Mrs Jan French

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved (in-month only)	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
LPI ARP1 Days taken to process Council Tax support – new claims and changes	8 days	7.93	8.67	
Target ARP2 Days taken to process Housing Benefit – new claims and changes	8 days	6.20	7.24	

We are within the tolerance levels for our targets, and the recent months' achievement illustrates that the trend is moving in the right direction and performance continues to improve .

The time taken to assess Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit, new claims and changes is decreasing. For the last month alone, target 1 processing time has increased by 1.5 days and target 2 by 1.55 days. This month's decrease has for both targets resulted in the time taken to assess Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit new claims/changes has decreased for the year as a whole. Target 1 has decreased by 0.31 days and target 2 by 0.30 days. The current year to date figures remain very good, with both targets having been exceeded.

The Council continues to analyse outstanding work and allocate work tasks on a daily basis to ensure that claims and changes are managed effectively.

The Partnership has recently advertised nine Council Tax Billing Officer vacancies.

Fenland has managed to spend 31% of Discretionary Housing Payment funds

allocated by the DWP to assist tenants in the local area.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Support vulnerable members of our community

Business Plan Action: *Prevent Homelessness, meet housing needs, improve housing conditions and keep homes accessible through our housing duties*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Miss Sam Hoy

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
LPI CEL1 Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety and cohesion issues	200	96	96	

Since April 2019 the Council had undertaken 31 positive interventions in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district.

The Council had also investigated 65 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation in the same period. Council Officers intervened to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to make them safe for the residents.

The geographical spread is as follows:

	HMOs inspected	Privately Rented Homes investigated
Wisbech	29	29
March	2	11
Chatteris	0	4
Whittlesey	0	9
Villages	0	12

Private Sector Housing Enforcement – Controlling Migration fund project Performance

Case Study

Adhoc visit to a listed building containing 2 first floor flats above a commercial premise in Wisbech. Entry on ground floor level to communal area in poor condition; entrance door insecure, poor lighting, light switch inoperative, evidence of water ingress, no guarding to staircase. Inspection of flat B which is a bed sit, occupied by a single male with learning difficulties. Internal defects include poor siting of electric cooker, absence of work surface, no smoke detection throughout, severe damp & mould to

bathroom with inadequate extraction, water ingress to uninsulated flat roof, crittal windows & inefficient heating system, with the dwelling attracting a poor Energy Performance Rating (24- F).

Defects were communicated to landlord by letter and email requesting a schedule of works, together with confirmation of a scheduled appointment to meet the officer on site. No response received from landlord. Further scheduled appointment made for landlord to meet officer; which was attended by landlord. Whilst there was evidence that some work had been carried out, it was of an inadequate standard. Landlord was obstructive and offered no evidence as to how & when the remedial works would be completed. Improvement Notices are being prepared for service.

Tenant welfare - tenant disclosed information during the inspection raising safeguarding concerns. Officer discussed the matters at length with the tenant and his mother and offered ongoing referrals for support to improve outcomes. Areas of concerns included lack of benefit support resulting in possible homelessness, vulnerability and exploitation. Referrals were made to relevant agencies. As a result the tenant was able to complete a PIP application, which increased his entitlement to welfare benefits which has entitled him to a backdated payment dating back to May 2015 totalling £6,240.

The table below identifies the officers' interventions in the last month which reflects their current performance.

Measure	Cumulative since March 2018
Total Number of Properties Inspected	2066
Interventions Taken (see table below)	826
Information Packs Issued	313
Smoke Detectors brought into use	281
Hazards Removed	484

Breakdown of interventions since March 2018

Interventions	Cumulative
Smoke Detector defect letters (Private Rented Sector)	150
Smoke Detector advisory letters (Owner Occupied)	147
Formal Inspection Appointment Letters	134
Notice requesting Information	9
Informal Letter requesting remedial repair	325
HMO declaration notices	53
Enforcement Notices issued	10

The actions undertaken by the council help to ensure that residents can live safely in their private rented homes and landlords are aware of their responsibilities.

The Portfolio Holder is working with the team in looking at taking a tougher line on enforcement using our existing powers. A meeting was held with Peterborough City

Council to gain some shared learning and a new process is being introduced imminently.

Mandatory HMO Licensing:

Since October 2018 a new extended Licensing Scheme has come into national law. This relates to any property occupied by five or more people, forming two or more separate households. In response the Council has been engaging with landlords through 2 events and developed an on line application process. To date 38 applications have been received which is lower than what is felt is out there in the district.

The Council has out a press release stating HMO landlords obligations, further to this, at the request of the Portfolio Holder, we are writing to all Landlords and agents offering them to come forward immediately as if they do not and their property is found fines will be issued. This would be a Civil Penalty Notice and could lead to a fine of up to £30,000.

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
LPI Number of households prevented from becoming homeless	200	108	108	

Breakdown:

Mediation = 7

Debt Advice = 6

Resolve rent arrears = 9

Private rented with deposit support = 19

Private rented without deposit support = 30

Housing Register Offer = 20

Supported Accommodation = 17

The total preventions in 2017/18 was 115, the total for 18/19 was 315.

Description	Achieved	Cumulative for 2019/20	%
Total number of Households approaching to the Housing Options Team		702	N/A
Total number household receiving advice only for example not homeless but advice needed		207	N/A
Total number of Personal Housing Plans created i.e. there is a risk of homelessness and an action plan has been created to hopefully prevent the homelessness taking affect.		79	N/A
Number of formal Homeless decisions made.		3	N/A

This is where the personal housing plan has not resolved the problem leading to the need for a formal decision to be taken under the legislation. In 17/18 we made 159 decisions and experience in Wales and Southwark indicate this should be much lower under the new Act.			
Successful outcomes in Prevention stage (household had their issue resolved within 56 days)	April = 18 May = 12 June = 23 July = 3	56	56 out of 61 = 91.80%
Successful outcomes in Relief stage (cases that came to us too late for prevention stage i.e. households were awaiting court action to end their tenancy or they lost their last settled accommodation, which meant the Council had to provide some alternative form of accommodation whilst the household and the Council work on a personal housing plan. During the 56 day "relief period" they had their housing issue resolved).	April = 14 May = 9 June = 16 July = 13	52	52 out of 89 = 58.43%
<p>Statistic for Wales Prevention 62% Relief 42%</p> <p>Cumulative Prevention April – July 91.80% (56 out of 61)</p> <p>Cumulative Relief April-July 58.43% (52 out 89)</p>			

Trailblazer Project Update

The Council leads on an early homelessness prevention project known as the Homeless Trailblazer. The project covers all of Cambridgeshire councils and Peterborough. The purpose of the project is to engage with individuals and organisations at an early stage to solve their homelessness situation. The team of 5 work closely with all Housing Options and Advice teams and statutory and voluntary organisations, landlords and agents, families and social care. Since April, a total of 232 referrals have been received by the team, 68 relating to Fenland cases, the highest rate of referrals across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. This has resulted in 2 advice cases, 8 cases prevented, 16 referred to Housing Options, 2 not responded to contact made and 40 cases are open.

The initial funding was for two years from HMCLG the third (and current year) has been funded following underspend from the initial bid and donations from each council (except East Cambs DC), Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridgeshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

As well as the current day to day prevention being undertaken, the team are also working on a range of protocols between statutory agencies and housing to reach agreement for joint working and collaboration around early homelessness prevention. Examples include housing and criminal justice, housing, mental health and substance misuse and housing and hospital discharge.

Rough Sleeping Update

The council bid under the Controlling Migration Fund for two Migrant Outreach Workers to provide a service within Wisbech. The council commissioned Change Grow Live (CGL) who previously successfully delivered outreach services for the council. To date, since the start of the project on 24 June, the team have action plans for 18 rough sleepers. In addition, 2 are in March being assisted by Housing Options totalling 20.

The team have facilitated 2 voluntary repatriations to their country of origin. The team are working in collaboration with a range of local partners. CGL as an organisation also have the contract for drug and alcohol services for Fenland (also based in Wisbech) and have outreach workers with whom they are linked in with. There is also a strong working partnership with the council's Housing Options Team who have assisted with deposits and advice around rehousing options and with Private Sector Housing around suitable properties.

Hub

The outreach workers are also closely aligned with Ferry Project who operate a new Hub. The council submitted a bid of £131,000 for a day Hub to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & local Government's (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Initiative fund. The purpose of the Hub is to be a central point for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to receive support and assistance with accommodation options, sign posting and hand holding to treatment services to alleviate rough sleeping. Clients can also access free counselling, washing facilities, food and a change of clothing as well as support for getting work ready and assistance with finding work.

The Hub opened on 24 June and the following has been achieved:

Clients supported at the Hub

44 people have attended and engaged with the services from the Hub.

Homeless clients into alternative accommodation

13 night shelter, **11** hostel, **1** sourced own accommodation, **3** Friday Bridge Camp, **2** voluntary repatriations (working with CLG outreach team).

Total 30

(Note: the remaining 14 - some have accommodation, but have issues with it, some are using the day centre for other reasons and have accommodation (the washing machine for example) and some need accommodation, but are happy with

encampment living as a lifestyle choice.)

Number of people into work/training

5 people have achieved paid work

All clients registered via the Hub have an automatic referral to the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) service which supports them to get back into work by offering them courses, voluntary work, job café's that can help with CV writing and job searching.

9 have registered for the induction sessions to join the course

Counselling service

11 people have benefitted from the counselling service. The opportunity to receive counselling is held open to all clients who may not feel like they need the service at point of entry but may benefit at later date.

Monthly meetings are being held to ensure Government outcomes are being met and that the service is working well.

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
LPI Number of homes adapted to assist vulnerable disabled residents to remain in their home	130	61	61	

Through this scheme the Council provides adaptation works for elderly and disabled home owners and tenants to remain safe, secure and protected in their own homes. This work is financed through the Better Care Scheme the health and social care budget- with funds being allocated annually to the Council.

Since the last performance report (April 19) The Council has assisted 61 households with adaptation works.

