

AGENDA

CABINET

TUESDAY, 24 AUGUST 2021

3.00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL

Committee Officer: Linda Albon

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Whilst this meeting will be held in public, we encourage members of the public to view the meeting via our YouTube channel, due to the Council still observing Covid-19 restrictions.

The YouTube link for today's meeting is: <https://youtu.be/CbELVPyBfIE>

1 To receive apologies for absence

2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held 15 July 2021.

3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified

4 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting

5 Future Project Funding Opportunities (Pages 7 - 24)

To consider how well placed the Council is to capitalise on grant funding opportunities.

6 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 25 - 26)

For information purposes.

7 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

CONFIDENTIAL - ITEMS COMPRISING EXEMPT INFORMATION

To exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: "that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated."

8 Previous Minutes (confidential) (Pages 27 - 32)

To approve and sign the confidential minutes of the meeting held 1 July 2021.

Monday, 16 August 2021

Members: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor A Lynn, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton and Councillor S Tierney

CABINET



THURSDAY, 15 JULY 2021 - 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton and Councillor S Tierney

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs D Laws and Councillor A Lynn

Councillor Mrs Laws' absence was due to the current government limits on social contact because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CAB5/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 1 July 2021 were approved and signed.

CAB6/21 ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members considered the Annual Report 2020/21 report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Cllr Boden thanked officers and Councillor Tierney for their work in making the report clearer to read than last year; it is a positive report.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the Annual Report of the Council 2020/21.

CAB7/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members considered the Treasury Management Annual Report 2020/21 presented by Councillor Boden.

Cabinet AGREED to note, and that Council receive, the Treasury Management Annual Report.

CAB8/21 2020/21 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT

Members considered the 2020/21 Financial Outturn Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Cabinet AGREED that:

(i) The Outturn for the Council's General Fund services in 2020/21, as detailed at Appendix A and Section 2 of the report, be noted and that Members note the transfer of the underspend to the Budget Equalisation Reserve; and

(ii) The reasons for the variations from revised estimate be noted.

CAB9/21 CAPITAL UPDATE REPORT

Members considered the Capital Update Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the updated capital programme and funding schedule at Appendix A of the Capital Update report.

CAB10/21 PROJECT UPDATE - GROWING FENLAND & CCC CAPITAL COMMUNITY FUND

Members considered the Project Update – Growing Fenland and CCC Capital Community Fund report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Tierney said he was concerned that people viewing this meeting may wonder why Cabinet members do not ask questions when going through the agenda items. He thought it would be useful to point out for the record that this is a good sign as most of these items have already been covered in other meetings. Cabinet is a procedural process; members are engaged but have already read and understood the reports and had any questions answered. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney for this comment; which was appropriate in his role as Portfolio Holder for Communications and suggested he make this point at every Cabinet meeting for the benefit of the public; he agreed that Cabinet members have already been through these papers at least twice and ironed out any significant problems.

Councillor French updated Cabinet with the news that she attended a County Council meeting last week where they requested at least another £5m to be put into the budget for the community.

Councillor Hoy wanted to make a positive point about the business capital grant scheme. The officer involved was very helpful, did everything we asked, and it was good to see the scheme implemented well.

Councillor Benney pointed out that Chatteris has done exceptionally well in respect of the Growing Fenland project, which received £4m of funding in total. Some questions have been asked on Facebook about whether it is a good thing to move the museum, but this changes the way the council runs. Moving the museum, which taxpayers pay for, will make it self-funding from the income we will receive from renting the office and flats. In turn this will provide a surplus which can be spent for the good of the town. The £1m Chatteris has received from the funding has been spent but not wasted. Any criticism is unjust; a lot of work has gone in and he is very pleased with the outcome.

Cabinet AGREED to:

- **Note the contents of the Project Update report and the projects which were submitted to the CPCA Board Meeting on 30.06.21 as set out in appendix E of the report.**
- **Note that all of the £4m of CPCA funding ringfenced for the four market towns of Fenland has now been allocated to various projects.**

CCC Capital Communities Fund:

- **No further action required**

Growing Fenland:

- **Cabinet members are asked to approve the capital costs linked to the CPCA funding bids in the table below. These bids were approved at the CPCA Board Meeting held on 30.06.21.**

TOWN	PROJECT	CPCA FUNDING REQUESTED	CAPITAL COST IMPLICATIONS FOR FDC	REVENUE COST IMPLICATIONS FOR FDC (PER YEAR)	PROJECT TO BE DELIVERED BY
Wisbech	Community Hub at Wisbech Park	£299,200	£5,000	£0	FDC
Chatteris	Chatteris Museum & Community Space	£771,821	£0	£0	Chatteris Town Council

CAB11/21 FREEDOM LEISURE

Members considered the Freedom Leisure report presented by Councillor Clark and Councillor Boden.

