

AGENDA

CABINET

MONDAY, 17 JULY 2023

2.00 PM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL,
COUNTY ROAD, MARCH**

Committee Officer: Linda Albon
Tel: 01354 622229
e-mail: memberservices@fenland.gov.uk

Although this is a public meeting, members of the public are encouraged to view the meeting via our YouTube channel <https://youtube.com/live/y3ccPCAq9mw?feature=share>

- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 5 - 8)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held 12 June 2023.
- 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 Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 9 - 32)

To present the Annual Report of the Council for Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities in 2022/23
- 6 Council Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 (Pages 33 - 42)

To inform Cabinet of the income and expenditure (known as “Outturn”) for the Council for 2022/23 and reasons for variations. To also inform Cabinet of the final settlement of the Council’s A14 contribution to the Department for Transport.

7 Update to Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Pages 43 - 48)

To consider and recommend to Council an update and re-positioning of the current adopted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

8 On and Off-Street Parking Enforcement Update Paper (including CPE) (Pages 49 - 56)

To update members on progress made so far by FDC and Cambridgeshire County Council in respect of the CPE implementation works, following the previous Cabinet update paper on 13th June 2022.

9 Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund (RESPF) (Pages 57 - 64)

The purpose of this report is to determine the legal, financial and governance arrangements in relation to the administration of the District Council’s RESPF allocation to include approval of the utilisation of the fund for 2023-24 and the associated processes, decision making structures and grant funding agreements.

10 Draft Consultation Statement of Community Involvement (Pages 65 - 88)

Every 5 years the Council is required to update the Statement of Community Involvement for the planning service. An updated document has been prepared (Appendix 1) and Cabinet is requested to consider its content and approve it for public consultation.

11 Wisbech High Street Update (Pages 89 - 90)

To provide Cabinet with an update regarding ongoing work related to FDC’s properties at 24 High Street and 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

12 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 91 - 92)

For information purposes.

13 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

14 Local Authority Housing Fund 2 (with confidential appendix) (Pages 93 - 100)

To consider an opportunity to receive a further tranche of grant money from the LAHF programme to purchase 5 homes as a resource to meet the Council’s responsibilities with regard to housing Afghan refugees and as a lasting legacy resource to support meeting our wider homelessness duties.

Appendix A to this report comprises 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 would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated.”

Friday, 7 July 2023

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

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CABINET



MONDAY, 12 JUNE 2023 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Tierney

Councillor Boden welcomed new Cabinet members, Councillor Wallwork and Councillor Miscandlon.

CAB1/23 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 16 March 2023 were approved and signed.

CAB2/23 RURAL ENGLAND SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Members considered the Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Cllr Laws and AGREED:

- 1.1 To recommend acceptance of £436k Rural England Shared Prosperity Funding from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for a two-year period commencing in 2023-24 and ending in 2024-25.**
- 1.2 Due to the tight delivery timescale, it is recommended that the 2023/24 RESPF monies should be allocated exclusively for business growth purposes. The split of the fund to be spent in 2024/25 between business growth and community will be determined at a future meeting of the Cabinet.**
- 1.3 Given the limited funds available for projects in 2023/24, Officers should prioritise bringing forward opportunities for approval in the following areas:**
 - Grants towards equipment and premises for smaller businesses which will promote business growth.**
 - Grants to rural areas**
 - Grants which will create and sustain rural jobs by assisting the diversification of income streams for farmers.**
- 1.4 To delegate to Officers responsibility for approving and finalising with the CPCA the RESPF Grant Funding Agreement; and**
- 1.5 To note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet for approval of the detailed proposals in relation to the projects, procedures and documentation associated with the onward administration of the funding.**

CAB3/23 FENLAND FUTURE LTD - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

Members considered the Fenland Future Ltd – Appointment of Director report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Miscandlon said that having known Anna Goodall for twelve years he considered this to be a most appropriate appointment. Councillor Boden agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French, and AGREED to approve:

- **the appointment of Anna Goodall to the Board of FFL and the appointment of Jane Bailey as the Company Secretary of FFL and to,**
- **delegate to the Company Secretary all necessary arrangements to make this happen.**

CAB4/23 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR 2023/24

Members considered the Appointment to Outside Bodies for 2023/24 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden advised that as there had been some amendments since the list was published it would be prudent for him to read them out. He added that the Leader of the Fenland Independent Alliance (FIA), Councillor Gavin Booth, had filled some of the posts to which the FIA were entitled to nominate, but where he had not yet nominated, these can be dealt with between meetings of Cabinet by the Monitoring Officer under her delegated powers within the Constitution.

Councillor Boden announced the additional appointments and changes as follows:

- Fenland Twinning Association –Councillor Diane Cutler appointed from the FIA. Councillor Mrs French said she thought she had read that the FTA was closing. Councillor Boden replied that he understood that the committee was considering closure, but assuming they still believe it is the right thing to do, they need to be constituted before they can un-constitute themselves.
- Hundred of Wisbech IDB - Councillor Mrs French in place of Councillor Sam Clark. Councillors Dal Roy and Gavin Booth appointed from the FIA, and Councillor Roy Gerstner appointed as unaligned.
- Rural Cambs CAB – Councillor Gavin Booth appointed from the FIA.
- March East IDB – Councillors John Clark and Paul Hicks appointed from the FIA.
- Middle Level Commissioners – Councillor Boden said the appointment was proposed of former Councillor Will Sutton to represent the FIA but at this point would refer to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer advised that in view of the nominee being external to the Council she needed to check the legal and constitutional position of this proposal. She therefore suggested this appointment not be made today to allow her time to investigate and feedback to the group leaders. Councillor Mrs French referred to 24th May 2014, when Mr and Mrs Bucknor said that the Council should not be paying non-councillors to represent FDC on outside bodies and this was supposed to go to Full Council. There were discussions at Cabinet on 18th June 2015 but again it went no further. Councillor Mrs French added that with the new makeup of councillors, there are more than enough members to attend outside bodies without having to ask non-councillors to attend and in her opinion this resolution should be taken back to Full Council next month. Councillor Mrs Laws agreed, she recalled that Councillor Mrs Potts had put up a very strong argument to remain on the North Level IDB after retiring from Council but was declined and, like Councillor Mrs French, is of the opinion there are enough members to fill these appointments. Councillor Hoy agreed; she recalled a similar situation that led to a review by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel in 2015 in which several recommendations were made. Councillor Boden said this was very helpful and he would therefore leave it in the hands of the Monitoring Officer.

- Nightlayer IDB - the FIA have ceded their two positions to the Conservative Group, hence the appointment of Councillors Miscandlon and Boden.
- North Level District IDB - Councillor Boden advised that due to a mistake on his part, Councillor Laws' name appeared twice on the published report, therefore the erroneous second post is replaced with the addition of Councillor Humphrey and Councillor Booth is appointed from the FIA.

Councillor Hoy asked if Cabinet are obliged to accept the Monitoring Officer's delegation. We do not have to make the appointment even under delegation if we do not agree it today; it is not a fait accompli and even if the advice is that it is unclear and because of that we have to allow the appointment, we do not have to allow anything because it is Cabinet that makes the appointment and we could say we wanted this to come back to the next Cabinet meeting. Councillor Boden responded that the Monitoring Officer will make her decision based on all the evidence in front of her; we must accept that it is in the Constitution that she can make appointments between meetings of Cabinet. He added that members can either change the Constitution or have a resolution at Full Council to change it. There is a legal permission for representatives other than councillors to be used on Outside Bodies, but it would be for Full Council to decide not to utilise that. Councillor Mrs French said that she would not want to go down the route of changing the Constitution again as it is not an easy task, and she would much prefer a resolution.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to:

1.1. The proposed nominations in respect of Outside Bodies which require Fenland District Council representation as set out at Appendix A and in addition as read out in the meeting for the amendments.

1.2. Note where requirements to provide representatives on outside organisations cannot currently be fulfilled.

1.3. Delegate to the Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders the addition or deletion of Outside Bodies as the need arises during the municipal year and appointment of members to vacancies on outside bodies during the municipal year.