The geographical spread is as follows:

Wisbech	14
March	21
Chatteris	7
Whittlesey	2
Other villages	17

Other villages broken down:

Eastrea	= 2
Elm	= 3
Manea	= 2
WSM	= 1

Parson Drove =2
 Coldham = 1
 Murrow = 3
 Thorney Toll = 1
 Gorefield = 2

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
MPI Number of households receiving the Handyperson service	180	31 in Q1	31	

The Handyperson service is a county wide service operated by Age UK. All district councils and county councils contribute towards this. Improvements carried out in Q1 include fitting grab rails, bannister rails, steps and key safes. There were also 38 onward referrals to other support organisations following assessments with customers.

Two customers benefited from key safes being installed to enable them to be discharged from hospital. Care staff are able to support them in their own home with having a safe access to unlock the door. This has prevented costly bed blocking and enabled the customers to be back at home safely.

The target of 180 is expected to be met by the end of the financial year.

Homelessness Review & Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Update

Feedback from Ministry Housing Communities Local Government (MHCLG) on Housing Options Service

The Council was inspected by MHCLG on 26 June. This is a routine inspection that is undertaken nationally. The purpose of the visit is to check on the performance of the Housing Options Service and ensure that it meets government guidelines and is operating effectively.

Feedback included:

- Caseloads against the number of officers were consistently high when compared to other districts. Currently caseloads are high with 50 cases per officer, MHCLG recommended number is 35.
- Service design for customers is good, there is a wide range of options to access

our service, but MHCLG would like to see more face to face interface with customers. In response the council has advised that this is part of the service and is undertaken when required, e.g. sensitive cases, joint meetings with partners such as social care, home visits, mediation with parents etc.

- It is a positive approach to maintain funding for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Trailblazer project.
- The Council is resolving cases to higher overall success rates than average nationally. This demonstrates that we have grasped the opportunities and principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act and delivered effectively against them.
- Front line staff were encouraged to be flexible and imaginative in their negotiations to achieve best outcomes for customers.
- Our landlord Rent Solution service appears to be working well. A total of 106 in district private rented placements in one year represents a strong performance which underlines the strength of the relationships we have established locally with the private rented sector and our ability to manage customer expectations.
- Our website is easy to navigate and contains a range of useful information for customers and stakeholders with information for vulnerable groups present.
- Our allocations scheme was updated in February 2018 to take account of the new act. This is being reviewed again later this year.
- Homelessness Strategy and Roughsleeper Action Plan - MHCLG are keen to see a review of this and this is something that is programmed to be done anyway by the Council this year. The action plan is detailed and comprehensive and good coverage of both Homelessness Reduction Act prevention work and rough sleeping.

In terms of service development the Council is looking at how new types of supported accommodation for rough sleepers can be enabled to be set up in the district.

At the request of the Portfolio Holder, a meeting was held between the Housing Options Team and the Private Sector Housing Team to ensure they are working closely together and ideas are being shared. The meeting was a success and ideas from the meeting will be put in to practice.

Empty Home Update

A priority that has been given to the team is to look at bringing a number of the empty homes in the District back in to use. An empty homes strategy has been formulated and a meeting has been arranged with another Local Authority to get some shared learning. The 151 Officer is working with ARP in obtaining the true numbers of empty homes that are eligible to be chased and in particular, those being empty for more than 6 months which are then eligible for the New Homes Bonus.

What do our customers say?

Description	Baseline	Target 19/20	No of customers who responded	No of customers satisfied	% 19/20	RAG
Disabled Facilities Grants: % of residents who felt that the work undertaken to adapt their property made their life easier (1 year on survey)	97%	90%	6	6	100	
6 surveys have now been completed for 19/20 with all customers satisfied, culminating in satisfaction score of 100 %						

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Chris Seaton

Syrian Refugees Update

2 refugee families will be welcomed into Fenland in the Autumn. The families have been assessed by all relevant agencies and in partnership with Whittlesey Town Council accommodation has been found. Work is now underway to ensure the properties are furnished and the support services are in place to help integrate the families into the Fenland community. The service is being run on behalf of Fenland District Council by Peterborough City Council who have a service up and running with access to all relevant support groups. The funding comes from the national budget set aside for Foreign Aid.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA:

Communities

Business Plan Priority:

Support vulnerable members of our community

Business Plan Action:

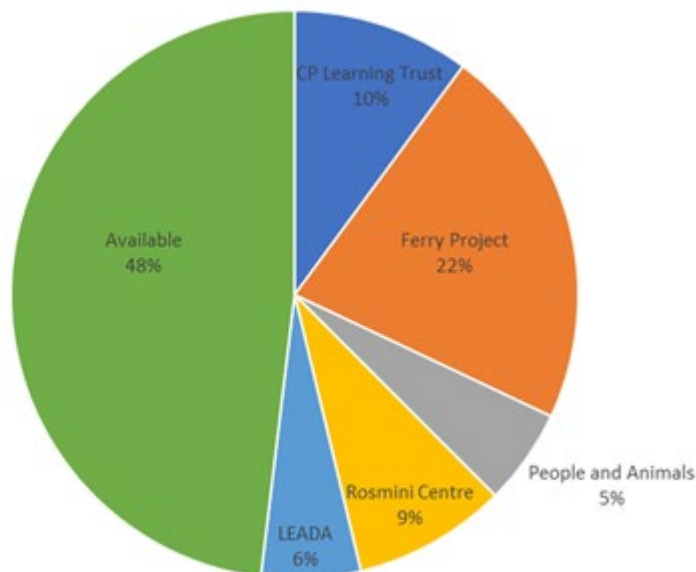
Work with partners to build capacity and resilience so that residents can support themselves and the community

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Susan Wallwork

Community Locally Led Development (CLLD)

Contracted: £454,208.86
Remaining grant: £419,269.72



The above information is for the local projects delivering as part of the Q1 monitoring however numbers are due for revision at the end of August, to incorporate the Q2 figures, and anticipate these to increase in both outputs and grants claimed by the local projects.

The amount of CLLD grant money available is £419,269, with a minimum grant of £10,000 / project. All projects need to provide 50% match funding, out of which at least 10% needs to be cash, whilst the rest can be in kind volunteer time.

Based on the Q1 information, all projects are delivering CLLD activities in the form of group or 1-1 sessions, working on building confidence, identifying individual needs, providing volunteering and work experience to their participants. The Ferry Project in particular is focusing on providing formal training courses and work experience placements to their target group.

Links to where groups / individuals can find info on how to apply – the initial information for interested potential applicants is available at <https://wisbechclld.wordpress.com/applying-for-funding/>

Additionally, any organisation interested can contact Samantha Smith, CLLD Project Animator, at samantha.smith@cambsacre.org.uk 01353 865020, or Kieran Carr, CLLD Programme Manager, at Kieran.carr@cambsacre.org.uk, 01353 865047.

In respect of press releases all projects have been asked to produce press releases concerning their successful projects which the Accountable Body would re-publish and distribute with details of how other projects can apply. This is in order to raise awareness of the fund.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 25th September 2019.

Think Communities Update (including I ♥ Wisbech)

This project has been looking to build a collective partnership across the Public and Community and Voluntary Sector in Wisbech to collaborate on building capacity through understanding issues and developing programmes of action with the community to get them addressed.

A community conversation took place over the winter last year with around 5,000 participants

I ♥ Wisbech engagement/feedback sessions took place on:

- Saturday 22nd June 1.30pm-3.30pm at the Oasis Centre (PE13 3NP)
- Wednesday 26th June 10am-12 noon at the Queen Mary Centre (PE13 2PE)
- Thursday 27th June 5pm-7pm at the Rosmini Centre (PE13 2PH)

Purpose of sessions:

- To feedback results from the I ♥ Wisbech engagement exercise that took place over the Autumn and Winter 2018/19.
- To explore what needs to happen next with community members who wanted to get more involved and I ♥ Wisbech partners in the room at the same time
- To connect people with each other and with resources to help make their ideas happen

The community conversation captured names of 300 residents who said they might like to be involved in some shape or form. The interests of the residents concerned were broken into the following themed interest areas:

- A Safe and clean town
- Making the most of our heritage and tourism
- More investment in better facilities and amenities
- Things to do for young people and children
- Helping those in crisis
- Connecting people, bringing them together and what's on in Wisbech

Priority Area Leaders (PALs) as detailed below have been chosen to take these themes forward. A Priority Area Leader will receive segmented data tailored to the themed area which will include contact details of residents. PALS should make contact with these residents to see how they want to be involved and make them aware of other opportunities already available to them to get involved (where applicable).

A Safe and Clean Town – Fenland District Council

Heritage and Tourism – Blackfields Creative and Wisbech Town Council

Investment – Russell Beal (Anglian Water)

Young People and Children – a collective of Clarion Housing and Cambs County Council

Helping those in Crisis – To Be Advised

Connecting People – Ferry Project

This work will be undertaken to conclude by the end of the calendar year.

Support communities and businesses to access the information they need surrounding Brexit

As Brexit is a continually evolving matter, the Council has been responsive to the changes and continues to provide useful advice to Fenland-based businesses, which has included sharing the latest updates from HM Government regarding Brexit.

For businesses involved in the export or import of goods from the EU, advice has been offered in relation to:

- Obtaining an Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number to enable UK businesses to continue to move goods into or out of the EU in the event of a no deal' scenario.
- Applying the Transitional Simplified Procedures, in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal, businesses will need to apply the same procedures to EU trade that apply to trading with the rest of the world.

In addition, the Council has signposted businesses to briefings and seminars, which recently included two local Business workshops (Norwich & Boston) hosted by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy which are primarily aimed at SMEs.

Officials from across government were available to share information on operational areas that are expected to change when the UK leaves the EU and the preparations businesses need to make on areas including importing, exporting and transporting and employing EU citizens.

Advice is also available on the Council's website and Officers continue to actively encourage businesses to visit the <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/brexit> webpages where there is advice for residents and businesses.

Officers also remain in frequent contact with key partners and other Councils to ensure a network of advice and support is available for businesses in the Fens.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Support vulnerable members of our community

Business Plan Action: *Explore the creation and development of Youth Advisory Boards in Fenland, and to work with local schools in the development of the national Democracy Ambassador scheme, consulting with young people on matters that affect them*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Chris Seaton

Increasing awareness of democracy with young people

Over the last few months officers from FDC have been working with 20Twenty Productions to set up Youth Advisory Groups (YAG) in each of the 4 towns in Fenland in order to support a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) for the District. Officers have enabled the development of this initiative in facilitating meetings, including a meeting with an established Youth Advisory Board from South Norfolk, as well as advice to help shape the bid submitted to the Department of Education Social Mobility Fund.