Councillor Seaton said it is encouraging to see the progress that Freedom Leisure has made since reopening, which is better than anticipated. He commented that leisure centre car parks are usually full of cars and as we are developing a cycling/walking strategy he wondered if there is an opportunity through Freedom Leisure, even for a limited period, to encourage people to cycle or walk to the centres to promote the overall strategy for health and wellbeing within Fenland. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Seaton for his sensible suggestion and asked that he take this back to officers to feedback to the County Council and Freedom Leisure, with the assistance of Councillor Clark.

Cabinet AGREED that:

- 3.1 Fenland District Council ("FDC") provides the Phase V financial relief to Freedom Leisure set out in these recommendations.**
- 3.2 FDC defers the monthly management fee of £38,000 per month for July 2021 – September 2021, at a cost to the Council of £114,000, repayable in accordance with the terms set out at paragraph 3.4 of these recommendations.**
- 3.3 FDC continues to support Freedom Leisure on an open book basis by providing financial support from the remaining NLRG grant. The current estimated cost of operational support for the period is £47,178.**
- 3.4 Repayment of the £114,000 described in paragraph 3.2 of these recommendations shall become payable through an annual deduction of 75% of any profit generated in excess of the levels predicted in the LOBTA (Leisure Operators Base Trading Account). This is a change from the current 50/50 profit share and will be subject to the performance of the business over the contract period.**
- 3.5 The Monitoring Officer and s.151 Officer are authorised to put in place all necessary arrangements to give effect to the agreed recommendations to include entry into the necessary legal arrangements and expenditure of the amounts described from existing budget provisions.**

CAB12/21 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members considered the Local Development Scheme Report presented by Councillor Boden on behalf of Councillor Laws.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the attached Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Appendix 1) which sets out the revised timetable for production of the Fenland Local Plan.

CAB13/21 FDC RESPONSE TO BOUNDARY COMMISSION PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY PROPOSALS

Members considered FDC's response to the Boundary Commission's Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Proposals report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor French said it would be down to the North East Cambs Conservative Association (NECCA) as to whether we change the name of the Association.

Councillor Seaton asked how this affects the title of our MP. Councillor Boden confirmed that our local MP would become the MP for Fenland instead of MP for North East Cambs. He added that our current MP has expressed approval for this change.

Cabinet AGREED to:

- 1.1 Submit the proposed consultation response on parliamentary constituency boundaries to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) as set out in section 5 of this report.**
- 1.2 Support the BCE's initial proposals with respect to the boundaries of its proposed "North East Cambridgeshire" and "East Cambridgeshire" parliamentary constituencies.**
- 1.3 Strongly oppose the retention of the name "North East Cambridgeshire" for the BCE's proposed new parliamentary constituency covering the area of Fenland District Council, much preferring that that new parliamentary constituency be named "Fenland."**
- 1.4 The name proposed by the BCE for its "East Cambridgeshire" parliamentary constituency.**
- 1.5 The BCE's initial proposal to create new "Peterborough" and "North West Cambridgeshire" parliamentary constituencies should be replaced with new "Peterborough North" and "Peterborough South & Ramsey" parliamentary constituencies.**

(Councillor Hoy left the meeting for this item and therefore took no part in the discussion or vote).

CAB14/21 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

CAB15/21 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 1 July 2021 were unavailable and will be presented for approval at the next meeting of Cabinet.

2.40 pm

Chairman

Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 August 2021	
Report Title:	Future Project Funding Opportunities	

1 Purpose / Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider how well placed the Council is to capitalise on grant funding opportunities, particularly through Government's Build Back Better and Levelling Up agenda. Building on the recent success of the Wisbech High Street National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) and March Future High Street Fund (FHSF) projects and the significant grant awards achieved, together with lessons learnt from the round one Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid process, the report considers how we can best position the district with a clear and coherent set of priorities that can swiftly be further developed into detailed business cases and shovel ready projects to form the basis of future bids, and particularly Round 2 of LUF.

2 Key issues

The key issues that the report considers are:

- grant funding opportunities
- our existing priorities and projects
- how we ensure that our existing priorities and projects are 'bid ready'
- identifying new projects that would be eligible for grant funding and how we make these 'bid ready'
- resource implications
- how members will be engaged throughout this process

3 Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of this report and the potential funding opportunities likely to be available to FDC in the short term, particularly the opportunity to bid for LUF funding for Wisbech of up to £20m.

3.2 That Cabinet:

(1) Authorises the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director and Chief Financial Officer, in discussion with the Leader, to develop a Round 2 LUF bid for Wisbech including a Town Centre Spatial Plan, as described in Section 8 of this report, and to commission the specialist external consultancy support required to achieve this.

(2) Approves the commissioning of the Stage 1 of the 'thinkingplace' 'Place Shaping work - Narrative Development' as described in this report at a cost of £31,400 which will be funded by Steve Barclay MP.