CAB5/23 24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH - UPDATE

Members considered the 24 High Street Wisbech update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Mrs French said the news after all these years is very welcome. She referred to the report where it says contractors will be using the Wisbech Town Council car park and queried whether it is Wisbech Town Council's or Fenland's car park. Councillor Seaton confirmed that it is Wisbech Town Council's car park, but he understands this is leased from the County Council. The compound will take up about 20 car parking spaces. The part owned by Fenland will not be intruded upon.

Councillor Hoy said it is a shame to be losing the car parking spaces but the work needs doing. Unfortunately, not all the spaces are able to be used at the moment because rough sleepers have been camping there for many months, but we are in the process of evicting them through legal action.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to note the current position in relation to the 24 High Street construction project in Wisbech High

Street.

CAB6/23 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted for information, but Councillor Boden proposed a few additions to the Forward Plan for 17th July, namely:


- The addition of a paper on A14 Contributions and Cambridgeshire Horizons Limited monies, and
- An update on the medium-term financial strategy and any recommendations for Full Council.

CAB7/23 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the Cabinet meeting held 16 March 2023 were approved and signed.

4.29 pm

Chairman

Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17 July 2023	
Report Title:	Annual Report 2022/23	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To present the Annual Report of the Council for Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities in 2022/23.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2022/23 describes the performance of the Council over the last year, linking to the priorities detailed in our Business Plan. These are designed to deliver outcomes that improve the quality of life for Fenland residents and are listed under the key headings of Communities, Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation.
- 2.2 The achievements listed in the Annual Report are not exhaustive but reflect some of our successful projects over the last year. Notable examples are given of how we have worked closely with the community and partners to tackle important local issues in a collaborative and efficient way.
- 2.3 As like other local authorities, Fenland District Council faces significant financial challenges and increased demand upon services. Nevertheless, we continue to provide high quality services whilst keeping our budget balanced.
- 2.4 Our Cabinet members have selected a number of projects to contribute towards our 'Council for the Future' agenda. These projects have a variety of aims, from tackling areas of particular need within the district, to transforming services and the wider organisation sustainability to be fit for the future. Some of these projects are also interlinked with our corporate priorities. A section of the report has been developed to detail progress on these projects over the past year.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Annual Report of the Council 2022/23.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Boden, Leader of the Council Cabinet Members
Report Originator(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications
Background Papers	Business Plan 2022/23

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2022/23 summarises key examples of the Council's performance against each of our corporate objectives over the past year. This document is published and circulated on an annual basis to provide a summary of performance for Councillors, customers and partners.
- 1.2 In addition to our corporate priorities, our Cabinet members have selected a number of projects to contribute towards our 'Council for the Future' agenda. These projects have a variety of aims, from tackling areas of particular need within the district, to transforming services and the wider organisation sustainability to be fit for the future. Some of these projects are also interlinked with our corporate priorities. A section of the report has been developed to detail progress on these projects over the past year.
- 1.3 The Council continues to deliver high quality services and effective projects within each of its corporate priorities. Key examples include:

Communities - highlights

- 1.4 As the Cost of Living crisis deepened in the aftermath of Covid and war in Russia, we launched a campaign to help residents struggling with rising costs. The campaign has included organising cost of living events with a host of partners in attendance, creating a resource hub on our website, producing a cost of living information booklet available at locations across Fenland, internal staff updates and a social media toolkit.

- 1.5 Our Housing Options team received 2051 requests for homeless advice and assistance; 1,228 of these approaches were resolved through the advice provided. 275 households were prevented from becoming homeless through various forms of intervention.
- 1.6 Our Golden Age project, which helps provide older residents with advice on services and support available to them at events across Fenland, celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2023. Held at venues across the district throughout the year, the events bring together many providers of care, financial assistance, social activities, health provision and other services for the over 60s. To date, almost 7,000 visitors have attended the Golden Age events.
- 1.7 We have continued to invest in our parks and open spaces. Together with our contractor Tivoli, we look after more than 135 hectares of parks and open spaces across Fenland. Work in the past year has included refurbishments to several play areas to keep them up-to-date, safe, and popular with children and families, investment in planting new trees, and a new Splashpad attraction in Wisbech park.

Environment – highlights

- 1.8 We carried out more than 2.9million bin collections from across the district, in all weathers, and collected more than 8,850 tonnes of materials for recycling. Thanks to residents continuing to recycle their waste well, we also generated more than £461,600 of income to support our services. Customer satisfaction with our Refuse and Recycling and Garden Waste (Brown Bin) services remains high with 96% and 89% respectively. The Garden Waste service has continued to grow with subscriptions at an all-time high of over 23,688 in 2022/23.
- 1.9 Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team continued to provide the excellent seven-day street sweeping, litter picking and fly-tipping removal service in our towns and villages. Last year they responded to over 1860 service requests: 96% on the same or next day. Over 1380 quality inspections were made in areas of high footfall – 99% met cleansing standards first time.
- 1.10 Our Street Scene team spent 3,900 hours out and about in the community, working on various environmental improvement projects. In 2022/23 the team issued 10 Fixed Penalty Notices for fly-tipping, and successfully prosecuted two individuals for fly-tipping, with a combined fine total of £857 imposed by the courts. The team also investigated 194 reported abandoned vehicles and issued 13 car parking fines to drivers parked illegally on March Market Place.
- 1.11 Our shared CCTV service with Peterborough City Council maintained its 100% service function 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service conducted over 4,000 pro-active camera patrols, detected over 1,000 incidents of crime and disorder across the district and supported our policing partners to make over 100 arrests for offences, helping to make the district safer.

Economy – highlights

- 1.12 We secured over £900,000 of funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to invest in businesses over the next three years. The funding

will support businesses with grants to invest in new technology, diversify their income or create new employment opportunities. In addition, we have secured over £430,00 to invest in rural businesses and communities that will, for example, provide grants to help farming businesses diversify.

- 1.13 Our Planning team determined 725 planning applications and dealt with nearly 800 other types of application (such as discharge of condition, general enquiries, and licensing requests) and received 103 pre-application enquiries, in addition to 'traditional' planning applications. We also investigated and resolved 228 cases of unauthorised development reported to us.
- 1.14 Work gathered pace on March town centre's multi-million pound regeneration, a programme of inter-related schemes being delivered by various partners to transform and futureproof the town centre. Highlights of 2022/23 include:
 - Delivery of March Market Place improvements
 - Primary-build of CityFibre's £5million super-fast broadband investment – offering service to over 8,500 homes.
 - Major gas pipe upgrade by Cadent Gas
 - Contractor appointed to deliver the Broad Street regeneration scheme

Quality Organisation – highlights

- 1.15 We collected over £65million in Council Tax and £24million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community.
- 1.16 Our website saw over 345,000 visits and received 21,500 online form submissions across 48 different topics. As part of our ongoing work to improve our digital services and user journeys, we also expanded our suite of online forms, with new digital journeys for licensing forms and event bookings. The forms enable residents to apply for services or submit information online 24/7.
- 1.17 The Licensing team issued 461 licenses for a variety of services including Taxi, Premises, Alcohol, Scrap Metal and Animal Licensing, to help ensure such businesses are well managed and operating safely and legally. They also worked closely with partners during the pandemic through a variety of channels to support businesses to operate safely and take enforcement action when required.
- 1.18 We were reaccredited with the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award last year. This is a Government standard that recognises the high quality, customer focused services that we provide. The independent assessor said the Council had continued to meet the 'gold standard' for customer service delivery and that our ongoing transformation programme is clearly delivering significant benefits to customers.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2022/23 shows clear performance towards the achievement of our corporate priorities. It is only a summary document; many more projects are ongoing that aim to improve quality of life for Fenland residents.
- 2.2 For Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities and for Cabinet to approve the Annual Report of the Council 2022/23.

3 CONSULTATION

N/A

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered as the Council has made an ongoing commitment to produce an Annual Report of the Council.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific legal considerations connected with the content of this report.

