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| 21 | <u>Introduction and Apologies</u> | | | <p>Apologies received from: Hilary Ellis Emma Nasta, Nick Harding and Martin Williams.</p> <p>Present: Dino Biagioni, Stephen Buddle, Christian Cooper, Marcel Cooper, Stephen Buddle, Mark Greenwood ,Hannah Guy, Matthew Hall, Nick Harding, Dan Horn, Simon Jackson Councillor Mrs Dee Laws, John Maxey (Chair), David Rowen, Nick Seaton, Jordan Trundle, Gemma Wildman and David Wyatt</p> |
| 22 | <u>Review of Action Schedule from Last Meeting held on 6 October 2021</u> | | | <p>The action schedule was agreed.</p> <p>The following points were raised.</p> <p>Wisbech Access Study: Dan Horn confirmed that an introductory meeting has taken place with the new County Council Director of Transportation and a further is meeting with Officers from both the County Council along with FDC Officers to look at the next steps. John Maxey stated that it is helpful for an Officer from the Highways team to attend the Forum meetings and Dan Horn agreed to request representation from Cambridgeshire Highways at the Forum meetings going forward. John Maxey added that there had previously been a query raised over the funding and process for the Wisbech Access Study Works and he asked Cllr Mrs Laws for an update. She stated that she has attended a meeting with the Local MP,</p> |

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| | | | | however at this time, there is no further update. |
| 23 | <u>Local Plan Update</u> | | | <p>Gemma Wildman gave the Forum an update on the emerging Local Plan. She highlighted the work carried out over the last couple of years and explained that there have been delays for different reasons which she detailed. She explained that a revised LDS was published in July 2021.</p> <p>She explained that the latest delays have been attributed to the site assessment work have taken longer which has taken longer than had been anticipated which has then led to delays with the transport assessment work and the appointment of the consultant to oversee that aspect of the work.</p> <p>A new version of the Local Plan timetable is therefore going to be presented to Cabinet on the 3 February which is proposed to go out to public consultation in the Summer of 2022. Some of the issues which will be looked at will include specific deliverable sites and it will be much more about supporting investment and growth. She added that settlement boundaries will also be reintroduced which was something that was suggested and asked for as part of the earlier consultation.</p> <p>Cllr Mrs Laws stated that there is the will and want to bring economic growth and development to Fenland and there will be more flexibility in the proposed plan, than there is in the current plan which is very out of date. She added that the team are being held up by the consultants which has caused the delays, but they should be thanked</p> |

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| | | | | <p>and applauded for their work to date.</p> <p>John Maxey referred to one of the reasons for delay which had been listed as transport assessments and asked whether it was linked to the funding for the Wisbech Access Study. Gemma stated that it is not linked and explained that there were delays in appointing consultants in the first instance which added a month to the timetable and there were also delays in obtaining additional information. Gemma explained that there are difficulties currently with regard to the transport assessment work as data needs to be analysed differently which is taking longer.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that the delay is not stifling development in the main settlements, however there a lot of the large allocations that are in the process of being delivered rather than actually happened already. He added that a lot of the villages have already reached their thresholds and he asked whether there is an obvious slowdown in delivery because of the delay. Gemma explained that she has only reviewed information from last year and has not looked at the status of development since March. She added that the Government has recently released the results of the housing delivery test where they ranked the performance of the local authorities against their housing targets over the last three years and work out if they have met their target and the Government concluded that Fenland met 95% of their target.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that given that the threshold has been met there is still the scope to grant more consents in villages if there are applications being</p> |

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| | | | | <p>put forward that warrant it. Gemma Wildman stated that each application should be looked at to see how it fits against the criteria in the current local plan, the same criteria process needs to be followed. John Maxey asked for clarity that given that the delay is adding more years until the next review is due, he presumes that threshold levels are not currently being used as reasons for refusal. David Rowen stated that the thresholds that are set out in the Local Plan, and since an appeal decision in Manea a few years ago, it is not something that has been used as a reason for refusal or something that would be sustainable at appeal, and therefore each application is looked at on its planning merits, rather than the threshold and consultation response type of approach which is set out in the local plan.</p> |
| 24 | <p><u>Future of the Fenland Development Forum</u></p> | | | <p>John Maxey stated that it is his wish to stand down as Chairman of the Developer Forum.</p> <p>He added that he has been unable to find anybody else who wishes to take over the role and asked members of the forum for their thoughts with regards to the future of the Forum.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws expressed the view that the Forum is useful and stated that she does not necessarily feel that attendance is low due to it being held virtually. She added that she would like to see the Forum fold and added that in her view Nick Harding would be a very suitable Chairman.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper stated that he agrees with Cllr Mrs Laws comments and stated that Nick Harding would be a suitable Chairman as he has the continuity of the Forum business. He added that</p> |