(3) Approves the commissioning of Stage 2 of the 'thinkingplace' Place Shaping work - Visual Development - as described in this report if third party funding to deliver this work can be secured.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Chris Boden - Leader of the Council
Report Originators	Paul Medd - Chief Executive Peter Catchpole - Corporate Director Carol Pilson - Corporate Director Simon Machen - Interim Corporate Director Amy Brown - Head of Legal & Governance Phil Hughes - Head of Leisure Services Jo Blackmore - Executive Officer Simon Jackson - Economic Growth Manager
Contact Officers	Paul Medd - Chief Executive Peter Catchpole - Corporate Director Carol Pilson - Corporate Director Simon Machen - Interim Corporate Director Amy Brown - Head of Legal & Governance Phil Hughes - Head of Leisure Services Jo Blackmore - Executive Officer Simon Jackson - Economic Growth Manager
Background Papers	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) Levelling Up Fund Prospectus Cultural Development Fund Guidance

1 Background / introduction

- 1.1 Government's response to COVID-19 through Build Back Better and the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) agenda offers a unique opportunity to attract significant levels of funding to Fenland which is designated as a 'Priority 2' area. The recent success of the March Future High Street Fund (FHSF) bid demonstrates that with the right professional input, stakeholder engagement and political prioritisation, the Council is capable of pulling together a credible and compelling business case for investment.
- 1.2 The Growing Fenland Master Plans for March, Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey were coordinated by the District Council with support from economic analysts Metro Dynamics who worked closely with key stakeholders. The Master Plans were endorsed by the District Council, respective Town Councils, the County Council and Combined Authority. They include a set of well informed and evidenced strategic priorities for each town.
- 1.3 This report sets out recent experience of grant bid opportunities together with consideration of how the Council can best position itself to maximise the potential for future inward investment, and how it needs to be fleet of foot to achieve that, particularly for Round 2 of LUF and its previously agreed focus on Wisbech.
- 1.4 Given the limited resource available within the Council and the specialist skill set required to prepare bids and the accompanying background work, this report recommends that the Council now procures specialist consultancy support - in the first instance to develop a Round 2 LUF bid for Wisbech.

2 Levelling Up Fund / Build Back Better

- 2.1 Announced at the Spending Review in 2020, the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) will invest in capital investment in local infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. Building on and consolidating prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund, it will have a visible and tangible impact on people and places and support economic recovery. In doing so it will also create opportunity across the country, prioritising bids that invest in regeneration and growth in places of need and areas of low productivity and connectivity.
- 2.2 The £4.8 billion fund will support town and city centre regeneration to deliver economic and social levelling-up. In round one the emphasis was on town centre regeneration, culture and heritage, as well as a major opportunity to promote local transport projects through the Local Transport Authority (CPCA in Cambridgeshire). LUF provides a new approach to tackling economic differences between areas and driving prosperity in towns and cities that have been left behind, and which have now been prioritised by Government for support.
- 2.3 The Levelling Up Fund bids may be put forward under two separate categories:
 - Regeneration and town centre investment and cultural investment bids up to £20m focused on town centres that improve cultural, heritage and community amenity
 - Transport bids up to £50m as single project bids or packages of no more than 3 projects together
- 2.4 While the Fund is open to every local area, it is especially intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including ex-industrial areas, deprived towns, and coastal communities. Whilst bidding and funding criteria are not yet known for round two there is some expectation of it being similar to round one, with bids expected to have to align to local and national policy and strategies, the prospectus outlined the priorities below.

- 2.5 **Regeneration and town centre investment**, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
- 2.6 **Cultural investment** maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.
- 2.7 It should also be noted Government's Net Zero and wider environmental ambitions represent a key part of the commitment to Build Back Better – and this is particularly important with regards to capital and infrastructure projects which have a visible impact on surroundings. Projects should be aligned to and support Net Zero goals: for instance, be based on low or zero carbon best practice; adopt and support innovative clean tech and/or support the growth of green skills and sustainable supply chains.
- 2.8 The bid assessment process is likely to focus on the following key criteria:
- Characteristics of the place – each local authority is sorted into category 1, 2 or 3 based on Government's published assessment metrics, with category 1 representing the highest level of identified need. Fenland falls into category level 2.
 - Deliverability - will be based on supplementary finance, management, and commercial cases, with bids able to demonstrate investment or which begin delivery on the ground in 2022-23 financial year prioritised in the next round of funding.
 - Strategic fit with local and Fund priorities – this should be addressed in the strategic case of submissions and should include support from stakeholders.
 - Value for money – an economic case should be submitted to explain the benefits of the bid and how it represents value for money.

Fenland decided, following extensive conversations between senior members, the CPCA and officers, not to submit a bid in Round 1 of LUF because of the likely competitiveness of this first round with only £660m available nationally, as well as Fenland's limited preparedness for the complex work and detailed background documents required to support a coherent bid that would lead to a successful outcome. Instead, the focus is to work on preparing for a Round 2 submission ready for the end of 2021.