5.3 Financial Implications

- 5.4 The Annual Report 2022-23 sets out high level corporate achievements that are linked to the priorities in our business plan which are reflected in the Council budget.

5.5 Equality Implications










- 5.6 N/A

Fenland District Council

Annual Report
2022/23

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Welcome to Fenland District Council's Annual Report for 2022/23

As we look back on the past year, we're both pleased and immensely proud to share that Fenland has experienced another year of strong performance as we continue to put residents at the heart of everything we do.

Despite wide and well-documented challenges affecting everyone the length and breadth of the country, it's great to see how much we have been able to achieve to support our communities while preparing for what the future holds.

It's fair to say that 2022/23 was perhaps the first year back to normality following the Covid pandemic. The last government coronavirus measures were imposed in December 2021 to tackle the Omicron variant and there was a welcome end in sight when the government published its 'Living with Covid' guidance in February 2022.

Although the economy bounced back, aided by government support for workers and businesses, after a brief period of relative respite, the war in Ukraine combined with the global aftershocks of the pandemic to push up prices. Inflation has risen to levels not seen for 40 years and is well above average wage increases, leaving many households facing a cost-of-living crisis.

Despite the strain on our own finances, the Council has remained determined to continuing supporting residents through the most difficult years in recent history.

After four years of council tax freezes, the council might have been expected to raise its portion of the bill for the first time since 2019 to help pay for its public services. But instead, members reduced Fenland's portion of the bill by 2% to lessen the financial burden on taxpayers – and reaffirmed their commitment to freeze council tax for a further four years thereafter, through to 2027/28.

We also continued to invest in our parks and open spaces, supported our leisure centre provider and ensured our much-loved community events were not only re-established after the pandemic but came back bigger and better.

We supported vulnerable members of our community; prevented and tackled homelessness; helped people to live in good quality, safe housing; brought empty homes back into use; worked with the police to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour; encouraged residents to live healthier, more active lifestyles; cleaned streets and collected almost 9,000 tonnes of recycling; promoted and lobbied for infrastructure improvements; improved our air quality; and secured even more investment into the district.

We also continued our transformation journey to further modernise and improve customer services, enhance customer experience, embrace smarter and more resilient working practices and, despite reduced budgets, provide even better value for money each year.

In March, this work saw the council shortlisted for the prestigious, national MJ Awards, which acknowledge local government authorities which dedicate themselves to supporting local communities and "never give up in the face of adversity".

We hope this Annual Report provides a snapshot of the key developments and achievements of the past year, and a flavour of what goes on behind the scenes to make a positive difference to our residents, and our district, every day.



Paul Medd
Chief Executive



Chris Boden
Leader of the
Council

About Fenland

Fenland is a district in North Cambridgeshire with four vibrant market towns and 29 characterful villages. Between the villages and towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech are swathes of rurality. Fenland benefits from close proximity to the major economic centres of Peterborough, Cambridge and Norwich.

- Fenland covers approximately 211 square miles.
- Over 200 miles of beautiful waterways.
- Over 135 hectares of open green space.
- The population increased by 7.6 per cent between the 2011 and 2021 census – to around 102,500*.
- Population density is low, at around 1.3 people per football pitch-sized piece of land*.
- The average (median) age of people in Fenland is 44*.
- Average property price is £237,493, compared to £352,732 in the East of England**.
- Over 3,160 businesses in Fenland.
- Key sectors: Agri-food, manufacturing, financial and business services, wholesale and retail.



Fenland covers approximately
211 square miles



Over 200 miles of
beautiful waterways



Over 135 hectares of
open green space



The population is
around 102,500*



Average property price
is £237,493**



Over 3,160 businesses
in Fenland

* Office for National Statistics
** UK House Price Index

Cabinet



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
Whittlesey East
and villages



Jan French
Deputy Leader of the Council
March South



Ian Benney
Chatteris South



Peter Murphey
Chatteris South



Chris Seaton
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



Alex Miscandlon
Whittlesey East
and villages



Dee Laws
Whittlesey North West



Sam Hoy
Wisbech South



Steve Tierney
Wisbech South



Susan Wallwork
Wisbech South

Other Councillors



James Carney
Chatteris North
and Manea



Alan Gowler
Chatteris North
and Manea



Charlie Marks
Chatteris North
and Manea



Anne Hay
Chatteris South



David Conner
Doddington and
Wimblington



Maureen Davies
Doddington and
Wimblington



Dal Roy
Elm and
Christchurch



Matthew Summers
Elm and
Christchurch



Brenda Barber
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



Sam Clark
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



John Clark
March East



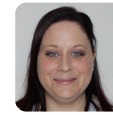
Stuart Harris
March East



Mark Pursar
March East



Steve Count
March North



Kim French
March North



Paul Hicks
March North



Gary Christy
March South



Tim Taylor
March West and
Benwick



Andrew Woollard
March West and
Benwick



Gavin Booth
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Dianne Cutler
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Michael Humphrey
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Dr Haq Nawaz
Whittlesey East and
villages



Jason Mockett
Whittlesey Lattersey



Elisabeth Sennitt Clough
Whittlesey North West



Roy Gerstner
Whittlesey South



Kay Mayor
Whittlesey South



Lucie Foice-Beard
Wisbech North



Nick Meekins
Wisbech Riverside



David Oliver
Wisbech Riverside



Sidney Imafidon
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken



David Patrick
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken



Billy Rackley
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken

Conservative 
Independent 
Liberal Democrat 

Money Matters

Where your Council Tax goes

In 2022/23, the Band D Council Tax bill was set at £2,062.62 (plus Parish amounts). In 2023/24, this increased to £2,162.55 (plus Parish amounts). Fenland District Council collects money through Council Tax on behalf of other authorities, as shown on the diagram.

Fenland District Council froze its element of Council Tax in 2022/23 for the fourth year running. Members decided to further reduce the financial burden on taxpayers in 2023/24 when it cut its element of the Council Tax bill by 2%. Just 11.5% of each household's Council Tax bill goes to Fenland District Council, with the remainder going to the other authorities.

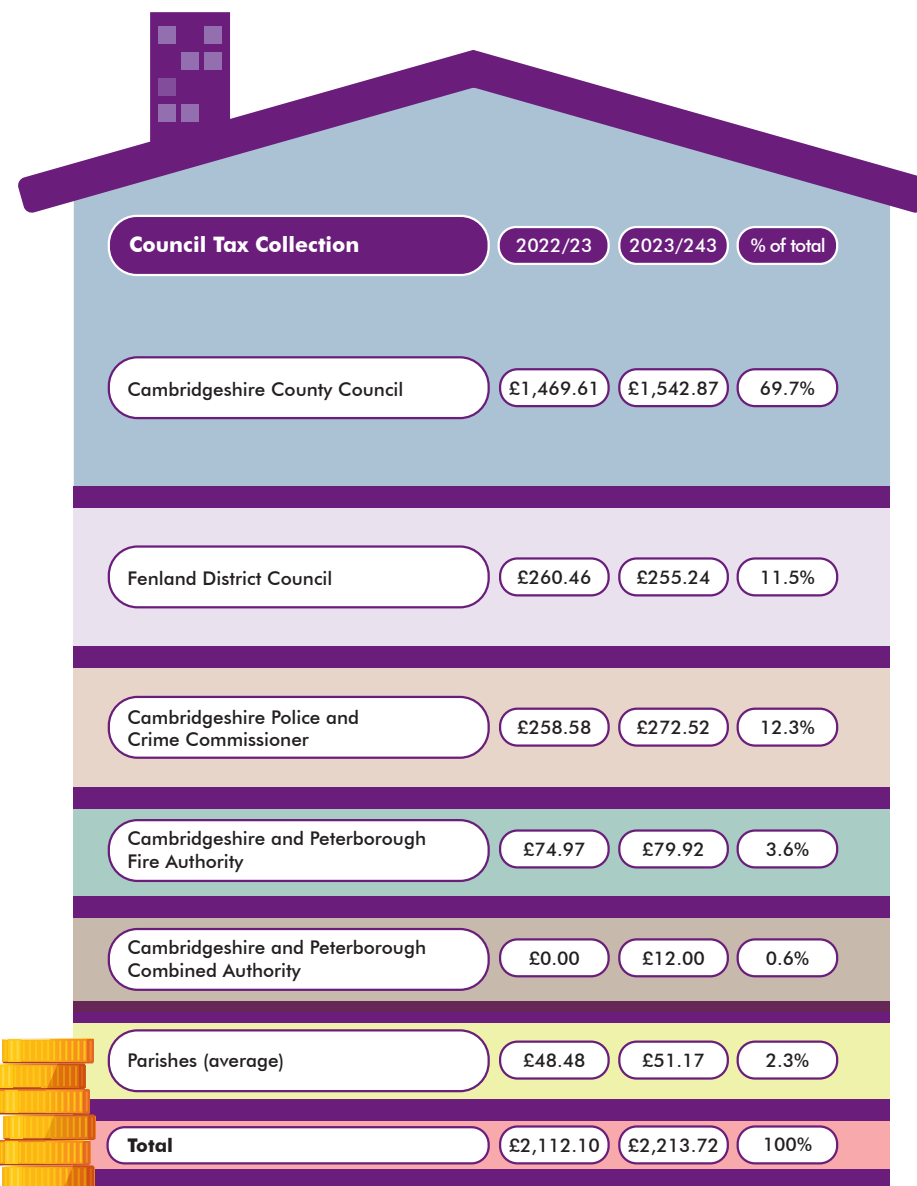
The numbers above relate to a Band D property. However, 83% of properties in Fenland are in Bands A-C. The average Council Tax per property in Fenland was £1,415.21 in 2022/23 and is £1,492.10 in 2023/24 and is the lowest average per property in Cambridgeshire. This also compares to an average Council Tax per property of £1,578.32 in 2023/24 across all English authorities.