20Twenty Productions have now secured £50,000 from this fund to set up a Youth Advisory Board in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council have also provided a further £20,000 to be split between Fenland and East Cambridgeshire which has increased the commissioning budget from each area from £10,000 to £20,000.

The Youth Advisory Board in Fenland will therefore have £20,000 to commission projects to tackle the top three issues in Fenland identified through the Youth Advisory Boards consultation over the next two months. A smartphone application has been created to assist the consultation process in the four main secondary schools in Fenland.

Future plans

Once consultation is complete the Youth Advisory Board will have an initial meeting in November 2019 in the Council Chamber at Fenland Hall to discuss the three top issues and how this can be tackled with the appropriate professionals and organisations including Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and other public or voluntary sector organisations.

The Youth Advisory Groups will then have from November 2019 to January 2020 to formulate projects and present to the Youth Advisory Board where money will be awarded to tackle issues over the coming year. Members from The Youth Advisory Board will carry out inspections with the groups through the project life span to ensure the money is being spent appropriately.

Whilst the Youth Advisory Groups and the Board will encourage social action the vision of the project is to teach the Young People about democracy and democratic

processes. Throughout the year there will be opportunities to vote, campaign and hold public consultation surrounding their projects. Young people will be recruited to Youth Advisory Groups in each secondary school and then a proportion of these young people will be voted into the Youth Advisory Board ensuring a good mix of age, ethnicity and split between town and village areas.

The Youth Advisory Boards will be available to be utilised for consultation and will be a ready-made young audience for future key policies and plans of Fenland District Council.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Support vulnerable members of our community

Business Plan Action: Encourage a range of partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme to support older people

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Susan Wallwork

Description	Target 19/20	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20	RAG
Performance Measure				
MPI Number of people who attend the Golden Age events	200	87	87	

The last Golden Age Fair was held on Thursday 11th of July at Wisbech St Mary Sports and Community Centre. The Golden Age Team were supported by 28 partners with 87 visitors on the day including some of the original Golden Age Team (Ken Mayor, Trevor Quince and Bernard Keane along with Mac Cotterell's wife, Madge). It was fascinating to learn how the Golden Age concept first started and the vision of those involved.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service saw 27 people, exchanging 4 electric blankets. There was also one urgent referral for a Home Fire Safety visit for an elderly couple with mental and physical disabilities who had moved in to a property that had no fire preventative equipment including smoke alarms. Wisbech Fire crew attended the property the same afternoon installing smoke alarms and giving vital safety advice.

Cambridgeshire Libraries saw 28 people who they have successfully encouraged to go to the library to see the range of services and activities they have on offer.

The Bobby Scheme met over 20 people and booked security visits.

Wisbech Lions Club saw 40-50 and were able to introduce people to the Lions and explain to them their philosophy.

Cam Sight met 15 people and gave out leaflets for new groups and also potentially recruited a new volunteer

Breathe Easy Wisbech had 7 people who showed an interest in attending future Breathe Easy groups

Cambridgeshire Police saw 26 people and made contact with the new local councillor and had useful conversations about local issues

Freedom Leisure saw 40 people and were able to promote their programmes and initiatives

Wisbech St Mary Parish Council met 20 people and thought it was a good vehicle for promoting awareness and discussion about the village

Fenland Ferret gave detailed advice to 2 people about the benefit system and signposted to relevant organisations.

Careline and Care & Repair service met with 12 people, having detailed conversations with and also one referral for a Buddy Button

Healthwatch spoke to 42 people about their experiences with Cambridgeshire Health and Social Care services

Living Sport saw 25 – 30 people, carrying out several functional fitness MOTs and helped a number of people try indoor curling.

What do our customers say?

Description	Baseline	Target 19/20	No of customers who responded	No of customers satisfied	% 19/20	RAG
LPI Customer satisfaction with Golden Age events	100%	90%	2	100	100	

The visitor feedback we had on the day indicated that everyone was happy with the event, feeling that the partners who attended were relevant to their needs and that they would recommend the Golden Age Fairs to a friend. We are expecting to receive further feedback from the surveys placed in the Golden Age bags which are distributed to every visitor.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority:	Support vulnerable members of our community
Business Plan Action:	<i>Work with partners and the community to deliver the Wisbech 2020 Action Plan across the themes of Education and Skills, Health, Wellbeing and Cohesion, Infrastructure and the Built Environment, and Local Economy</i>
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Chris Boden

Wisbech 2020 Update

Over the past 4 months, the Wisbech 2020 Vision project has progressed in its own right as well as converging with other projects focussing on the town.

In July 2018, Russell Beal was appointed as the Head of Programme for the Wisbech 2020 Vision project and is driving forward progress against the actions in the vision document. Russell is also focussing on improved engagement with businesses and the 3rd sector, as well as improving communications. Russell's services have kindly been seconded from the Wisbech 2020 partner Anglian Water free of charge for an 18 month period as part of its ongoing contribution to the project.

A new progress tracker has been introduced which will help to track progress of the actions included within the four themes of the project:

- Education and Skills
- Health, Wellbeing and Cohesion
- Infrastructure and the built environment
- Local Economy

Leads have been identified for each for each of the actions and progress is discussed at the relevant themed Steering Group meeting.

The aims, objectives and progress of other projects being delivered in the town are continually being reviewed to highlight any overlap and identify where joint working towards a specific goal can be progressed. These projects include:

- **I Love Wisbech** (delivered through the LGA 'Prevention At Scale' programme). A large number of public sector and community sector organisations have joined forces to talk to people that live and work in Wisbech to identify projects and interventions which will have positive and long lasting impacts in the town.
- **Growing Fenland.** Funded by the Combined Authority, this programme has identified interventions for each of our four market towns as well as overarching strategic interventions which will improve the quality of life in the Fenland area.
- **Think Communities.** A programme led by Cambridgeshire County Council that

is piloting a reworking of their approach to building community resilience and capacity with increased partner and stakeholder engagement.

- **Pride of Place.** Wisbech is one of only two pilot towns receiving focus from Business in the Community to develop a strong business led response to building trust between business and society.

Celebrating Successes

The continued progress and success of the Wisbech 2020 Vision and other Wisbech focussed projects have been celebrated throughout the year. These include:

- The opening of an Anglian Water training facility at the College of West Anglia
- Arts workshops held in the Wisbech library for over 300 children with links to the Wisbech Reads festival
- The success of the Crowded Room artwork project, which is currently being displayed in The Boathouse
- Numerous positive outcomes achieved through the Controlling Migration Fund projects
- Progress on transport improvements, such as the GRIP 3 study for the Wisbech to March rail link and the potential dualling of the A47
- New and affordable private housing built on the Nene Waterfront Site
- The expansion of the Cromwell Road retail and commercial area
- The Wisbech Community Regeneration Guide, which highlights the work of the Business in the Community Connectors and how they link into the Wisbech 2020 Vision project
- The success of the Wisbech High Street project

Next steps

The Wisbech 2020 Vision Steering Group continues to deliver the actions set out in the refreshed Wisbech 2020 Vision document. These include:

- Taking part in local careers events to improve links between employers and future employees
- Designing and developing training facilities at the College of West Anglia (led by Anglian Water)
- Delivering the refreshed Community Based Literacy programme, including links to the Wisbech Reads initiative
- Delivering an annual programme of community events
- Engaging with migrant communities on health & wellbeing issues
- Tackling street drinking in Wisbech
- Upgrading Wisbech Market Place
- Delivering improvements to Wisbech High Street
- Working with local businesses to increase access to finance for growth and development and also to develop networks to increase knowledge transfer

The actions from the various Wisbech focussed programmes will be continue to be considered with any overlapping or complimentary projects being identified and joined-up delivery mechanisms being promoted.

A Wisbech 2020 Vision Summit/Celebration Event is planned for December 2019 where the public will be encouraged to attend to celebrate successes, learn about future plans and share their views.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Business Plan Action: *Support our local community by delivering the Council's Leisure Strategy, in partnership with Freedom Leisure*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sam Clark

Leisure Contract Update

Freedom Leisure took over the operation and management of the 4 leisure centres on 4 December 2018. This involved:

- The TUPE of 180 different members of staff, revised management approaches and ongoing support for these staff following such a considerable change
 - Setting up a completely new ICT infrastructure within the 4 centres to manage the members and all bookings and income, including the £130,000 per month Direct Debit run
 - New website / new mobile phone App' implementation
 - Implementing Freedom training and health and safety procedures for all staff
 - Setting up a maintenance regime for the 4 facilities, including adherence to a scheme of maintenance for the many systems within each building
 - Development of plans for the gym improvements at the Hudson
- To mention but a few of the challenges.

To their credit Freedom has undertaken the transfer smoothly with little impact on customers. The service continues to perform well, with customers satisfied and a fundamentally seamless transfer from the Council to Freedom. This work continues over the past quarter, with some historical maintenance issues being addressed.

Overall the Council continues to monitor the contract closely, is in contact with Freedom management regularly and, given that the contract remains in its initial stages, is very happy with progress to date.

Whilst Fenland managed the leisure centres, the teams were lucky to not have faced many serious first aid incidents over the past 15 years. Unfortunately in the past quarter Freedom's team have had to deal with 2 significant incidents.

First responders and the ambulance service praised staff highly for their response and professionalism.

Fortunately incidents of this severity tend to be few and far between. It is worth recognising the professionalism of the teams in the leisure centres and the training that they have undertaken should such incidents occur.

O&S are meeting with Freedom Leisure in November 2019.

Freedom Leisure – Leisure Centre Membership growth

Freedom Leisure anticipates membership growth throughout the 4 leisure centres in Fenland across the period of the contract, but a specific figure per facility is not set in stone. Freedom operates a scheme of reporting membership data and sales on a daily basis and moving targets accordingly.

In the past quarter, the number of memberships has grown from **5,931** to **6,103**.

Generally, a small drop in membership is expected in May, following growth in the initial 4 months of the year, however this did not take place this year. This is a positive indication, with, potentially, the new spinning equipment assisting member retention and development.