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| | | | | <p>he would not like to see the Forum cease.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that the position of Chairman is not an onerous position and only means Charing the Forum four times a year and agreeing agenda items with Nick Harding and Member Services.</p> <p>David Wyatt stated that he endorses the comments raised by Cllr Mrs Laws and Marcel Cooper and added it would be a great shame if the Forum would close. He added that he joined the Forum like many other developers who are interested in the development and improvement of Fenland. John Maxey added that it is still his intention to remain a member of the Forum.</p> <p>Dan Horn stated that the Council would like the Forum to be Agent and Developer led and having a Chairperson who is an agent or developer adds value to the forum to ensure it is not a Council led initiative.</p> <p>It was agreed that for the foreseeable future, it would be that Nick Harding would be the nominated person, however if any Agent wished to take up the position, then Nick would step down as the Chair.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws expressed her gratitude and thanks to John Maxey for holding the position of Chairman and she suggested that an email should be sent to advise all members of the Forum of the way forward, advising them that Nick Harding will take on the position of Chairman for an interim period until such time as an Agent comes forward and takes on the role.</p> |

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| 25 | <u>Changes to the Planning System</u> | | | <p>David Rowen briefed the Forum on the recent changes to the planning system.</p> <p>The Environment Act has been introduced which sets out the biodiversity net gain thresholds within that and the minimum standard is 10% biodiversity gain.</p> <p>Building regulations – Car charging points are now to be included in new developments.</p> <p>Future Homes standard – no gas boilers in new homes from 2025 and no new or replacement gas boilers in existing homes from 2035.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that some of those points have an impact in terms of viability and added that it is likely to add £10,000 per dwelling to install a heat pump in rather than a gas boiler and also to include a car charging point. He added that the benchmark on land value on viability in Fenland is not much more than £10,000 per unit, that additional cost will make a dramatic difference.</p> |
| 26 | <u>Staffing and Performance Update</u> | | | <p>David Rowen updated the Forum on the recent staffing changes.</p> <p>Dan Horn is Acting Director and will be covering for Carol Pilson while she is on maternity Leave.</p> <p>Humphrey Mpezeni – Contractor covering Jen Seaman post</p> <p>Julie Jaques – Planning Officer</p> |

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| | | | | <p>Gavin Taylor – Leaving (agency cover being sought & recruitment under way)</p> <p>Nick Thrower – Leaving (agency cover being sought & recruitment under way)</p> <p>John Maxey asked for a new list of contact details to be circulated.</p> <p>Mark Greenwood introduced himself as the new Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects. M.greenwood@fenland.gov.uk 01354 622472</p> <p>David Rowen updated the Forum with the performance statistics.</p> <p>Majors: 100% within 13 weeks or eot</p> <p>Minors: 75% within 8 weeks or eot</p> <p>Others: 87% within 8 weeks or eot</p> <p>Validation: 5-week backlog, due to volume of applications and additional resource has been brought in to address the backlog.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws stated she appreciates the volume of applications, but the quality of them also needs to be considered. She added that the right first time status of applications is still drastically low and she will be providing statistics for the next meeting.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper questioned that when there is a discharge of conditions are they for major, minors</p> |

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| | | | | <p>or others. David Rowen stated that discharge of conditions applications do not form a reportable application. Marcel Cooper stated that it would be very interesting to see those figures reported as he has found that he can get a permission where it is rated and then to get the conditions to be discharged can take a considerable time. David Rowen stated that he did not disagree with the point raised and added that in some cases the Planning Team rely on external consultees feeding into the process and many of the consultees that are involved also have backlogs of work and are overwhelmed with volumes as well.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper questioned that when there is an extension of time and then fail to make a determination before the extension of time and then do not renew it what are the next steps?. David Rowen explained that if the application is determined outside of the previously agreed extension of time, it does not count as a positive in terms of performance figures and would be shown against the percentage that was not determined within the agreed time scale. Marcel Cooper questioned that if it is a discharge of a planning condition then it does not matter to officers anyway if there is an extension of time. David Rowen stated that discharge of conditions is slightly different as it is subject to a different regime and is not a reportable figure.</p> <p>David Wyatt asked for figures to be provided the figure for the number of applications that go to extensions of time. David Rowen added that the statistics can be provided going forward and he added that when agreeing extensions of time, it is within the applicant's gift whether they choose to do that and there are issues and instances where major application's go beyond the 13 weeks to resolve technical matters or Section 106 issues.</p> |