- 2.9 The Key information for LUF that is currently known:
- Round 1 bids had to start by March 2022 and complete by March 2024 – expecting Round 2 start and complete parameters to potentially go back by a year – this was a Gateway criteria in round 1.
 - Round 1 of the Fund was for £660m out of £4.8 billion. We expect Round 2 to be much bigger.
 - Bidders can submit one bid or a 'package' bid of no more than 3 linked projects per MP constituency
 - Package bids may take more time to develop working across partners.
 - MPs must only choose one submission to support in writing to Government
 - FDC doesn't have to submit to Round 2 but it is likely that in later rounds delivery timeframes could be even shorter
 - If a bid is unsuccessful Lead Authorities can submit again in later rounds with a revised or other proposed bids
 - Once successful with a bid Lead Authorities cannot bid again unless Government criteria rules change in later rounds or the criteria changes in CSR 2021

- There is potential for a transport bid on top of a regeneration bid if the CPCA were to put forward a Fenland project or package of projects.
 - Once funding awards are decided, relevant local institutions are responsible for their delivery. Further contributions from the Fund will not be provided to meet cost overruns after funding has been agreed.
- 2.10 In addition, the Business Board and Combined Authority may provide the route to obtaining match funding for proposed projects being bid for in LUF. A match component of 10% or more will be taken into account at assessment by MHCLG. Any business case for match funding contribution to any project will be subject to making an application and Board approval through the CPCA Assurance Framework process.
- 2.11 It was agreed during Round 1 of the LUF process that Wisbech, given its particular circumstances and challenges, should be the focus of a LUF bid.

3 Bidding for funds - recent experience

- 3.1 It is helpful to compare recent experience of the March FHSF and LUF Round 1 bid processes.
- 3.2 In the case of March, the FHSF bidding round was announced in January 2019, with expressions of interest submitted in mid-March 2019. Following the approval of £125,000 support grant to successful expressions of interest, bid development commenced using specialist consultants. The Council's draft bid was submitted in January 2020, with the final bid submitted in May 2020. This timeframe was necessary to develop the detailed documentation necessary for the bid, effectively from scratch. The Growing Fenland March Masterplan and its stakeholder endorsement was very successfully used as the starting point for bid formulation, setting the proposal very clearly against the Masterplan's strategic priorities. The time available to formulate the bid from expression of interest through to detailed submission together with the financial support from MHCLG to support the bid was critical to its success. Without that specialist support it is questionable whether this could have been achieved.
- 3.3 By contrast, the LUF Round 1 bid process, like other more recent Government grant funding opportunities, took a significantly different approach and with no consultant bid funding support for Priority 2 areas, including Fenland. Whilst the level of documentation required for a bid remains the same as that for March FHSF, the approach did not include an expression of interest stage. Instead, bidders had only a very short time frame to develop documents of the same quality and complexity as the FHSF process. A similar approach was used with the Green Recovery Fund, recent flood prevention funding, the ongoing Treescape Fund, Cultural Development Fund and grants available for green travel initiatives. Time is very short from announcement of the opportunity to the submission date. Within the very limited time available for a LUF Round 1 bid, the Council and partners struggled to pull together the basis of a confident bid that would satisfy the funding criteria. Whilst the Growing Fenland Wisbech Masterplan, the Council's Local Plan allocations, and the Wisbech Access Strategy provided a starting point, this could not be readily and realistically translated into a focused, detailed proposition supported by a high-level cost analysis and business case for a coherent package of proposals within the time available, and without the specialist support to support such a bid.

4 Investment in necessary supporting evidence and prioritised plans for future bid preparation

- 4.1 To be better positioned for future bid opportunities, to be able to respond to demanding deadlines, and to ensure that schemes are capable of delivery on the ground within the timescale expected by Government, it would be beneficial to make some upfront investment in scheme and strategy development to create oven ready bids capable of delivering shovel ready schemes. This could include schematic material such as physical masterplans, indicative designs and associated high level business cases. In the case of Wisbech, for example, whilst there are a number of individual project ideas, these are not yet sufficiently mature to form the basis of bids as evidenced by the recent Levelling Up Round 1 bid process.
- 4.2 Discussions with Fenland's consultant for the Future High Street Fund has identified that there are many Councils in the same position as Fenland, with focused work required in order to develop credible plans that would match Government's agenda and future bid documentation. This work would include requirements to develop Value for Money analysis based on third party cost consultant work, as well as other socio-economic assessments of proposals. This is necessary as part of Government's Green Book guidance which was revised in December 2020.
- 4.3 Many larger metropolitan areas have much of this work to hand already and are well prepared for future funding rounds, leaving districts such as Fenland at a competitive disadvantage.
- 4.4 Discussion during Round 1 of the LUF process concluded that Wisbech should be the focus of a bid and preliminary work was undertaken to inform the process. The approach now proposed to support the immediate need to develop a Round 2 LUF bid is as follows:
- (1) Commission external consultancy support to help shape the bid;
- (2) Commission external consultancy support to develop a Wisbech Town Centre Spatial Plan to form an integral part of the Round 2 LUF bid
- 4.5 Alongside the above there is a further potential piece of work that could be of significant benefit in helping to secure not only future LUF and other grant funding but also in supporting our wider growth and place shaping agenda:

(3) Carrying out a place shaping exercise for Fenland as a whole, including identifying a wider list of projects and priorities across the district.