The next steps in membership growth will be when:

1. The Hudson gym development opens in early October
2. New gym equipment is delivered to all leisure centres in the latter part of the calendar year.
3. Swim school improvements take place with additional classes added, generating additional swim school memberships

Whilst the initial 2 points are in hand with programmed delivery dates, the development of the learn to swim offer relies on training and recruiting more swimming instructors. This is underway but progress will take some time.

Hudson Leisure Centre Redevelopment Project Update

The Council and Freedom Leisure have worked very well together on this significant project. It is anticipated that it will be delivered in advance of expectations, despite additional asbestos removal work, and will be on budget.

Design works were completed early in the financial year, with contractors and sub-contractors appointed in May. Building work commenced in late June 2019. Prior to the commencement of the works some asbestos removal took place following an assessment of the roof spaces above the gym changing facilities.

Since commencement of the building work, all has progressed to plan. Importantly there has been no disruption to centre users during the work and handover of the new reception area and new gym is some three weeks ahead of schedule.

This is excellent news, with the community in Wisbech able to access what will be an exceptional gym and dance studio from around 11 October 2019. The reception will also be available at this date improving the experience that customers have, as well as offering them the opportunity to enjoy Costa coffee from the 'grab and go' café that will be integrated into the reception area.

The final works will take place on the area adjacent to the swimming pool changing rooms from October to December, with this sections open to customers prior to the Christmas holiday.

Alongside this work, some car park improvement works are also anticipated, with the whole package being officially opened in early January 2020.

Gym Equipment Replacement Update

The equipment in the leisure centre gyms is now 6 years old. Whilst it has been well maintained and is still functional, new equipment has taken several steps forwards with regard to integration with fitness monitoring software, wearables and mobile phones. As part of the agreement with Freedom Leisure, the equipment in all 4 leisure centres will be updated shortly, with the new facility at the Hudson in Wisbech benefitting initially.

The Council is part of the way through the tender process and is expected to appoint a supplier by the end of August, with delivery to the Hudson in early October and the 3 remaining sites in November & December.

A key aspect of this work is staff training over the 5 year period of the equipment contract to ensure that the Freedom teams are able to get as much out of the equipment as possible to ensure that customers are satisfied and remain members over the longer term, whilst also recommending the gyms to their friends and family.

What do Fenland Freedom Leisure customers say?

Freedom runs a comprehensive assessment in terms of the customer experience for each of the 100 facilities that is under their management. The 4 in Fenland are no different, despite the new nature of the contract with the Council.

In the past quarter assessments undertaken have provided the following scores:

Quality Assurance

Audit Type	Chatteris	George Campbell	Hudson	Manor
Area Manager	79.6%	87.8%	80.9%	85.4%
RLSS	N/A	86%	83%	94%
E-Focus (MVs)	78%	86.0%	86.9%	89.2%

The Area Manager audit is undertaken by another area manager who works for Freedom Leisure. They audit each facility in the group against a Freedom Standard quality assurance framework. As the Fenland contract is still in its early stages, some points were dropped as some Freedom standards are still being adopted, but overall the Operations Director with Freedom is satisfied that the contract is performing well.

The RLSS Assessment is conducted independently by the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) against a standardised assessment protocol. In the past quarter Freedom has had 16 facilities assessed – the Manor Centre in Fenland has scored the highest of these 16 facilities. (Note that no assessment at Chatteris takes place as the assessment is principally pool based).

The E-Focus assessment is carried out by a third party on a mystery visit (MV) approach – both over the phone and in person. Again, the scores presented above are satisfactory and only expected to improve slightly as the Freedom approach is further embedded across the 4 centres.

Freedom Customer Comments

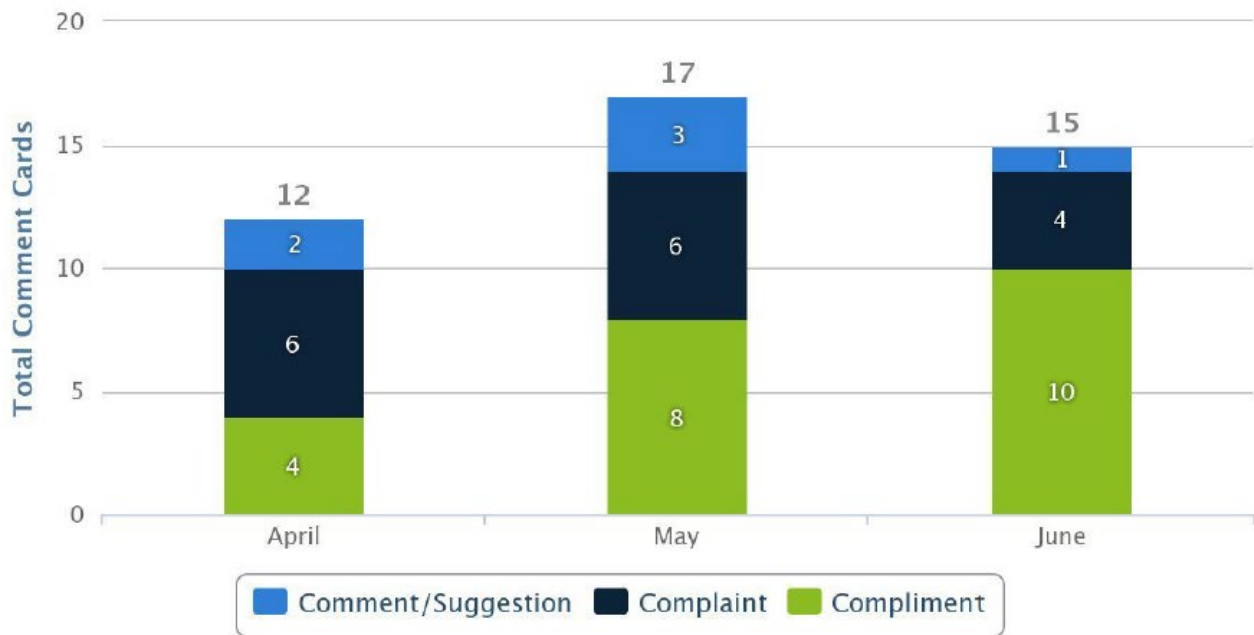
In addition to the customer focussed quality assurance systems already highlighted above, customer comment cards are available at each site. An analysis of these has highlighted the following:

Total Comment Cards

Start Date: 01-04-2019 / End Date: 30-06-2019

RE: SOUTH / CO: FENLAND / LC: All

Type of Comment: All



This is a balanced number of complaints against compliments and would be expected in public facilities which welcome so many visitors every day.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Promote health and wellbeing for all

Business Plan Action: *Work collaboratively with others to deliver the Council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy to tackle local health priorities, including mental wellbeing, and reducing inequalities both within Fenland and between Fenland and the rest of Cambridgeshire*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Susan Wallwork

Health & Wellbeing Strategy / Working in Partnership

County Partnership Structures

The Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board met on 30 May 2019 and as part of the agenda received a paper updating on the progress of the Living Well Partnership (LWP) for East Cambs and Fenland.

The report set out recent developments within the partnership including membership and attendance.

The HWBB's discussion concluded:

- The LWP be supported to deliver the HWBB priorities and empowered to do so.
- A report regarding which structures were most effective to deliver care to specific communities be brought back to the Board in the new year and that LWP's should have the endorsement to act so as not to hold back progress, and brief the Board as appropriate.

Local action:

While these partnership structures in Health are being considered, The Council's Health and Well Being Strategy 2018 -21 is still active.

https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12208/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy/pdf/Health_Wellbeing_Strategy_v2.pdf

The strategy evidences that a district council's services have a significant impact on health & wellbeing.

In terms of key projects to help support the delivery of the strategy, examples include:

- Operation Pheasant – the multi-agency partnership working together to tackle issues in the Private Rented Sector
- I heart Wisbech the community conversation that has taken place to capture views in the town and also find residents who want to get more involved in

community initiatives.

- The Controlling Migration Fund projects that the Council has worked with the Diverse Communities Forum to develop 20 funded initiatives with inward investment of circa £2 million

Future focus to support the strategy include:

- Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Plan Review and how the review can help the objectives of the strategy
- The Growing Fenland 4 Market Town plans
- Increase in residents using Freedom Leisure Centres
- Development of a Culture Strategy
- Tackling rough sleeping
- Tobacco Control Alliance (see below)

Key Project Update – Smoking Cessation

The Council is a partner in the joint Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Tobacco Alliance Group, so far the group has had its initially meeting and are currently working towards developing a draft strategy.

The framework surrounding the tobacco control strategy is:

- Prevention First
- Supporting smokers to quit
- Eliminating variations in smoking rates
- Effective enforcement

As a follow on from this group we are putting together a plan on looking at smoking in commercial vehicles (taxis) and vehicles being used for school journeys by parents who are smoking in them.

The next partnership meeting is scheduled for October, whereby we will be discussing and agreeing the draft control strategy.

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Tierney**

Energy Conservation / Fuel Poverty

During April 2019 the Council ensured that every household received information about the free of charge services available to them to reduce their energy spend by including this in the annual council tax mailing. Residents could access a home energy visit provided by Peterborough Environment City Trust [PECT] with whom the Council has worked in partnership. These visits entailed tailored advice on home improvements and access to funding for residents.

Approximately 207 home visits were undertaken, saving householders in the region of

£35k in the following areas:

- 31% of the 207 householders were helped to sign up to or were signposted to the warm homes discount. This resulted in savings of £8,780.
- 18 referrals were made to grant schemes such as the Affordable Warmth scheme through the Local Energy Action Partnership (LEAP), CLAS scheme, and Disabled Facilities grant scheme;
 - o 5 referrals of which were for first time central heating,
 - o 7 for new A rated energy efficient boilers,
 - o 3 for loft insulation, and
 - o 3 for cavity wall insulation.

This resulted in cost savings of £5,440. 2 households were also provided with a grant: £1500 from Turn2Us and £2,000 from the Disabled Facilities grant scheme respectively, to help with the replacement of boilers.