Our finances

The Council's net spending on services in 2022/23 was £13.086m. This sum is financed by the Council's share of Business Rates (£5.855m) and Council Tax (£8.031m) which resulted in a surplus of £800k being returned for 2022/23. At the budget meeting in February 2023, a net surplus of £69k was forecast at the year end. The surplus of £800k has been transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve. This reserve represents the amount taken in tax which has not been spent and now stands at £1.867m.

Full details of the Council's Budget for 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found at: www.fenland.gov.uk/finance

You may also wish to read our Business Plan. This explains our organisational priorities for the next financial year: www.fenland.gov.uk/businessplan



Council for the Future

Our Cabinet members have selected a number of projects to contribute towards our 'Council for the Future' agenda. These projects have a variety of aims; from tackling areas of particular need within Fenland, to sustainably transforming services and our organisation to be fit for the future. Projects vary in scope and complexity, with some requiring close partnership working with external organisations and changes in policies before their aims can be delivered.

Modernising Council services Councillor Steve Tierney

- ❶ Over 54,500 answered phone calls to contact centre and 99% of customer queries resolved at first point of contact.
- ❷ We continue to develop our My Fenland team, with 2 new service areas supported by the team and 112 officers trained over 30 topics.
- ❸ Our Transformation team has completed 75 new and existing processes, including 11 processes redesigned. These benefit either staff, our customers or both.

Safer homes for tenants Councillor Samantha Hoy

- ❶ 246 properties where positive action from the team helped resolve issues.
- ❷ Our Housing Options team received 2051 requests for homeless advice and assistance; 1,228 of these approaches were resolved through the advice provided.
- ❸ 275 households were prevented from becoming homeless through various forms of intervention.

CCTV service Councillor Susan Wallwork

- ❶ Service delivered 24/7, 365 days a year, providing key outcomes for our community.
- ❷ 1,247 incidents captured on CCTV to support police outcomes, leading to 107 arrests being made.
- ❸ 4,492 (12 per day) pro-active camera controls completed, supporting early detection of community issues and crime reduction.

Planning for the future Councillor Dee Laws

- ❶ Completed the evidence base to enable consultation on a draft Local Plan.
- ❷ Consulted on a draft Local Plan between August and October 2022.
- ❸ Oversaw the making and successful referendum of the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan.

Better online services Councillor Steve Tierney

- ❶ Our website received over 345,000 visits and over 21,500 webforms were completed online across 48 different topics.
- ❷ Fenland For Business website developed with new branding and updated content, and brought back in house, with content hosted on the FDC website.
- ❸ Launch of two Idox web digital journeys for Licensing and Events which enable customers to supply information or apply for a licence via our website on a 24/7 basis.

Bringing empty homes back into use Councillor Samantha Hoy

- ❶ Intervention advice and assistance to help two long-term empty residential properties (LTEP - 24mth), and two long-term empty properties (LTE 6-23mths) properties which have now been fully renovated.
- ❷ 81 homes brought back into use.
- ❸ £98,395 benefit from New Homes Bonus.

Competitive trade waste service Councillor Peter Murphy

- ❶ Introduction of a commercial food waste service to complement the existing mixed dry recycling and residual waste collections offered to small and medium sized Fenland businesses.
- ❷ 75 new customers joined our service from other providers.
- ❸ Increased income year on year; income in 2022/23 was £465,000 - up 26% from 2021/22.

Clamping down on poor parking Councillor Jan French

- ❶ Completed on-street site surveys of all existing Traffic Regulation Orders within the district. This identified works needed surrounding sign and line discrepancies.
- ❷ Working with Cambridgeshire County Council, we have prepared a draft application for the Department of Transport for the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- ❸ We wrote to all statutory consultees to find out any comments or objections in relation to the implementation of CPE. No objections were received.

A more commercial outlook

Councillors Chris Boden, Ian Benney and Steve Tierney

- ❶ Received a second full year's rent (£230,000) from the Wisbech property investment acquired in March 2021.
- ❷ Outline planning permission granted for two Council owned development sites.
- ❸ Strategically purchased another property in March to support the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy.

Healthy you

Councillor Alex Miscandloan

- ❶ Through recruitment and training we have developed our Yoga, Forever Fit and Badminton sessions into self-sustainable programmes, thereby prolonging provision.
- ❷ Over 3,170 individuals made contact with the Healthy You Tier 1 service, with just over 1,320 new individuals starting an activity at some point in the year.
- ❸ 55 sessions set up across the district ranging from physical activity, healthy eating, to school-based and family focused sessions.

Protecting our environment

Councillors Peter Murphy and Susan Wallwork

- ❶ Reviewed and responded to more than 800 consultations associated with proposed developments and industry in Fenland, including the proposal for an energy from waste plant, to protect the environment and residents from potential harm, such as noise, dust or other air pollutants.
- ❷ Successfully prosecuted two individuals for failing to dispose of their waste correctly when we found large items fly-tipped. This saw a combined fine of £857 imposed by the courts.
- ❸ Our Street Scene team spent 3,900 hours out and about in the community.