5 Our Existing Priorities and Projects

- 5.1 It is important to ensure that future work dovetails into those projects already being delivered and to wider Council and community priorities. Some of this work is shown below in sections 6 and 7.

6 The status of our live grant funded projects

- 6.1 There are number of ongoing major projects within the district that are subject to grant funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and MHCLG's Future High Street Fund. These are listed in the table attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 6.2 The March Area Transport Study (MATS) includes a package of measures to improve highway network capacity in and around March and to support the Local Plan's growth

aspirations for the town. These include junction improvements to the A141 and town centre together with the development of a northern industrial link road. The estimated cost of this package of work is circa £20M and the project is led by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) as local highway authority with funding support from the CPCA. Preliminary scheme design work is ongoing with a project budget approved by the CPCA, but delivery of the full package of proposals is not yet funded and relies on CPCA funding following design and business case value for money assessments.

- 6.3 The Wisbech Access Strategy (WAS) similarly includes a package of measures aimed at improving highway network capacity to support the future growth of the town and these schemes are critical to unlocking that growth potential. The original budget for phase one of the WAS programme, funded by the CPCA, was £11M to cover 5 schemes including improvements to Elm High Road and Broad End Road junctions. However, the forecast cost of these schemes has almost doubled since 2019 and is now approaching £20M for just 3 of the schemes. The CPCA Board is discussing this project in an Emergency Board meeting in August 2021 with a request by CCC that funding be provided to complete detailed design work.
- 6.4 The Fenland Station Regeneration project, funded by the CPCA, is ongoing with improvement schemes underway at Manea and March Stations which are being delivered within the available budget. The situation at Whittlesea station remains more complex with the estimated cost of the optimum solution to improvement of the existing station including a new road access, additional car parking, footbridge and lengthened platform beyond the funding envelope currently available.

7 Growing Fenland

- 7.1 Significant capital funding has recently been made available to Fenland District Council via the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Market Towns Initiative (which has been given the working title of Growing Fenland).
- 7.2 Following a successful pilot scheme undertaken in St Neots, the CPCA Board committed to provide funding to create a masterplan for growth for each market towns within the CPCA area (as recorded in the actions from the [CPCA Board meeting held on 28.03.18](#)).
- 7.3 With the aim of bringing jobs, infrastructure and growth to the Fenland area, the masterplans also enable each of our towns to become and remain "vibrant and thriving places" in their own right whilst helping to boost the local and regional economy. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought a sharper focus to this work as communities and businesses adapt to new ways of working, shopping and socialising.
- 7.4 A commitment of £50k was made by the CPCA to produce a masterplan for each town. In Fenland, funding was originally provided for Chatteris, March and Whittlesey only (£150k in total) due to the ongoing Wisbech 2020 Vision work. However, a decision was later made to include Wisbech in the process and a further £50k was committed to the Fenland project.
- 7.5 The master planning project was given a working title of 'Growing Fenland' which linked the proposed growth of the local economy to our important agricultural heritage.
- 7.6 Four town masterplans were produced, following the process outlined in the '[Growing Fenland - Town Reports](#)' paper tabled at the FDC Cabinet meeting held on 09 January 2020.
- 7.7 All of the £4m of CPCA funding ringfenced for the four market towns of Fenland has now been allocated to various projects which are shown in Appendix 2 to this report.

8 Securing future grant funding opportunities

8.1 Priority 1 - Develop a detailed Round 2 LUF bid for Wisbech for submission in 2022 including a Wisbech Town Centre Spatial Plan

8.2 During the Round 1 LUF process, Members agreed that the centre of Wisbech should form the focus of a LUF bid. The Growing Fenland Wisbech Master Plan sets out a clear list of priorities in its narrative for the town and town centre. It is recommended that a supporting piece of work is now commissioned to help shape a Round 2 bid and give spatial, map-based expression to existing priorities and to identify further opportunities for regeneration and investment. The March FHSF fund bid was successful in no small part due to the funded investment in consultancy support following the Council's successful expression of interest. We were able to very clearly demonstrate how each of the projects included within the long list, and refined through business case development, met the March Master Plan's priorities. The recommendation is to follow a similar approach in Wisbech but to also develop a Town Centre Spatial Plan as part of this process.