- One individual outside the project remit was awarded a new boiler through a separate stream, leading to cost saving of up to £240 per year.
- 11 households were provided with small measures such as draught proofing and the provision of LED lightbulbs from PECT's Warm Homes Officer. This resulted in total savings of £2,395.
- 14 households switched to a new tariff or supplier, with 12 moving to green suppliers. This resulted in savings of £3381.60.
- 70% of the 207 households made behavioural change. This resulted in total savings of £15,526. This leads to average savings of £74.32 per household.
- An emergency fuel payment grant was secured for one household at a value of £250.
- One to one support with one individual was provided to alleviate £440 of fuel debt.

Also included in the council tax mailing was the opportunity to switch to a cheaper energy supplier via the IChoosr scheme. 32 switches took place following the auction in May saving Fenland residents £242 on average per household per year.

In June the Council published its 2019 Home Energy Act Report which can be found at www.fenland.gov.uk/energy. As a Council we are required to report on our plans for improving domestic home energy efficiency. The Government's Clean Growth Strategy includes a target for all domestic properties to attain at least a Band C Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) by 2035 where practical, cost-effective and affordable.

Fenland District Council's HECA report sets out the current state of play regarding the energy efficiency of properties in Fenland and where the Council should focus resources in order to realise national efficiency and carbon reduction targets, such as that in the Clean Growth Strategy. Through the HECA report the Council has informed government of the work that will take place in 2019/20 at district level but also of the challenges faced locally with a view to inform further national policy making.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Promote health and wellbeing for all

Business Plan Action: *Create healthier communities through activities developed by Active Fenland and community partners*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sam Clark

Active Fenland Update

All three Active Fenland projects are being managed well by the project leads and the Active Fenland Manager and are hitting funder targets. 40 sessions are available through the team every week, and in the past quarter, 4,376 people have attended Active Fenland sessions.

The lead up to the summer months is always intensive in terms of planning activities, whilst maintaining the week in week out sessions that are in place. To see the sessions that are on offer to the local community please visit:

<http://www.newvisionfitness.co.uk/whats-on.html> and
<https://www.facebook.com/ActiveFenland/>

Facebook continues to be an excellent way of communicating with local people very effectively at a low cost, with the majority of Active Fenland sessions being promoted in this way.

Freedom Leisure Active Communities work

Since late May, Freedom Leisure has had an Active Communities Manager in place. Again the first couple of months work has been about understanding the 'patch' and linking this back to Freedom's obligations. Projects planning and partnership meetings with local groups have taken place and delivery will commence shortly.

One initial project is the further promotion and rebranding of the Exercise Referral Scheme. Freedom has a target of a 25% increase on referred clients, up to a total of 400 per year - rebranding and communication with local GP surgeries has already taken place and Freedom is very keen to see additional clients attending the gyms in the early autumn.

Description	Achieved	Cumulative for 19/20
Performance Measure		
MPI Value of funding realised as a result of Active Fenland team applications and supported applications	£9,000	£9,000

In the current financial year the Active Fenland team has secured £9,000 towards active sports projects in the District. Other applications are being made, with this sum expected to increase throughout the year.

This funding excludes the money already realised that wholly funds the three core Active Fenland projects;

- Let's Get moving – funded by the County Council Public Health budget
- The Controlling Migration Fund Project
- Active Families Project – funded by Sport England and Clarion Futures

With the key funding streams ending in 2020, the Active Fenland Manager is focussing on more substantial funding opportunities to ensure that current programmes are able to continue when the initial funding streams expire. The reliance on third party funders is a risk, but ensures excellent value for money is delivered by the Active Fenland team.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Promote health and wellbeing for all

Business Plan Action: *Facilitate housing development that will deliver healthy environments and promote wellbeing*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Miss Sam Hoy and Cllr Sam Clark

Major Housing Permissions

A number of 'major' planning applications have been approved in the period:

1. 76 dwellings in Wisbech St Mary – although due to viability concerns the development was not able to achieve policy compliance in respect of affordable housing and off site sport & recreation contributions, policy compliant on site open space and play facilities are to be provided as well as an NHS contribution.
2. 15 dwellings in Park Road, Manea – whilst no affordable housing is being provided for viability reasons, a policy compliant level of open space is being provide on site

Other options for delivering Affordable Housing are being explored.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: Communities

Business Plan Priority: Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage

Business Plan Action: *Work with local stakeholders to develop a Culture Strategy for Fenland; strengthening links between the wider Fenland communities, as well as promoting the area to people outside the district*

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Chris Seaton

Culture Strategy Update

In late July the Arts Council approved a grant to support the development of a creativity and culture strategy for Fenland. The funding secured (£15,000) will pay for the services of an experienced consultant to work with local arts and creativity providers, as well as the District and County Councils.

The Arts Council has identified local towns as a key area requiring support in order to develop community focussed opportunities to engage in cultural and creative activities. The supporting funding is an initial step to moving things forwards in Fenland.

This work will deliver a strategy that will allow local providers to lever funding into the area to support improved arts, creativity and culture opportunities for the Fenland community.

This work will take some time; subject to the appointment of a suitable supporting consultant it is anticipated that the strategy will be completed by the end of the financial year.

Must Farm Update

Peterborough City Council (PCC) is leading the project to develop a small facility at the Kings Dyke Nature reserve.

Fenland has committed a further £5,000 to support preparatory work with regards to the facility. PCC will update partners, including Fenland Council and local Town Councillors, with regards to progress at a meeting during week beginning 23 September.

BUSINESS PLAN AREA: **Communities**

Business Plan Priority: **Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage**

Business Plan Action: *Support voluntary and community groups to hold public events safely*

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sam Clark & Cllr Peter Murphy**

Safety Advisory Group

Since April the Safety Advisor Group (SAG) have given advice to 11 community groups, which have been local events running year after year. As part of working with these groups the Council have offered the groups the opportunity to come along to a Safety Advisor Group meeting and discuss their event directly with the SAG.


So far we have held 3 SAG meetings and had 5 community groups attend these for help and advice and how they can ensure they offer a safe event for the public.

From these meetings, we offered the event organiser the opportunity to allow us to conduct a site visit during the setting up of their event. So far we have carried out 2 of these and both have been of value to the SAG members and the event organiser. Again it is a further opportunity for the event organiser to demonstrate that all of their procedures and practices are being adhered to as part of the Event Management Plan that is supplied and circulated to all SAG members.

The SAG looks at ways in which it can help and support community groups. This can even be by signposting the organiser to the correct person and/or team within the local authority or community that may be able to help them.

As a working group the county SAG has put together an Event Management template with various pointers and links that can be used by community groups to assist them in putting together their documentation.

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Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel	
Date:	02 September 2019	
Report Title:	Council Tax Support – 2020/21 scheme	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. This report advises Overview and Scrutiny of the progress of the 2019 annual review and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.

2 Key issues

- We are now in the seventh year of CTS; a locally set scheme that replaced the nationally set Council Tax Benefits (CTB) scheme from April 2013.
- In 2013-14 we were able to take advantage of a one-off Government grant that compensated in part for the reduction in Government funding that year. This meant that the maximum CTS awarded was the amount calculated, less 8.5% (Pensioners are protected by legislation and receive up to 100% CTS).
- In 2014-15, we initially proposed this reduction be increased to 20%. However a reduction in demand meant that we were able to revise this reduction to 14%.
- For 2015-16 and 2016-17 we kept the same scheme as 2014-15, except that allowances and premiums (the amounts of income from state-administered benefits such as Jobseekers' Allowance) were increased in line with other benefits such as Housing Benefit. This means that customers have a higher income before losing CTS.
- For the 2017-18 scheme, as part of the Council's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR1), we consulted customers on a proposal to increase the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 20% starting from 1 April 2017. Based upon feedback from customers and the potential impact on collection rates, Overview and Scrutiny members at their meeting on 28 November 2016, recommended to Cabinet and Council that the 14% reduction level be maintained. This recommendation was subsequently approved and the scheme contribution rate remained unchanged.

- For the 2018-19 scheme we consulted on a proposal to harmonise the scheme to DWP welfare reforms introduced for Housing Benefit and CTS for Pensioners, and introducing closer links to Universal Credit data share for claims, thereby removing the stipulation to make a separate claim. This was subsequently approved and introduced.
- For 2019-20 we kept the same scheme as for 2018-19.
- Councils are required to consider whether to review their LCTRS schemes annually. Where it is determined to retain the existing scheme this must be decided by 11 March of the preceding year.
- Where Councils seek to amend their scheme it will be necessary to consult preceptors and stakeholders prior to a wider consultation to inform a final scheme design by 28 February of the preceding year. Therefore work has commenced to allow sufficient time to consult, approve and implement changes prior to 28 February 2020.
- The current Fenland CTS scheme provides a maximum benefit of 86% for working age claimants and our scheme also fully protects War Pensioners. The aim in designing the scheme was to achieve a balance in charging an amount of Council Tax to encourage customers back into work whilst setting the amount charged at an affordable and recoverable level.
- Three options for changes to the current scheme are presented for consideration:
 - (i) to increase the customer contribution rate to 20%;
 - (ii) to reduce the customer contribution rate to 8.5% and
 - (ii) to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the treatment of Universal Credit.
- Should Members decide not to recommend changing the customer contribution rate, this will remain at 14% for the 2020/21 scheme.