Better railways for Fenland

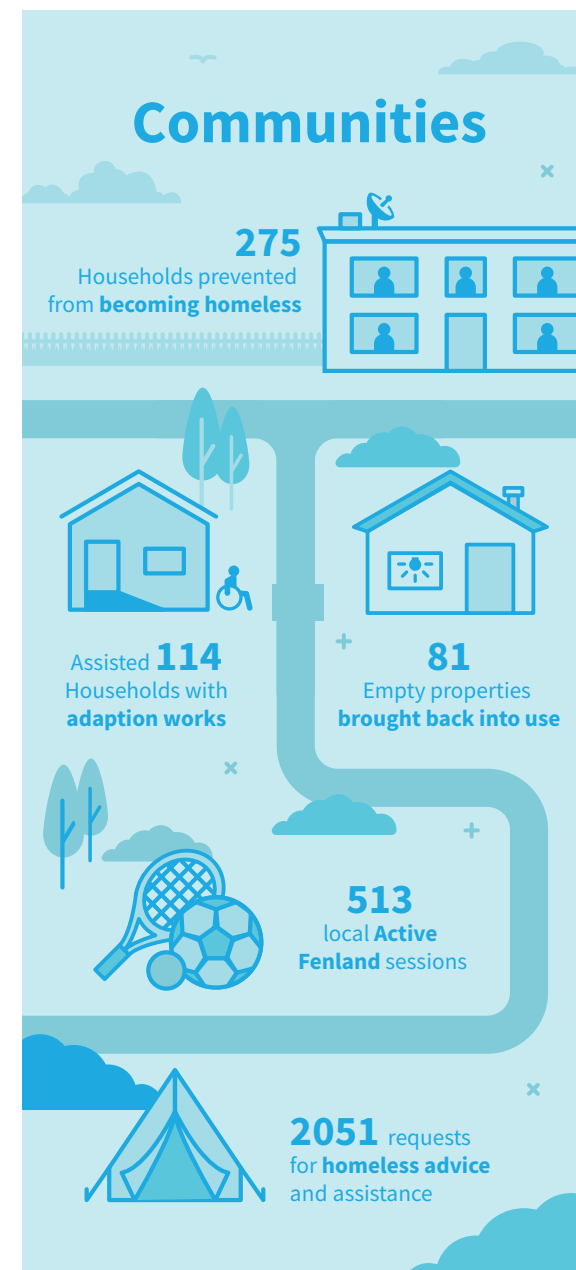
Councillor Chris Seaton

- ❶ Completion and launch of the Whittlesey Heritage Walk.
- ❷ Working with the Hereward Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and railway industry partners to achieve pre covid levels of use at Manea and Whittlesea Stations.
- ❸ The 10-year anniversary of the Hereward CRP and its national re accreditation for 2022/2023.

Our Communities

Support vulnerable members of our community

- As the Cost of Living crisis deepened in the aftermath of Covid and war in Russia, we launched a campaign to [help residents struggling with rising costs](#). Together with our partners, we have helped to ensure people claim support they are entitled to, know how to make their homes warmer and cheaper to run, are aware of social tariffs offered by suppliers, are helped to manage debt or know where to turn if they need advice or someone to talk to. The campaign has included organising cost of living events with a host of partners in attendance, creating a resource hub on our website, producing a cost of living information booklet available at locations across Fenland, internal staff updates and a social media toolkit.
- Our Housing Options team received [2,051 requests for homeless advice and assistance](#); 1,228 of these approaches were resolved through the advice provided. [275 households were prevented from becoming homeless](#) through various forms of intervention including (but not limited to) mediation, emotional support, budgeting advice, financial support and assisting with sourcing alternative accommodation.
- Through our Disabled Facilities Grants scheme, the Council provides [adaption works for elderly and disabled householders](#) to remain safe, secure and protected in their own homes. Last year we [assisted 114 households with adaption works](#). These included the [installation of walk-in showers, stairlifts, ramped](#) access facilities and specialist equipment such as person hoists.
- The [15th annual Pride in Fenland awards](#) took place in November to celebrate the incredible contributions of unsung heroes from across the district. Organised by Fenland District Council and the Fenland Citizen newspaper, this year's awards saw an almost record number of nominations – 83 in total. Judges heard many inspiring stories of kindness and selfless support across seven categories: Young Individual or Youth Group Volunteers, Individual Volunteer, Community Group Volunteers, Special Judges' Award and three new awards; Recreational and Environmental Volunteers, Community Fundraising Volunteers and Lifetime Volunteering Award.
- Our [Golden Age project](#), which helps provide older residents with advice on services and support available to them at events across Fenland, [celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2023](#). The events were launched in 2003 by the late Cllr Mac Cotterell MBE and have continued to be valuable to residents – and an enduring Council priority - ever since. Held at venues across the district throughout the year, the events bring together many providers of care, financial assistance, social activities, health provision and other services for the over 60s. To date, almost [7,000 visitors have attended the Golden Age events](#).



- Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, we have [led a co-ordinated response to the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme](#). Together with partner organisations and local community groups, we have helped to ensure all arrivals from Ukraine receive the best possible support and safe welcome to the district. This includes working with host families to carry out necessary accommodation and disclosure checks and providing a wrap-around support package for Ukrainian refugees to help them with access to financial support, education, healthcare, and social care services when they arrive.

Promote health and wellbeing for all

- [Freedom Leisure](#) continues to deliver leisure centre services on the Council's behalf and has done an excellent job at encouraging people back into the centres following the Covid pandemic. Whilst there remain some reductions in performance below the pandemic levels, overall monthly income is now performing 4% above the February 2020 level, with swimming lessons particularly strong, and [thousands of young people learning to swim every week](#). This is excellent news and a reflection on the efforts that the Freedom team in Fenland has put into the service.
- Health and wellbeing support for Fenland residents and businesses continued following the Covid-19 pandemic. Working with our partners we focused on access to vaccination centres and information regarding immunisations through the ['Stay Strong, Live Long' campaign](#). The Enduring Transmission project continued to support businesses until March 2023 providing [direct public health support](#) helping to build resilience and supporting business continuity.
- Our Active Fenland team successfully attracted [more than £402,000 in funding](#) to help all ages of the community to [get more active, more often](#), and to lead healthier lifestyles. The funding helped to [deliver 513 sports and physical activities](#) to Fenland communities, including badminton, tennis, running, walking football and netball, yoga and strength and balance.
- We have [continued to invest in our parks and open spaces](#). Together with our contractor Tivoli, we look after more than 135 hectares of parks and open spaces across Fenland. Work in the past year has included [refurbishments to several play areas](#) to keep them up-to-date, safe, and popular with children and families, investment in [planting new trees](#), and a [new Splashpad attraction](#) in Wisbech Park. We also [secured a £240,000 grant from the Government's Changing Places Fund](#) to provide two larger, accessible Changing Places toilets for severely disabled people, including one for the new Wisbech Park café and pavilion due to open in 2024.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage

- We worked with numerous local cultural and creative organisations and individuals to [develop the Fenland Culture Strategy](#) and build on relationships with Arts Council England (ACE) and Cause4 Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy, both of which have led to [additional training support, engagement, and further investment in the district](#). This work, combined with Fenland's ACE Priority Place status, also led to two Fenland-based organisations being named as the [first two ACE National Portfolio Organisations \(NPO\)](#) ever. As a result, they will receive a combined £399,600 investment annually.

- We secured **£120,000** from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for **Amplifying Community Arts and Culture**. The funding will be used to help local creative providers **develop more opportunities for the community to engage in creative activities**, including training and upskilling for cultural organisations and creative individuals, and equipment and resources. It will also provide dedicated support to the creative community around searching and applying for grant funding to further amplify what is available in Fenland.
- Significant effort has been made in the last couple of years to ensure that our much-loved **Four Seasons events were not only re-established but came back bigger and better** than they were before the Covid pandemic. Government 'Welcome Back' funding enabled a series of marketing events throughout the town centres prior to the relaunches, designed to rebuild the events again and encourage visitors back out into public spaces. Additional funding was secured by volunteers to boost March's St George's Fayre, with visitors turning out to the event their thousands, and there were huge efforts to support Whittlesey Festival to recruit more volunteers and regroup in 2022 after a three-year hiatus. Work has been ongoing in Whittlesey for 18 months but has proved successful, meaning that all Four Seasons event will have been reinstated in 2023.
- Thanks to an idea born from our Growing Fenland Whittlesey Project and funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, we launched the **new Whittlesey Heritage Walk** in October 2022. Developed in partnership with key stakeholders, the walk encourages people to explore the fascinating and often undiscovered history of the ancient market town. The walk can be completed by following information boards along the route, using the Whittlesey Heritage Walk brochure or downloading the Love Exploring App which includes Augmented Reality and GEO-Location features for lots of family fun.