8.3 A Town Centre Spatial Plan would include the following stages, with Member involvement at each stage:

- Analysis - consideration of the key ingredients of the wider town centre including its physical context, historic context, urban grain, connectivity, views and landmarks, land use, social infrastructure, open space and public realm
- Identifying barriers and constraints to growth and change
- Identifying opportunity sites and character areas across the wider town centre for renewal and investment which would include the Nene Waterfront and sites such as The Phoenix
- Graphically presenting a clear and deliverable spatial vision for the wider town centre

This work would include:

- A high-level illustrative masterplan and spatial vision for the wider town centre which is highly visual in its design, featuring a number of high quality and attractive artists impressions to include computer generated imagery (CGI), plans/maps and photographs
- Renewal and regeneration options for opportunity sites and character areas
- Opportunities for maximising the value of the river
- The physical and social infrastructure provision required to support and future proof business growth and promote inward investment
- A high-level public realm strategy including improved connectivity and accessibility
- A high-level urban design to create a clear sense of place within the wider town centre
- A strategy to maximise the value of heritage assets within the town
- Implementation, phasing, land assembly and high-level cost analysis

8.4 It is important to stress that this Round 2 LUF bid preparation and accompanying Spatial Plan is intended to build on work already done through extensive partner and community engagement on the Wisbech Masterplan, not to start afresh on revisioning the town. It could be integrated into the Council's emerging Local Plan to give it not only significant weight in the planning process but also greater status when being used to form the basis of bids for funding, and to act as an investment and marketing prospectus for the town.

- 8.5 The Round 2 LUF bid will focus on projects that can be delivered in the short term to align with the delivery deadlines expected to be set by Government. This would preclude work on longer term projects, such as the Nene barrier/barrage.
- 8.6 Members will be fully engaged throughout this process through a series of formal and informal meetings as well as written project updates.
- 8.7 Priority 2 - A potential Place Shaping prospectus for Fenland as a whole and the four market towns to support economic growth opportunities**
- 8.8 The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly highlighted the importance of where we live, how we live and the role of the local community. This period of disruption is an excellent opportunity to review the services and projects we are delivering to ensure that they will drive the socio-economic and structural changes needed for our towns to thrive.
- 8.9 Building on the success of the Growing Fenland Master Plans and their associated funding, the Council could now consider the appointment of place shaping specialists to help further develop our priorities in order to:
- Engage further with members and local stakeholders to review the area's strengths and opportunities and how we can recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Help shape Fenland's future by building on its history and learning from other place's successes.
 - Create a simple, clear and impactful narrative that highlights Fenland's assets and opportunities, helping to develop an anchor point for future strategy development and bid submissions.
- 8.10 It is important to stress that this work would not be intended to rewrite or reinvent our current socio-economic strategy and priorities. Those have been subject to extensive stakeholder engagement and are endorsed by FDC, the CPCA and by our town councils. The Growing Fenland Master Plans remain the starting point, with the need to show a clear 'golden thread' back to these from any future work.
- 8.11 A proposal has been received from a company called thinkingplace. This outlines 3 clear stages of work to develop a place shaping narrative for Fenland, focussed around our 4 market towns.
- 8.12 Members will be fully engaged throughout this process through a series of formal and informal meetings, focus groups and individual discussions, as well as written project updates.
- 8.13 Stephen Barclay MP has confirmed that his office will fund stage 1 of the process:
- Place Shaping Stage 1 - Narrative Development including**
- Research in Fenland to appreciate the assets, detailed profiles of Fenland businesses, brands and significant attractions
 - Desk research and strategy review
 - 50 individual 'place conversations' with key stakeholders
 - 5 focus group discussions with groups representing the local business sector, visitor economy, elected members
 - 4 'place workshops' with a wide range of businesses and organisations to understand the Fenland area in depth
 - Online survey for community input
 - Benchmarking with other areas of similar characteristics

- Development of a comprehensive place narrative for Fenland as a district with a narrative for each of the market towns

The cost of this first stage is £31,400. There would be further benefit in this Stage 1 process being tailored to help capture a list of potential projects across the district that could be subject to future grant funding bids, to support the Wisbech specific work set out above, and the wider Growing Fenland agenda.

Place Shaping Stage 2 - Visual Development

The Council is discussing with partners potential external funding to deliver the second phase of this programme - Visual Development. At a cost of £53,987 it would include:

- Design and development of the visual language and visual identity for Fenland based on the overarching place narrative.
- Development of a toolkit for the Fenland area which can be used by partners and stakeholders
- Development of visual identity for each of the 4 Fenland towns based on their story
- Creation of 'place led' images which can be used by partners and stakeholders
- Development of a Fenland storybook, including stories for all 4 towns. This will be used by partners and stakeholders and can be included within bid documents for external funding
- Deliver 4 masterclass workshops (one for each town) to introduce partners and stakeholders to the visual language and visual identities of each town

Place Shaping Stage 3 - Implementation

The third phase of the 'thinkingplace' programme includes the formation of place-led Leadership Groups, launch events, an Ambassador Programme, and marketing strategies to attract both businesses and visitors to Fenland. The cost of Stage 3 is £30,800.