3 Recommendations

The Panel is requested to:

- Review the CTS scheme for 2020-21 as outlined in this report and recommend to Cabinet any changes to the scheme which will require consultation to be undertaken.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	This item is included in the Forward Plan
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance Cllr Mrs Jan French, Deputy Leader
Report Originator(s)	Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer; Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	None

Report:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Before April 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was a nationally controlled scheme administered by District and Unitary Councils that give reductions from Council Tax to people on low incomes according to set criteria specified by regulations. The maximum reduction was 100% of a person's Council Tax bill.
- 1.2 The costs of CTB were fully reimbursed to the Council by the DWP, so that if demand rose or fell, the Council did not bear the costs of these changes.
- 1.3 CTB was localised and replaced by CTS in April 2013. At the same time, Government funding was reduced and CTS was localised, coming under the control of District and Unitary Councils. Whilst pensioners were protected and regulations specified that they must still receive up to 100% CTS, this protection did not apply to working age people.
- 1.4 Unlike CTB, the costs of CTS are borne by Councils. Funding is given by the Government within the overall finance settlement, but this has reduced significantly over the years so that Councils bear the costs of an increase in demand but gain from reduced demand.
- 1.5 The implementation of CTS left Fenland with a funding gap, that potentially saw working age customers only being entitled to 80% CTS. However, Members considered the options available to help increase CTS and were able to implement a scheme in 2013-14 that saw working age customers be entitled to up to 91.5% of CTS; in two ways.
- 1.6 Members primarily met the funding shortfall by revising Council Tax exemptions on empty properties, permitted by regulations that changed in 2013. This meant that the Council would no longer give a Council Tax reduction for most empty domestic properties.
- 1.7 The funding shortfall was further closed by a one-off transitional Government grant that applied in 2013-14 only.
- 1.8 In 2014-15 this grant was not available. With demand for CTS not growing as much as was predicted for 2013-14, Members were able to revise the CTS scheme to feature a reduction of 14% CTS for working age customers.
- 1.9 Councils are required to review the operation of their CTS schemes annually. They are required to make any revisions no later than 28 February in the financial year preceding that for which the scheme will be revised (i.e. 28 February 2020 for the scheme relating to the 2020-21 financial year).
- 1.10 Further annual reviews determined that the CTS reduction remained at 14% since 2015-16, with further links to Welfare Reform and Universal Credit introduced for 2018-19. That scheme was retained for 2019-20.
- 1.11 We are now reviewing our CTS scheme for the 2020-21 financial year.

2 The 2019 review

- 2.1 Councils are required to review operation of their CTS schemes each year. Where a change is proposed, we are required to undertake customer consultation; the results of which assist in the final decision made by the Council regarding the CTS scheme next year.
- 2.2 Three proposals are presented for members consideration, to increase the contribution rate from 14% to 20%; to reduce the contribution rate from 14% to 8.5% and to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the assessment of Universal Credit awards.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that this Council is one of five partners forming the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP). The other four Councils are Breckland, East Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk (formerly Forest Heath and St. Edmundsbury) and East Suffolk (formerly Waveney and Suffolk Coastal). These Councils have maintained the contribution rate in their schemes at 8.5% since 2013. They are not proposing any changes to this rate for 2020-21.
- 2.4 The other Councils within ARP will all be considering the change to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the assessment of Universal Credit awards as detailed in section 4 of this report.
- 2.5 Currently, apart from a different contribution rate, all other aspects of the CTS scheme are consistent across all of the ARP partners. This aids the efficient administration of the schemes across the partnership. This does not however preclude any of the partners amending their scheme independently of the others.

3 The impact of CTS to date

- 3.1 CTS with its associated gap between Council Tax payable and the maximum help working age people can receive has been in operation now for six full years and we are in the seventh year of operation.
- 3.2 The table below shows how the amount of CTS awarded and numbers of customers claiming it have changed since CTS was introduced in 2013:-

CTS cases and amount awarded			
Date	CTS awarded	Working age claims	Pensioner claims
31/3/13 (CTB)	£8.16m	4,682	4,727
31/3/14	£7.89m	4,755	4,667
31/3/15	£7.45m	4,620	4,431
31/3/16	£7.21m	4,450	4,202
31/3/17	£7.02m	4,228	3,998
31/3/18	£6.91m	4,189	3,827
31/3/19	£6.98m	4,227	3,629
Change 2013 to 2019	- £1.18m -14.46%	- 455 -9.72%	- 1,098 -23.23%

- 3.3 The amount of CTS awarded since 2013 has reduced as a result of both the increase in contribution rate to 14% and a significant reduction in claims.

4 Feasibility of changes to CTS for 2020-21 – changing the contribution rate

- 4.1 Any potential impact resulting from changing the contribution rate would be shared between the major preceptors in proportion to their Council Tax requirements in the Collection Fund. The proportions based on 2019/20 Council Tax, is detailed in the table below. This shows that any changes to the contribution rate would generate significantly more savings/more cost to the County Council, as they receives a much higher proportion of Council Tax receipts overall.

How Council Tax allocated is split	
Authority	%
Cambridgeshire County Council	68.61
Cambridgeshire Fire Authority	3.70
Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner	11.64
Fenland District Council	16.05

(i) Increasing contribution rate from 14% to 20%

- 4.2 Changing the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 20% is forecast to decrease CTS expenditure by £202,014, achieving gross savings to this Council of £32,423 (16.05%) based on current numbers of CTS claimants.
- 4.3 Changing the rate of contribution has also been shown to result in additional arrears and subsequent recovery action. Additional bad debts provision would be required for non-payment and to help maintain expected collection levels, extra resources would be required to undertake recovery work in respect of additional arrears that would accrue from working age customers having payment difficulties as a result of the proposed changes. The net additional cost is estimated to equate to 50% of the additional Council Tax raised:-

Additional Council Tax collectable @ 20%	£202,014
District share - 16.05%	£32,423
Estimated cost of additional recovery/bad debts provision	£16,211

- 4.4 As the Council is responsible for collecting Council Tax and administering CTS but only keeps 16.05% of the income, the potential benefit from increasing the CTS contribution rate from 14% to 20% is reduced by around 50%.
- 4.5 When the Council last considered increasing the contribution rate to 20% in 2016, Members asked Officers to request Cambridgeshire County Council to part-fund the above post's costs. However after considering the severe financial constraints that they were under, with the need to make significant savings, CCC felt that it would not be possible to agree to the funding request.

(ii) Reducing contribution rate from 14% to 8.5%

- 4.6 Changing the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 8.5% is forecast to increase CTS expenditure by £280,717, a gross cost to this Council of £45,055 (16.05%) per annum based on current numbers of CTS claimants.
- 4.7 As increasing the contribution rate is likely to worsen collection rates as detailed above, reducing the contribution rate could result in an improvement in collection rates as well as increasing the ability to recover in year debt by deduction from DWP benefits. Consequently, taking these factors into account, the potential cost to this Council of reducing the CTS rate from 14% to 8.5% could be reduced by up to 50%, ie. £22,527 per annum.
- 4.8 There are also options available to Members to increase the CTS contribution rate to higher amounts, possibly 30% or even 40%. This would result in correspondingly higher amounts of gross Council Tax being received but would also result in higher bad debts provision for non-payment and the possibility of further resources being required to help maintain collection levels.
- 4.9 Previous experience shows that when a significant change in the level of support given takes place, there is a spike in the level of recovery action and also the amount that becomes outstanding. The last changes of this nature was between 2012 (the last year of the old CTB system) and 2013 (the first year of the new CTS system) when the minimum working age customer's Council Tax contribution increased from zero to 8.5% and 2014 when the contribution rate increased from 8.5% to 14%.
- 4.10 The table below compares Fenland's in year Council Tax collection rate with the National average.

	Effects of changing CTS reduction percentages			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2018-19
All England Authorities- Average In Year Council Tax collection rate	97.4%	97.0%	97.0%	97.0%
Cumulative change in National Average rate since 2012-13		-0.4%	-0.4%	-0.4%
Fenland increase in CTS reduction level		8.5%	5.5%	0.0%
Fenland In Year Council Tax collection rate	98.0%	97.7%	97.3%	96.8%
Annual Change in Fenland collection rate		-0.3%	-0.4%	-0.5%
Cumulative change since 2012-13		-0.3%	-0.7%	-1.2%

- 4.11 It can be seen that there is a reduction in Council Tax collection rates after the reduction in CTS is increased. However the collection rate effects are complicated and could be caused by a variety of other factors such as the impact of the nature of the employment economy with more casual/part-time

working patterns as well as fluctuating monthly Universal Credit awards. The eventual collection rate is currently around 98.8% - 99.0%.

- 4.12 Bearing in mind the previous consultation results from 2016, the financial constraints that prevented CCC from supporting the funding of additional recovery resources, together with data that suggests a further increase in the CTS reduction at Fenland will adversely affect collection performance, Members are asked to consider whether or not they wish to recommend to Cabinet that consultation be carried out on changing the contribution rate and what rate the consultation should be carried out on.

5 Feasibility of changes to CTS for 2020-21 – fluctuating earnings rule

- 5.1 Claims dependent upon Universal Credit (UC) have become increasingly apparent since the Council entered the UC full service during summer 2018, whereby the significant majority of new claims now go through UC and are received by the ARP through the Universal Credit Data Sharing hub (UCDS).
- 5.2 Currently, there are 941 CTS claimants who are in receipt of Universal Credit. 2,422 CTS claimants are in receipt of other passported benefits and yet to migrate to UC and 767 CTS and/or HB claimants are in receipt of tax credits and yet to migrate to UC. Local Authorities will continue to assess rent element for temporary accommodation and supported accommodation customers as well as Discretionary Housing Payments for UC customers.
- 5.3 UC is designed to be paid monthly, calculated on the customer's circumstances, including Real Time Information (RTI) earnings data from HMRC every month. Given customer's circumstances, especially earnings, fluctuate, this leads to monthly revised UC awards sent to the Council by the DWP.
- 5.4 The existing Council Tax Support scheme rules require the Council to revise awards when a customer's Universal Credit changes leading to reassessment of Council Tax Support. In turn this means customers receive a revised Council Tax bill for balance due for the year and have to amend their payment arrangements, typically direct debit instructions. Increasingly, this can be a monthly occurrence for customers.
- 5.5 We have seen an increase in customer contact regarding these notifications because customers are unsure as to what they have to pay due to the requirement to re-profile their Council Tax payments on receipt of UCDS files on a monthly basis. The uncertainty caused toward the customer also has an impact on Council Tax collection, as well as increased administration costs and postage associated with producing additional notification letters.
- 5.6 Within the Anglia Revenues Partnership, Waveney (East Suffolk) has been in the UC Full Service the longest, since May 2016, where we have seen a 72% increase in revised UC awards sent to the Council. Over time we expect this pattern to continue and increase for all the partner Councils, given full service has been rolled out nationally and UC is set to expand. Fenland entered the UC Full Service September 2018.
- 5.7 To ease the burden on the customer, and the Council we recommend a tolerance rule is introduced into the Council's scheme. This would have the effect of freezing a customer's assessment when a revised UCDS notification would otherwise trigger a reassessment. UCDS changes notified above the

tolerance level would be processed as usual, whereas changes within the tolerance level would not be updated, no correspondence issued to the customer, and without amendment to Council Tax repayments.