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	250	246
Proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work	57%	53%
Number of empty properties brought back into use	50	81
New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£45,000	£98,395
Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health	500	513
Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland	25	29
Value of Grants for creativity and culture managed by FDC	£40,000	£43,000

Our Environment

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- We carried out more than **2.9million bin collections** from across the district, in all weathers, and collected more than **8,850 tonnes** of materials for recycling. Thanks to residents continuing to recycle their waste well, we also generated more than **£461,600 of income** to support our services. Customer satisfaction with our Refuse and Recycling and Garden Waste (Brown Bin) services remains high with **96%** and **89%** respectively. The Garden Waste service has continued to grow with subscriptions at an all-time high of over **23,688** in 2022/23.
- Our trained 'Getting It Sorted' volunteers supported recycling in Fenland with events, activities, and online training courses. They also kept the Council's multi-lingual recycling website, www.gettingitsorted.org, up-to-date to help residents recycle right at home.
- Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team continued to provide the excellent **seven-day street sweeping, litter picking and fly-tipping removal service** in our towns and villages. Last year they responded to over **1,860 service requests**: **96%** on the same or next day. Over **1,380 quality inspections** were made in areas of high footfall - **99%** met cleansing standards first time.

Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene

- We worked with a number of community environmental volunteering groups who carried out litter picks, planting and other community projects help to keep Fenland clean, green and safe for all to enjoy. Leverington Street Pride celebrated its 10th anniversary and Chatteris In Bloom achieved Gold in the town category of the Britain in Bloom awards. Over **£33,000 was awarded to community groups** living within the vicinity of wind turbines to improve their local environment. Projects included switching to LED lighting, upgrading to triple glazed windows to a community hall, solar powered mobile vehicle activated signs and enhancements to green spaces.
- Our Street Scene team spent **3,900 hours out and about in the community**, working on various environmental improvement projects. In 2022/23 the team issued **10 Fixed Penalty Notices** for fly-tipping, and successfully prosecuted two individuals for fly-tipping, with a combined fine total of **£857** imposed by the courts. The team also investigated **194 reported abandoned vehicles** and issued **13 car parking fines** to drivers parked illegally on March Market Place.



Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion

- Our **shared CCTV service** with Peterborough City Council maintained its 100% service function 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service conducted **over 4,000 pro-active camera patrols, detected over 1,000 incidents of crime and disorder across the district** and supported our policing partners to make **over 100 arrests** for offences, helping to make the district safer.
- Our Community Support and Community Safety teams made a **successful bid to the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for £50,000** to improve the perception of crime and anti-social behaviour in Wisbech. We are currently working with a range of partners including Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Clarion Housing, Wisbech Town Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to establish and engage with young people in Wisbech to shape the future of the project which will run until March 2025.
- Together with internal and external partners, our Community Safety team has been involved in the investigation of 246 reports of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or other quality of life concerns. The team is also part of the Fenland Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which has undertaken projects to raise awareness of domestic abuse and coercive control, radicalisation, child criminal exploitation and road safety. As well as engaging the community, training sessions were delivered to support the development of frontline professionals who work within the Fenland community surrounding domestic abuse, hate crime, cybercrime and substance abuse. The team was also part of a successful partnership bid with the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner and Cambridgeshire Constabulary, securing funds from the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative to deliver work on diverting youth away from involvement in anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Wisbech.

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	90%	96%
% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	93%	98.6%
% of collected household waste recycled through the Blue Bin service	28%	27%
Customer satisfaction with Refuse and Recycling services	90%	95.8%
Customer satisfaction with Garden Waste service	85%	89.1%
Number of Street Pride, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of Community environmental events supported	204	236
% of local businesses who thought they were supported and treated fairly	96%	100%
% of those asked who are satisfied with Fenland District Council's events	96%	97%

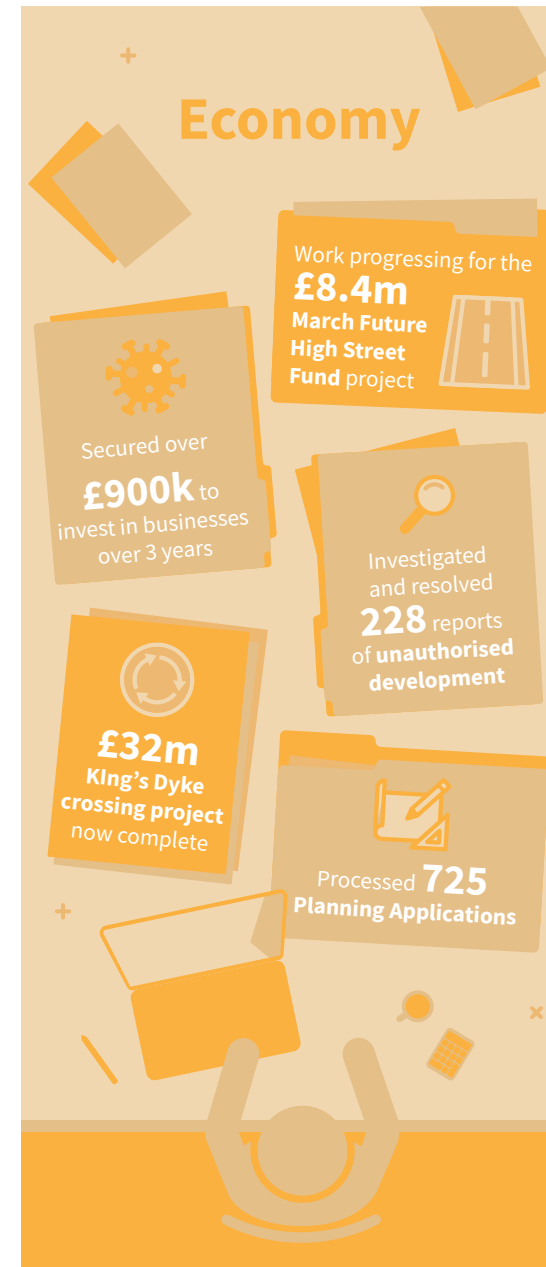
Our Economy

Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland

- The Economic Growth team has done intensive work with numerous business to support them to grow. One such example being major employer Suncrop, which was support to:
 - develop a long-term plan to **combat business-threatening energy price hikes**.
 - become a **Disability Confident employer** and further explore opportunities to address recruitment challenges by employing harder-to-reach groups.
 - form beneficial contacts to help with **access to funding and partnership working** with a foreign business now looking to establish a base within Suncrop's Chatteris site.
 - further explore **robotics innovation**.
- We **secured over £900,000 of funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund** to invest in businesses over the next three years. The funding will support businesses with grants to invest in new technology, diversify their income or create new employment opportunities. In addition, we have **secured over £430,00 to invest in rural businesses and communities** that will, for example, provide grants to help farming businesses diversify.
- We helped to **deliver a Start & Grow programme** with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Growth Hub, an intensive programme of structured business support and grants, funded by the Community Renewal Fund. More than £650,000 in business support and grants was delivered into Fenland through a number of sources. The 'Start' programme was for individuals wanting to explore enterprise and offered intensive pre-start business information sessions, online learning, mentoring, networking and peer support. The 'Grow' programme supported existing early-stage micro-businesses to expand into new markets, create new jobs or increase profitability and productivity.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland

- Our **Planning team determined 725 planning applications** - between 62% and 81% of these were decided on time, depending on application type. The team also dealt with nearly 800 other types of application (such as discharge of condition, general enquiries, and licensing requests) and received 103 pre-application enquiries, in addition to 'traditional' planning applications. We also **investigated and resolved 228 cases of unauthorised development** reported to us.