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| | | | | <p>He added that the 100% figure shown against majors is a collaborative approach in terms of that figure.</p> <p>David Rowen stated that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are not asking for eot's where FDC 'is at fault' 2. Vacancies in MyFenland back-office team (being addressed) is impacting on scanning & indexing of planning application and related material. 3. Staff Workflow and process review under way 4. Bid being made for additional resources in the planning team. |
| 27 | <u>Any other business</u> | | | <p>David Rowen highlighted to the Forum some anticipated changes for 2022.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government is looking to further digitise planning which would have more public engagement, for a more efficient planning application process. Once further details are known this will be communicated to the Forum. 2. Replacement of Sec 106, with an infrastructure levy and would mean a significant change to the application process. |

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| | | | | <p>3. Street Referendums on street level design codes: Greater local involvement in the planning process is being looked at by Government.</p> <p>4. Brownfield Site investment fund. Increase in funding given to some urban authorities previously and scheme will be expanded to be available more widely to bring Brownfield sites forward.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper asked how the brownfield site funding will be distributed and David Rowen stated that he would anticipate that the funding may go to Local Authorities to administer, however the details surrounding this scheme are still being looked at and once the information is known it will be passed to Agents and Developers.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws asked how the possible changes to the Section 106 system will affect CIL going forward. David Rowen stated that his understanding is that all Councils would operate a tariff based approach to development similar to CIL.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that the reason CIL is not in Fenland is because it was not viable and Section 106 is still required even if you have CIL to cover the affordable housing and he questioned whether affordable housing would be replaced with a tariff and then grant funding for housing associations from that tariff collection to buy on the open market for affordable housing. He added that it raises questions concerning viability concerns that already exist from the existing system.</p> <p>David Wyatt added that historically, the idea of the</p> |

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| | | | | <p>Section 106, was that it was attached to the land and therefore when a Section 106 was agreed with planning, it had an effect on the land value. He expressed the view that the new proposals seem to be levied against the developers and he added that with regard to CIL the County Councils in various areas do not seem to work with the District Council and therefore the schemes appear to be disjointed.</p> <p>Simon Jackson stated that the Commercial Developer Forum is due to take place on 21 February at 1pm.</p> <p>He added that there is continual strong demand for commercial units and the Bartletts site in Chatteris which is now Bartletts Business Park is almost fully occupied apart from 3 small units.</p> <p>He stated that there is a large amount of business support available including grant funding and a program to help businesses both existing and new. If anybody is interested then they should contact him on sjackson@fenland.gov.uk</p> <p>John Maxey expressed the view that in his experience, the biggest thing CIL does is that it encourages Parish Councils to produce a neighbourhood plan. He explained that once a plan is in place it enables the Parish Council coffers to receive 25% of the CIL, whereas if there isn't one in place you only receive 15% payment.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws asked Marcel Cooper to confirm the cost of installing an electric charging point into a home and he advised that it is normally £85 per unit into a home, dependent on the requirements, but he added that in his view he</p> |

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| | | | | <p>is unsure how the infrastructure will cope.</p> <p>John Maxey added that in his experience, the cabling is not expensive, however the equipment that needs to be connected is around £500, for a reasonable size, rather than a super-fast charging point. He added that the larger cost implication is for air source heat pumps which is in the region of £8000, or more than a gas boiler and that cost will be passed onto the householder by way of RHI at the moment. He added that currently there is very little market evidence that houses with air source heat pumps are selling for £8000 to £10,000 more than those with gas boilers.</p> <p>Hannah Guy stated all of their cabling systems have been redesigned so that if a potential purchaser would like to put a car charging point in then the facility is there to enable that. She added that in terms of discharging the planning conditions with the councils that want to see that currently it is adequate, and the local authorities are content with that.</p> <p>John Maxey thanked everybody for attending and stated that he has enjoyed being the Chairman, but now feels the time has come for him to stand down. Members of the Forum reiterated their thanks to him and wished him well.</p> <p>Date of next meeting 13/4/22</p> |

Finish: 4.20 pm