- 5.8 We have analysed UCDS award notifications for the past three months. The table below shows the level of reduction in reassessments for changes in UC banded in £5 increments, were a tolerance rule to be applied:

weekly earnings tolerance	£5	£10	£15	£20	£25
reduction in reassessments	14%	21%	32%	32%	36%

- 5.9 We recommend a weekly tolerance level of £15 (£65 monthly) to achieve a 32% reduction in revised Council Tax adjustments. We consider a £10, 21% reduction to be less effective, whilst there is little to gain by increasing the tolerance level. Setting the tolerance level at £15 equates to less than two hours employment at national minimum hourly rates.
- 5.10 With such a tolerance rule, UC customers can earn up to an extra £103 per month. An extra £103 per month will reduce UC award by £65 per month with the UC 63% taper (disregard) applied. An extra £15 per week would reduce CTS by £3 per week if we were to effect the change immediately. However, modelling has shown that the tolerance will reduce the number of re-assessments from an average of 9.28 over a year to an average 4.7 per year, with an average overall impact on CTS for the full year of only £3.43.
- 5.11 A relatively small tolerance level will ensure smoothing of customer's fluctuating UC awards and will not disadvantage those customers receiving greater or occasional beneficial changes.
- 5.12 The thresholds and percentage reductions detailed in the table at 5.8 above are an estimation based on experience of applying UC to date. Given all UC customers will be similarly affected by a tolerance rule we do not foresee any equalities issues. The impact is just as likely to be a minimal yearly decrease in CTS or a minimal yearly increase (around £3 p.a.) regardless of any customer group with the resulting reduction in re-assessments applying to all groups equally.
- 5.13 It should be noted where customers circumstances noticeably change, for example when employment ceases, the tolerance rule will not apply, given the change will be greater than £15 per week. In these circumstances the customer's Council Tax Support will be immediately adjusted to provide extra benefit.
- 5.14 It is also recommended that the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme include discretion to reassess entitlement where a reduction in earnings occurs and it is clear that this level of earnings have and will be likely to continue at a lower level.
- 5.15 An additional safety net for claimants if errors occur is the ability to issue backdated adjustment credit and there is also provision within the scheme to award exceptional hardship. In addition, the proposals within this report include discretion to reassess a case where a customer has had a single reduction in their UC within the proposed £15 tolerance level which has not benefited the customer.

- 5.16 In looking at how a tolerance would apply, a typical case would currently have 12 monthly reassessments and 12 amended Council Tax bills during the year. However, with a tolerance rule a typical customer will only have 4 monthly reassessments and the weekly difference in support would be £0.27p per week.
- 5.17 We are working with our software supplier to introduce additional functionality to enable a tolerance rule, along with automation of these assessments.
- 5.18 Should the Panel approve the recommendation to introduce a tolerance rule, the Council will be required to enter a formal public consultation to amend the scheme for 2020 - 21.
- 5.19 Consultation responses will be reported to the Panel, Cabinet and Full Council as necessary to conclude the review in time for 28th February 2020, or by 11th March 2020 if continuing with the existing scheme.

6 Expected benefits of implementing fluctuating earnings rule

- 6.1 Reduced customer notifications and contact, and stable Council Tax repayment arrangements for customers.
- 6.2 Setting the tolerance at a low level with discretion to review will minimise any implications.

7 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

- 7.1 Consultation will be required if Committee agree to the recommendation. Initial discussions indicate a six to eight week preceptor, stakeholder and web based consultation. ARP will work with the Policy and Communications teams throughout the partnership to organise a consultation.
- 7.2 We would consult all taxpayers, using a survey monkey consultation on the website along with targeted preceptor authorities and stakeholder direct consultation. The consultation would identify whether or not the respondent was in receipt of CTS.
- 7.3 It is anticipated an Equality Impact Assessment is likely to be required.

8 Future Years CTS Review – 2020 for 2021/22 Scheme


- 8.1 The Council Tax Support scheme is complex and includes many areas where potential changes could be made, all of which would have associated savings/cost to this Council and to CTS customers. For example, Peterborough City Council last autumn consulted on a wide range of potential changes to their scheme for 2019/20. At that time their CTS reduction rate was 30% (compared with our 14%). The potential options for changes to Peterborough's CTS scheme that were consulted upon were as follows:
 - (i) The existing 30% reduction that is applied at the end of the benefit calculation is replaced with a 30% liability reduction applied at the start of the calculation;
 - (ii) Alternative options for increasing the above 30% reduction, including: (1) increasing by 1% a year for 3 years; (2) increasing to 35%; (3) increasing to 40%;
 - (iii) Introducing a minimum award level of either £1 or £2 per week;

- (iv) A restriction to support being provided at up to Band C/D equivalent only (higher bands will be limited to the Band C/D level with their parish);
 - (v) An increase to the non-dependent deduction levels;
 - (vi) An assumed minimum earnings level for self-employed claimants;
 - (vii) Removal of second adult rebate;
 - (viii) Removal of extended payments;
 - (ix) Removing the current disregard of Child Benefit and treating it as income;
 - (x) Reducing the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 and
 - (xi) Treating Universal Credit claim notifications as claims for Council Tax Support.
- 8.2 Following consultation, of the above Peterborough approved options (i), (x) and (xi). In addition they approved increasing the 30% reduction by 1% a year for 3 years starting in 2019/20.
- 8.3 It is important to understand that the financial impact of changes to Peterborough City Council's CTS scheme is significantly different to this Council. Peterborough as a Unitary Council receives the majority of any savings realised from any changes, around 85%, whereas this Council only benefits from 16% of any changes.
- 8.4 We could, if Members are in agreement, carry out the required detailed modelling on the above options to determine the impact on both this Council and the customer. Due to time constraints in the review of the scheme for 2020/21 and the time required to carry out the necessary modelling, it is proposed that the above options be considered as part of the review of the CTS scheme in 2020 to be implemented in 2021/22.

9 Next steps

- 9.1 This report has given the Panel an update on progress of the annual review of the Council's CTS scheme, with options to change the existing customer contribution rate and to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule.
- 9.2 The recommendations from this Panel will be reported to Cabinet at their meeting on 18 September 2019. If Cabinet approve any changes that require consultation, it is anticipated that this consultation will occur over an eight week period between September and November.
- 9.3 Ideally and subject to the timing of any consultation process and analysis of responses, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will scrutinise the consultation responses and proposals after the consultation has ended, at their meeting on 2 December 2019. The final proposals would then be recommended to Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 13 December 2019.
- 9.4 If this timescale is not achieved then the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will review the consultation responses and proposals at their meeting on 13 January 2020 with the recommended final proposals being considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 20 February 2020 (within the statutory deadline of 28 February 2020).

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Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny	
Date:	2 September 2019	
Report Title:	Annual Ombudsman Letter and 3Cs process	

1 Purpose / Summary

To update Members on the annual statistics in relation to the Local Government and Health and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) and the Council's corporate '3Cs' procedure. This explains how we deal with the comments, compliments, correspondence and complaints we receive.

2 Key issues:

- On an annual basis the Ombudsman forwards to the Council a summary of complaints received from members of the public. This is also copied to the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny.
- The LGO investigated 13 complaints relating to Fenland District Council during 2018/19. Anyone can refer a complaint to the LGO as long as they have been through the Council's 3C's process. One complaint was upheld; although the LGO decided that while the authority did get something wrong, it offered a satisfactory way to resolve it before the complaint went to the LGO. In 2017/18 we had 3 upheld decisions.
- In 2018/19, 3Cs received 618 pieces of contact. 392 were complaints; a 2% decrease from 2017/18. 143 pieces of correspondence (43% less than in 2017/18) and 169 compliments (+16%) were received. Overall, contact through 3Cs was down by 15% compared to the previous year.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider and note the statistics in relation to the Ombudsman and 3Cs process.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	n/a
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Transformation & Communications
Report Originator(s)	David Wright - Policy and Communications Manager dwright@fenland.gov.uk

Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole - Corporate Director David Wright - Policy and Communications Manager
Background Paper(s)	LGO Annual Report 2017/18 https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/local-government-complaint-reviews

An overview of the Council's 3Cs process

1. Our 3Cs process

1.1 Our corporate 3Cs procedure is the framework used for managing comments, compliments, correspondence and complaints across the Council. We aim to provide a fair, consistent and structured process to enable customers to give their views and receive an accurate response. The feedback we receive is used to monitor performance and improve our services.

1.2 Customers can contact the 3Cs team by:

- Completing an online or paper 3Cs form
- Emailing 3cs@fenland.gov.uk
- Phoning our contact centre
- Visiting a Fenland @ your service shop or Community Hub
- Through their local councillor

1.3 The process for managing each type of contact is summarised in the table below:

Type of contact	Procedure
Comment	A comment is a brief statement of fact or a suggestion received by a customer. It is recorded under the 3Cs process and then passed to the relevant service area for consideration. If appropriate, the service area will contact the customer directly to discuss their comment further.
Compliment	A compliment is a positive comment about the service received. It may refer to an individual or a wider team. A compliment is recorded under the 3Cs process and is then passed to the relevant officer or team. We can use compliments from customers to improve what we do.
Correspondence	<p>Correspondence is two-way communication between a customer and the council. If its content forms a service request, it is referred directly to the appropriate service area for resolution outside of the 3Cs process.</p> <p>The majority of correspondence managed under the 3Cs system is from the MP's office and local councillors. Correspondence is acknowledged within five working days of receipt. It is passed to an appropriate officer who will respond within ten working days.</p>
Complaint	<p>A complaint is dissatisfaction with the service received from an individual, team or from the council as a whole. The complaints process can be up to three stages long.</p> <p>Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer contacts 3Cs• 3Cs sends an acknowledgement to the customer within 5 working days. This contains the name of the officer responding to their complaint and the deadline for response (10 working days from acknowledgement)• Officer responds directly to customer. This is stored in the 3Cs system as a Stage 1 response

Type of contact	Procedure
	<p>If the customer is dissatisfied with the response, their complaint is escalated to Stage 2.</p> <p>Stage 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer receives acknowledgement within 5 working days • Complaint passed to manager of the officer who provided a Stage 1 response. The deadline for response is 10 working days from acknowledgement • Officer responds directly to customer. This is stored in the 3Cs system as a Stage 2 response <p>If the customer is dissatisfied with the response, their complaint is escalated to Stage 3. This is the final stage in the complaints process.</p> <p>Stage 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer receives acknowledgment within 5 working days • Complaint passed to CMT lead for response. The deadline for response is 15 working days from acknowledgement • CMT lead responds directly to customer. They state that this is final response within our 3Cs process and give contact details for the LGO as a final course of redress. Their response is stored in the 3Cs system as a Stage 3 response. <p>The next section explains the LGO process.</p>

- 1.4 Contact was split into four high level service areas:
- Communities, Environment and Leisure (CEL)
 - Growth and Infrastructure (GI)
 - Planning, Policy and Governance (PPG)
 - Resources and Customer Services (RCS)

Due to incorporating many frontline services, CEL has the largest volume of correspondence and complaints (84% and 58% respectively in 2018/19).