- 8.14 It is recommended that the fully funded Stage 1 of this work now be commissioned, and that Stage 2 should be progressed if external funding can be secured.

9 Other potential future work to support grant bids

- 9.1 Looking at the longer term, and to support future bids for grant funding, there could be merit alongside the place-shaping work set out above in considering how new projects across the district could in the future be better captured and prioritised as those previously identified through Growing Fenland are delivered.
- 9.2 A future report to Cabinet could also consider how we can ensure that the growth strategy of the emerging Local Plan will be delivered and how grant funding can potentially be secured to support that strategy, for example through more integrated and evidence-based infrastructure plans for each of the market towns that focus on transport, utility infrastructure, skills, green space, digital infrastructure and land availability.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no specific legal implications in relation to this report. However, each bid and/or funding allocation is managed in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements with separate and specific legal advice being sought in relation to potential subsidy and/or procurement implications on a case-by-case basis.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1 This report recommends that work is commissioned through external consultant support to help develop the Round 2 LUF bid for Wisbech including a Wisbech Town Centre Spatial Plan. The estimated cost of this commission is £50-£75,000.
- 11.2 As set out above, Steve Barclay MP has committed to funding the first phase of the 'thinkingplace' proposal. Discussion is ongoing to identify external funding for Stage 2 of this work should Cabinet agree that it has value.

12 Effect on corporate objectives

The corporate objectives which link to the projects and proposals discussed in this report are as follows:

12.1 Communities

- Support vulnerable members of our community
- Promote health & wellbeing for all
- Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage

12.2 Environment

- Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene
- Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion

12.3 Economy

- Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland
- Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland
- Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

13 Conclusions

- 13.1 As set out at the beginning of this report, the Council has been successful in bidding for grant funding and has matured its approach to building the necessary business cases to support those bids.
- 13.2 However, it is clear that Fenland is at a competitive disadvantage against those councils which have already invested in town centre plans, growth strategies and detailed supporting documentation regarding key project development. The bid process for LUF

funds demands significant upfront work and investment to ensure that a credible and coherent bid can be formulated in the narrow time window available. This report sets out how the Council can potentially better position itself to maximise its income potential through the Build Back Better and Levelling Up agenda, and better support our growth agenda.

APPENDIX 1 – Live Grant Funded Projects

PROJECT	STATUS OF THE PROJECT	GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED	PROVIDER OF GRANT FUNDING	MATCH FUNDING	PROVIDER OF MATCH FUNDING
Fenland Cycling, Walking & Mobility Improvement Strategy	Strategy development stage to include schemes to be delivered. The strategy is to be used to bid for funds for scheme delivery. At present this is mostly FDC funded - £21,335	£7,500	Hereward Community Rail Partnership		
Fenland Rail Development Strategy	Strategy approved by FDC Cabinet April 2012. The Strategy runs 2011 – 2031 in line with the existing Local Plan. There are a number of components to this strategy. See below for funded capital projects.	The Hereward Community Rail Partnership receives approx. £50,000 per annum core funding. There are also opportunities to bid for project funding. This is expected to be ongoing.	CrossCountry, East Midlands Railway, Greater Anglia, LNER.	FDC provide in-kind support with some staff time.	
Fenland Station Regeneration (March, Manea, Whittlesea)	Various projects for each station. Smaller schemes complete, medium term schemes mostly in delivery. Development work for longer term projects. Overall expected full cost approx. £20million	Up to £9.5million allocated in total with around £4 million drawn down and currently in progress.	CPCA	Approx to date £250,000	S106 funding. Various applications for Manea, March and Whittlesea
Creativity and Cultural Strategy	Creativity and Culture Strategy developed. Appointment of joint funded Creativity and Culture officer role completed	£15,000 £35,000	Arts Council, England	£20,000	FDC

PROJECT	STATUS OF THE PROJECT	GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED	PROVIDER OF GRANT FUNDING	MATCH FUNDING	PROVIDER OF MATCH FUNDING
South Fens Enterprise Park, Chatteris	Pick Everard project managing Draft design stage at present	£2m	CPCA		
March Future High Street Fund	Member Steering Group established FDC project manager appointed Draft design stage for public realm works through CCC Highways team Acre Road workstream at early discussion with land owner stage Vacant units scheme likely to go live for year 1 within 2 months	£6.447m	MHCLG (Future High Streets Fund)	£900,000 Growing Fenland March £1,100,000 from the CPCA = £2m total	CPCA
March Area Transport Study (MATS)	This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by CCC. Total funding allocated £6.4million of which £2.6million has been approved to spend. The spend is to complete feasibility and preliminary design on all schemes and to complete the Outline Business Case work. It also includes delivery of a quick win schemes programme and work to develop some walking and cycling schemes.	£2.6million	CPCA		