- Work continued on projects outlined in our [Growing Fenland masterplans](#), part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) strategic Market Town Masterplans, including opening of the Whittlesey Heritage Walk and Wisbech Park Splashpad, progress on the March Future High Streets Fund project, completion of improvements to Wisbech Market Place and funding for local skills development in Chatteris.
- Work gathered pace on [March town centre's multi-million pound regeneration](#), a programme of inter-related schemes being delivered by various partners to transform and futureproof the town centre. Highlights of 2022/23 include:
 - [Delivery of March Market Place improvements](#), funded by our Future High Streets Fund grant funding. Work started in January 2023 and was completed in April.
 - Primary-build of [CityFibre's £5million super-fast broadband investment](#) - offering service to over 8,500 homes.
 - [Major gas pipe upgrade](#) by Cadent Gas
 - Contractor appointed to deliver the Broad Street regeneration scheme, including transformation of the existing road layout and a new public realm area. Funded by the Future High Streets Fund and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- Our [Wisbech High Street Project](#), funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, continued to make progress. Highlights from 2022/23 included the completion of restoration works at 31 High Street with grant funding, the delivery of seven free, in-person traditional heritage skills workshops, and planning approved and contractor appointed to deliver a retail and residential scheme at 24 High Street, known as 'The Gap'.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

- Supported by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority funding, work continues to improve transport connectivity in Fenland. Highlights include the [completion of the £32million Kings Dyke Crossing Project](#) in Whittlesey and the [£25million A47 Guyhirn roundabout](#). There was also great progress on the Fenland Railway Station Masterplans project, which aims to improve stations at March, Manea and Whittlesey and provide better railways for Fenland. Work included the completion of a redevelopment at March Railway Station, with a new open-plan ticket hall and waiting area, accessible modern toilet facilities and a bigger, upgraded car park. There were also infrastructure improvements delivered through the March Area Transport Study (MATS).

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	70%	74%
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks	70%	62%*
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks	80%	81%*
% occupancy of our Business Premises estate	92%	93.9%
% occupancy Wisbech Yacht Harbour	95%	99%

*The reduced performance was as a result of rising workloads and resource challenges

Quality Organisation

- We collected over £65million in Council Tax and £24million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community. A large share of this money is also passed onto the Police, Fire Service, County and Parish Councils - see the 'Money Matters' section for more information.
- We continued to roll out our ongoing transformation project to optimise our workforce, improve services and customer experience and make it even easier for people to interact with the Council. Phase 2 of our transformation project included a new My Fenland operating model and new management structure. Transformation highlights in 2022/23 included the completion of 75 process mapping tasks, and redesign of 11 processes, to develop services for the benefit of either our customers, our staff, or both. The My Fenland team also answered more than 54,900 phone calls and resolved 99% of customer queries at the first point of call. We also received 10,397 payments via PayPoint, totalling over £1.3million.
- Our website saw over 345,000 visits and received 21,500 online form submissions across 48 different topics and was regularly updated with front-page news to maintain user engagement. As part of our ongoing work to improve our digital services and user journeys, we also expanded our suite of online forms, with new digital journeys for licensing forms and event bookings. The forms enable residents to apply for services or submit information online 24/7, and automatically transfer information received directly to teams on the ground and into back-office systems – saving hours of resource in processing time.
- Our Social Media channels remain popular, with 8,880 Twitter followers and 6,700 Facebook followers. Over the past year we have used our social media channels to promote our online services and customer self-service forms, encourage behaviour change to tackle issues such as dog fouling and fly-tipping and improve recycling rates, and highlight local news, events, campaigns and consultations. We have also increased our use of video on our social media channels to develop our online engagement with residents.
- The Licensing team issued 414 licences and dealt with 95 service requests for a variety of licensable services including Taxi, Premises, Alcohol, Scrap Metal and Animal Licensing, to help ensure such businesses are well managed and operating safely and legally.
- We consulted with residents, stakeholders and partners about a wide range of topics to help us understand local people's priorities and shape our service. Consultations included asking for views on our draft Budget and Business Plan, our Local Validation List which helps ensure that the requirements for information included within a planning application are kept to the minimum, and plans for a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to help reduce anti-social behaviour in a Wisbech alleyway.


Quality Organisation



- We were **reaccredited with the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award** last year. This is a Government standard that recognises the high quality, customer focused services that we provide. The independent assessor said the Council had continued to meet the **'gold standard' for customer service delivery** and that our ongoing transformation programme is clearly delivering significant benefits to customers.
- As well as continuing to provide direct public health support to businesses through the post-Covid Enduring Transmission project, our Environmental Health team delivered a wide range of services including:
 - **Inspected more than 290 food businesses** to ensure they complied with food law and produced food that is safe to eat.
 - **Investigated nearly 2,000 reports of noise or other environmental problems** that may be affecting residents.
 - Extended our network of **air quality monitoring sites**.
 - Assisted Health Security UK with **infectious disease outbreaks** including salmonella, norovirus, campylobacter, cryptosporidium.
- Inspected and **permitted 16 industrial processes**, ranging from sawmills to mineral processes.
- Inspected and **licensed all skin piercing businesses**, including tattooing, acupuncture, botox and eyebrow microblading.

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact	85%	99%
% of customers satisfied by our service	90%	86%
% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	46.5%	47.49%
% of contact centre calls handled	80%	87.96%
Days taken to process Council Tax Support new claims and changes	8.0 days	5.29 days
% of Council tax collected	95.72%	96.76%
Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£64,734,624	£65,262,181
% of NNDR Collected	96.70%	97.1%
NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,017,406	£24,120,990
Number of online forms submitted via FDC website	22,000	21,504




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Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17 July 2023	
Report Title:	Council Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

To inform Cabinet of the income and expenditure (known as “Outturn”) for the Council for 2022/23 and reasons for variations. To also inform Cabinet of the final settlement of the Council’s A14 contribution to the Department for Transport.

2 Key issues

Revenue

- The Council’s provisional General Fund services net underspend is £799,924 for the financial year 2022/23. This is an improvement of £730,826 compared to the projected surplus of £69,108 as reported to Council in February 2023.
- The under-spend of £799,924 has been transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve in accordance with the decision made by Council at their meeting on 9th January 2020 which established this reserve and approved that any underspend at financial year-end be transferred to this reserve. As at 31 March 2023, this reserve has a balance of £1,866,568.
- The General Fund balance at 31 March 2023 remains at the approved minimum level of £2m.
- Given the scale of the challenges faced by the Council in 2022/23, the financial position at the year-end represents a considerable achievement and demonstrates the focus from Members and officers throughout the Council in delivering the required savings.
- As a result of continuing prudent financial management, improved income performance and additional government grants, the Council is in an improved position to deal with the significant ongoing financial challenges in 2023/24 and over the medium term.
- The Council’s Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23 (subject to external audit) is expected to be signed off by the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer by 31 July 2023. This is later than the date required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (31 May 2023) due to the ongoing delays in finalising the audit of the 2021/22 accounts. No date has yet been scheduled by our external auditors EY for the audit of the 2022/23 accounts (see Section 1 of the main report).
- The Statement of Accounts 2022/23 will incorporate all the outturn figures, revenue and capital presented in this report.

- The Council has made a single payment to the Department for Transport (DfT) rather than 25 annual payments, for its' agreed contribution to the A14. The DfT offered a significant discount for a single payment which the Council accepted and paid in March 2023. Further details are in Section 4 of the main report.

Capital

- The Capital Programme has been underspent by £949,000 (excluding Commercial and Investment Strategy). This compares with an under-spend of £1,233,000 in 2021/22. The variation principally relates to the re-profiling of several of the high-profile grant-funded regeneration schemes which the Council is currently delivering at various locations across the District. Additionally, the timing and extent of capital works which need to be undertaken at Council-owned buildings and facilities will be reviewed with an updated programme being presented to Cabinet in September. There is no loss of resources arising from the re-phasing set out shown in Appendix B(i).