- 1.5 The table below provides a comparison of contact between 2017/18 and 2018/19:

	2018/19	2017/18	Variance
Compliments	169	146	+16%
Comments	14	50	-72%
Correspondence	143	252	-43%
Complaints	392	400	-2%
TOTAL	718	848	-15%

- 1.6 Members receive a quarterly performance report within the Portfolio Holder Briefing document. This provides a quarterly cumulative comparison of contact between the current and previous financial year.
- 1.7 A monthly report is produced to measure response times for correspondence and complaints. It also measures how many complaints are progressed past a Stage 1.
- 1.8 The Council produces an Annual Report after full complaints data is available for the previous financial year. This is available for the public to view on our website.

2. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

- 2.1 Customers can contact the LGO if they have made a complaint and are dissatisfied with our response(s). The LGO will only investigate complaints that have fully completed our 3Cs procedure and relate to our services. They will *not* investigate if:
 - The complainant has known about the issue for over 12 months but hasn't complained
 - The matter has not affected the complainant personally or caused them an injustice
 - The issue affects most people in the Fenland area
 - The complainant should have appealed or taken legal action (e.g a tribunal, appeal to the Planning Inspectorate)
 - The complaint is about personnel matters (e.g employment issues)
- 2.2 If a customer makes contact, the LGO Assessment team will then ask us to check if the customer has completed our 3Cs process. They will ask for copies of customer contact and our responses.
- 2.3 If the Assessment team decides further investigation is needed, the complaint information will be passed to a LGO investigator. They will ask further questions and may request further information.
- 2.4 Once the investigator thinks they have got enough information to make a fair decision, they will share a draft with the Council and the complainant. Both parties then have the opportunity to comment on this decision and share further relevant information.
- 2.5 Following this, a final decision will be made. Depending on complexity, this process usually takes about 26 weeks. There are 6 possible decision types:
 - Uphold the complaint and give recommendation(s) about how the organisation should put it right
 - Uphold part of the complaint
 - Uphold the complaint but not make any recommendations as the organisation has already put things right
 - Uphold the complaint but not make any recommendations because the fault has not had a significant effect on the complainant
 - Not to uphold the complaint
 - The complaint cannot or will not be investigated

- 2.6 The LGO will write to the Council and customer to explain their decisions. If the Council is at fault, they may ask us to put things right (if we haven't already). This may involve:
- Apologising to the complainant
 - Providing a service to the complainant that they should have had
 - Making a different decision (that it should have made before)
 - Reconsidering a decision that wasn't made properly
 - Improving our procedures so similar issues don't happen again
 - Making a payment
- 2.7 The LGO does not have legal powers to force organisations to comply with their recommendations – however, most Council's do. Their decisions are available to publically view on their website. They release an Annual Report for each authority every year.
- 2.8 The LGO states that complaint volume figures should not be used in isolation to evaluate corporate health. High volumes of complaints can show that an organisation is open to learning. In contrast, low complaint volumes can show that an organisation is not receptive to user feedback. By monitoring trends and customer feedback, we are able to quickly change processes if they are not working as well as they should.
- 2.9 Between April 2018 and March 2019, the LGO received 13 complaints and made 14 decisions (1 carried over from previous year) relating to services provided by Fenland District Council. The table below shows the complaints that the LGO made a decision on in 2018/19:

Service	Decision made	Decision	Remedy
Planning & Development	Apr 2018	Not Upheld	Null
Benefits & Tax	Apr 2018	Incomplete/invalid	Null
Corporate & Other Services	Sept 2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
Planning & Development	Sept 2018	Advice given	Null
Environmental Services	Oct 2018	Referred back for local resolution	Null
Planning & Development	Oct 2018	Not Upheld	Null
Environmental Services	Oct 2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
Housing	Nov 2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
Corporate & Other Services	Nov 2018	Upheld	Null
Planning & Development	Jan 2019	Advice Given	Null
Corporate & Other Services	Jan 2019	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
Planning & Development	Jan 2019	Incomplete/invalid	Null
Planning & Development	Mar 2019	Not Upheld	Null
Benefits & Tax	Mar 2019	Closed after initial enquiries	Null

2.10 For any upheld decisions, the LGO carry out further investigation into whether there has been a satisfactory remedy provided by the authority. Between April 2018 and March 2019, Fenland District Council had one complaint upheld. The LGO decided that while the authority did get something wrong, it offered a satisfactory way to resolve it before the complaint went to the LGO.

2.11 The upheld complaint fell under the Corporate and Other Services category. The case is summarised below:

Date	Case History
Nov 2018	<p>Complaint: The Council's leisure centre was discriminatory and failed to make reasonable adjustments to support the complainant attending.</p> <p>Outcome: The Council did make reasonable adjustments. The Council was at fault for not having clear guidance on the carer's role for staff and customers. This has caused Mrs X minor injustice. It has remedied this by introducing a carer's card.</p>

2.12 The Council learns lessons from all Ombudsman contact and particularly for upheld cases. We review our processes to ensure they are thorough and consistent. We also thoroughly review the Ombudsman draft decision and proposed ruling carefully. This can change between the draft and final stage and has consequences for the council.

2.13 Since April 2019, the Council has not received any enquiries from the Ombudsman.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Overview and Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme 2019 – 2020

All Formal meetings are held in the Council Chamber at Fenland Hall

Meeting Dates

<u>Agenda Despatch Date</u>	<u>Informal pre-meeting</u>			<u>Formal Overview & Scrutiny Meeting</u>		
	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Pre-Brief</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
Thursday 23 May 2019	Tuesday 28 May 2019	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 3 June 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 4 July 2019	Monday 8 July 2019	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 15 July 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 22 August 2019	Tuesday 28 August 2019 **please note the amendment to the date	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 2 September 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 3 October 2019	Monday 7 October 2019	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 14 October 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 31 October 2019	Monday 4 November 2019	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 11 November 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 21 November 2019	Monday 25 November 2019	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 2 December 2019	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 2 January 2020	Monday 6 January 2020	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 13 January 2020	2.00pm	2.30pm
Thursday 30 January 2020	Monday 3	2.00pm	Room 38	Monday 10	2.00pm	2.30pm

	February 2020			February 2020		
Friday 13 March 2020 **please note the amendment to the date	Monday 16 March 2020 **please note the amendment to the date	2.00pm	Room 38	Tuesday 24 March 2020** Please note the amendment to this date	2.00pm	2.30

14 October 2019

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing			
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting	Annual Meeting with the Leader and Chief Executive	Quality Organisation	Councillor Boden Paul Medd Cabinet and CMT
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions		Anna Goodall
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall

11 November 2019

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing			
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting	Freedom Leisure Review	Communities	Councillor Sam Clark Carol Pilson Phil Hughes Simon Bell Representative from Freedom (TBC)
	LA Support (Kingdom) Review	Communities	Councillor Murphy Carol Pilson Annabel Tighe John Roberts (Kingdom)
	Wisbech 2020 Vision & Wisbech Rail Update	Communities	Councillor Boden Councillor Seaton Wendy Otter Gary Garford Russell Beal (Anglian Water) Adrian Chapman (Cambs County Council and Peterborough City Council) Rowland Potter (CPCA)
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall

2 December 2019

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing			
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting	Progress of Corporate Priority – Economy	Economy	Councillor Benney Gary Garford, Justin Wingfield
	Annual review of Anglia Revenues Partnership	Economy	Sam Anthony / Peter Catchpole

			Councillor Mrs French Paul Corney (ARP) Mark Saunders
	Update on CPCA Growth Service and impact on Economic Development in Fenland	Economy	Paul Medd Gary Garford Councillor Benney Justin Wingfield
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions		Anna Goodall
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall

13 January 2020

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing	Draft Overview and Scrutiny Future Work Programme 2017/2018	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting	Draft Budget	Economy	Cabinet CMT
	Draft Business Plan	Economy	Cabinet CMT Dave Wright
	Fees and Charges	Economy	Councillor Boden Peter Catchpole Cabinet Mark Saunders & Neil Krajewski
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions		Anna Goodall
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall

10 February 2020

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing			
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting	Local Health Partnership Update (TBC) Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Communities	Councillor Mrs Wallwork Annabel Tighe TBC – NHS Representative
	Progress of Corporate Priority – Environment	Environment	Councillor Murphy Councillor Tierney Dan Horn, Phil Hughes, Mark Mathews, Annabel Tighe Carol Pilson
	Crime Disorder and Reduction Partnership	Communities	Councillor Mrs Wallwork Carol Pilson, Dan Horn and Aaron Locks
	Draft Overview and Scrutiny Future Work Programme 2019/2020	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions		Anna Goodall
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall

24 March 2020

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ Officer/ External Witness
14.00 to 14.30 Pre Briefing			
14.30 to 16.30 Meeting			
	Review of Clarion	Communities	Dan Horn Councillor Miss Hoy Councillor S Clark Councillor Mrs Wallwork

			Carol Pilson Sue Stavers (Clarion)
	Transformation & Communications Portfolio Holder update		Councillor Tierney Carol Pilson David Wright Peter Catchpole
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions		Anna Goodall
	TEP items as required		
	Future Work Programme 2019/20	Quality Organisation	Councillor Miscandlon Anna Goodall