PROJECT	STATUS OF THE PROJECT	GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED	PROVIDER OF GRANT FUNDING	MATCH FUNDING	PROVIDER OF MATCH FUNDING
Wisbech High Street Project	<p>This is a National Lottery Heritage Funded (NLHF) project, funded from their Townscape Heritage programme with additional partner funding from CCC, FDC, Wisbech Town Council and Wisbech Society.</p> <p>The project continues to address the three high priority sites, including two derelict sites currently under the ownership of FDC.</p> <p>Site works are underway on a large conversion scheme bringing an empty first floor space back into use and two significant schemes due to commence in coming months,</p> <p>The project continues to work with other private owners who have schemes agreed or who still wish to apply for funding.</p>	£1.9million including partnership contributions. Overall project value greater with property owner contributions	NLHF	n/a Property owner contributions increase project value	Private investment
Wisbech Access Strategy (WAS)	<p>This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by CCC.</p> <p>Original Local Growth Fund (LGF) Bid allocated £10.5million in 2018 for 5 schemes.</p>	<p>£3.97million See status column comments</p> <p>£2.09million spend to date leaving £1.88 million</p>	LGF		

PROJECT	STATUS OF THE PROJECT	GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED	PROVIDER OF GRANT FUNDING	MATCH FUNDING	PROVIDER OF MATCH FUNDING
	<p>In July 2020 the 5 schemes were reduced to 3 and the funding allocation from LGF reduced to £6Million. CPCA approved the £4.5million gap.</p> <p>In July 2021 CPCA Board approved a reduced scope of the scheme to complete the 3 projects to detailed design and procure all land needed. It is now expected that alternative funding will be sourced for scheme delivery.</p> <p>It is expected that approximately £9.5million will be needed to complete the 3 schemes</p>	approved.			

APPENDIX 2 – Growing Fenland Projects

TOWN	PROJECT	CPCA FUNDING ALLOCATED	DATE OF DECISION BY CPCA	PROJECT TO BE DELIVERED BY
Whittlesey	Interactive Flood Signs	£57,500	30.09.20	CCC / Whittlesey Town Council
Wisbech	Wisbech Market Place Enhancement Scheme	£200,000	30.09.20	Wisbech Town Council
Chatteris	Chatteris Town Centre Renaissance Fund	£92,000	25.11.20	Chatteris Town Council
Whittlesey	Whittlesey Heritage Visitor Centre	£500,000	25.11.20	Whittlesey Town Council
Whittlesey	Whittlesey Heritage Walk	£218,169	25.11.20	FDC / Whittlesey Town Council
March	Match funding for March Future High Street Fund	£900,000 Growing Fenland March + £1,100,000 from the CPCA = £2m total	27.01.21 28.07.21	FDC
Whittlesey	Business Capital Grants Scheme	£124,331	27.01.21	FDC
Wisbech	Footfall Counters	£19,500	27.01.21	Wisbech Town Council
Wisbech	Replacement Shopwatch Radios	£33,800	27.01.21	Wisbech Town Council

TOWN	PROJECT	CPCA FUNDING ALLOCATED	DATE OF DECISION BY CPCA	PROJECT TO BE DELIVERED BY
Wisbech	Business Capital Grants Scheme	£200,000	27.01.21	FDC
District Wide Scheme	Civil Parking Enforcement	£400,000	27.01.21	FDC
Chatteris	Chatteris Skills Development	£36,179	24.03.21	Stainless Metalcraft
Wisbech	Wisbech Water Park	£147,500	24.03.21	FDC
Wisbech	Community Hub at Wisbech Park	£299,200	30.06.21	FDC
Chatteris	Chatteris Museum & Community Space	£771,821	30.06.21	Chatteris Town Council

For further details on bid submissions, please see the Projects Update report tabled at the FDC Cabinet Meeting held on 21.10.20.

DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN – Updated 12 August 2021



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

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
Thu 16 Sep 2021	1. Freedom Leisure 2. CPE Update 3. Fenland Walking, Cycling & Mobility Draft Strategy 4. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Clark Cllr French Cllr Seaton Cllr Boden
Thu 21 Oct 2021	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
Wed 17 Nov 2021	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
Wed 8 Dec 2021	1. Draft Business Plan 2022/23 2. Draft Budget 2022/23 and Mid Term Financial Strategy 3. Treasury Management Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy Mid Year Review 2021/22 4. Draft Local Plan 5. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Laws Cllr Boden
Thu 20 Jan 2022	1. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
Thu 24 Feb 2022	1. Business Plan 2022/23 2. Budget 2022/23 and Mid Term Financial Strategy 3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Boden

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