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that :-
 - (i) The Outturn for the Council's General Fund services in 2022/23, as detailed at Appendix A and Section 2 of this report be noted and that Members note the transfer of the underspend to the Budget Equalisation Reserve;
 - (ii) The reasons for the variations from revised estimate be noted;
 - (iii) The current position on the Cambridgeshire Horizons Reserve, as detailed in Section 3 of this report be noted;
 - (iii) The payment and funding of the A14 contribution, as detailed in Section 4 of this report be noted;
 - (iii) The proposed Capital Funding schedule for 2022/23 at Appendix B(i) be approved.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance
Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	Budget Setting Reports Monthly Budgetary Control Reports 2022/23 Final Accounts Working Papers 2022/23

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's income and expenditure figures for General Fund services and the Capital Programme for the financial year 2022/23 (known as 'Outturn') are presented in this report.
- 1.2 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require that the Council's Statement of Accounts be signed off by the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer by the end of May following the financial year ended 2020/21 and for the final audited Statement of Accounts to be published by the end of July.
- 1.3 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 extended these deadlines for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 accounts. For these years, the draft accounts were to be signed off by 31 July following the year-end by the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer and the publication of the final audited accounts moved to 30 September for the 2020/21 accounts. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 extended the publication deadline to 30 November 2022 for the 2021/22 accounts.
- 1.4 Due to resource issues, the Council's external auditors EY (Ernst & Young) were unable to meet the deadline for the audited accounts for 2020/21 which were approved by Audit & Risk Management Committee on 17 October 2022 and finally published on 30 November 2021.
- 1.5 Continuing resource pressures affecting both EY and this Council, together with ongoing issues regarding the Pension liability valuation has resulted in significant delays in completion of the audit of 2021/22 accounts. This has affected a significant number of Council's nationally. Subject to the resolution of this issue, we are anticipating that the final Statement of Accounts 2021/22 together with EY's audit results report will be presented to Audit & Risk Management Committee at their meeting in September 2023. None of the outstanding issues relating to the 2021/22 accounts audit affect the Council's outturn position for that year (as reported to Cabinet on 11 July 2022) and are primarily accounting adjustments required by regulations.
- 1.6 For 2022/23, the deadline for signing and publishing the draft accounts has reverted back to the 2015 regulations timescale of 31 May 2023. Due to the ongoing issues relating to the 2021/22 accounts audit, we are now expecting to publish the draft 2022/23 accounts by 31 July 2023. We have published the required notice on our website advising that we will not meet the timescales specified in the regulations and the reasons for this. In addition, due to EY's continuing resource pressures and the ongoing impact of delays in a significant number of Council's 2021/22 audits, we have been notified by EY that the earliest they will be able to start any Council's 2022/23 audit is November 2023. The regulations require audited accounts to be published by 30 September 2023.
- 1.7 The 2022/23 draft accounts, which are subject to external audit, will be published on the Council's website along with the required notice of the Exercise of Public Rights to inspect the accounts (30 days from 1 August 2023).
- 1.8 The figures presented in this report are all provisional pending audit by the Council's external auditors EY (Ernst & Young). Any significant or material changes will be reported back to Members at a later stage.
- 1.9 As a result of EY's scheduled timescale for completing the audit, the publication of the final audited accounts for 2022/23 will be later than the 30 September date specified in the regulations. EY will present their Audit Plan for the 2022/23 accounts to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 25 September 2023 where they will explain their reporting timetable and the reasons for not meeting the 30 September date. There are no consequences to the Council of these revised audit dates.

2 The Revenue Budget

- 2.1 In February 2023 the Council's year end position was estimated as a surplus of £69,108. It is important to note that this figure was based on projections as at the end of December 2022 and the report to Council also noted that there were still many uncertainties around the year-end position, particularly around projected income levels, government grants for new burdens and the projected support required by Freedom Leisure.
- 2.2 Following the closure process, the full position shows a net underspend of £799,924, an improvement of £730,825 compared to the previous projection. The net underspend of £799,924 represents 2.75% of the gross budget of £29.1m and compares with an underspend of £584,010 in 2021/22.
- 2.3 An analysis of the overall position is shown at Appendix A(i) and explanations of variances are detailed in Appendix A(ii).
- 2.4 Of the additional under-spend for the year, one-off variations total £680k. Of this amount,
- £507k relates to additional fees and charges received,
 - £53k relates to additional government grants, mainly for new burdens administration of the various business grant assurance schemes, Land Charges and Transparency,
 - £27K relates to higher income from Investments and Property Funds,
 - £121k relates to higher income from the RTB/VAT sharing arrangement with Clarion,
 - £123k relates to a lower contribution to the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) costs due to higher New Burdens grants received in March 2023,
 - £151k relates to higher support costs to Freedom Leisure for their additional energy costs, up to the Cabinet approved limit.
- 2.5 Service underspends amount to £51k, which includes lower employee costs (-£13k) across a variety of services. Lower Premises costs (-£46k) and Supplies and Services costs (-£131k) have been off-set by higher Transport costs (£55k), Third Party payments (£57k) and Capital Financing costs (£29k).
- 2.6 Together with the projected surplus of £69,108 (as detailed in the budget report to Cabinet and Council on 20 February 2023), the additional underspend of £730,825 (detailed in 2.3 – 2.5 above) brings the total underspend in 2022/23 to £799,924. This has been transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve in accordance with the decision made by Council at their meeting on 9th January 2020 which established this reserve and approved that any underspend at financial year-end be transferred to this reserve. As at 31 March 2023, this reserve has a balance of £1,866,568.
- 2.7 As a result of continuing prudent financial management together with better than expected income performance and the receipt of additional funding from government, the Council is in an improved position to deal with the significant ongoing financial challenges in 2023/24 and over the medium term.
- 2.8 The Council's reserves will be reviewed again as part of the 2024/25 budget process during the Autumn of 2023.

3 Cambridgeshire Horizons Reserve

- 3.1 Members will recall that in May 2021, the Council received £3,891,500 as its' share of the surplus generated by Cambridgeshire Horizons Ltd. Of this, £1,050,000 was an agreed contribution to the A14 improvements (see Section 4 below). This left £2,841,500 available for this Council's future use and was set-aside in an earmarked reserve. There are numerous conditions attached to the use of this money, mainly around regeneration and future economic development of the district, which restricts its future use.
- 3.2 The following table summarises the use of the reserve to date together with current commitments leaving the balance currently uncommitted.

Table 1: Cambridgeshire Horizons Reserve Current Position

Description	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2022/23	Estimate 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25
	£	£	£	£
Consultancy support to produce Levelling Up Fund Proposal for Wisbech	61,866	52,642		
Consultant support for regeneration schemes - fixed term to 31 March 2024	87,955	92,610	92,610	
Economic Development - Technical Support		18,058	34,800	35,500
Consultant support for Accommodation Strategy Review		13,125	59,000	
Economic Growth Strategy - to 31 March 2025			367,000	198,000
Total Utilised	149,821	176,435	553,410	233,500
Balance 1st April	2,841,500	2,691,679	2,515,244	1,961,834
Utilised during year	-149,821	-176,435	-553,410	-233,500
Balance 31st March	2,691,679	2,515,244	1,961,834	1,728,334

- 3.3 After taking into account current commitments, there remains a balance uncommitted of £1.728m. Consideration is currently being given to the optimum funding strategy for the works to properties in the High Street, Wisbech and other regeneration initiatives which may result in the use of part of this reserve. Further details will be provided to Cabinet at future meetings regarding the use of this reserve.

4 A14 Contribution

- 4.1 Members will recall that as part of the funding for the A14 improvement works, this Council (along with all other Councils within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the CPCA) agreed to fund £800,000 over a 25 year period, equating to £32,000 per year. Each Council included in the funding arrangement had agreed varying amounts of funding. The CPCA had agreed to fund £50m over 20 years.
- 4.2 The annual amount of £32,000 had been included in the Council's revenue budget for the last two years. In addition, following receipt of its' share of the Cambridgeshire Horizons money (£3,891,500) in May 2021 (see Section 3 above), a further £1,050,000 had been earmarked from this share for the A14 and set-aside in an earmarked reserve. Consequently, in total an amount of £1,850,000 was due from this Council for the A14, payable over 25 years, equating to £74,000 per year (£32,000 funded from the revenue budget and £42,000 funded from the Horizons A14 reserve).
- 4.3 In February 2023, the DfT contacted the Council and offered a significant discount (4.86%) for a single lump sum payment rather than 25 annual payments. This had the effect of reducing the total contribution due from £1,850,000 to £1,114,600, a reduction of £735,400 over the 25 years.
- 4.4 Officers considered this to be a good deal and after discussions with the Leader accepted this offer from the DfT, which had to be completed by the end of March 2023. The lump sum of £1,114,600 was paid to the DfT in March 2023.
- 4.5 As the payment of the lump sum was completed in March 2023, this transaction had to be accounted for in the revenue outturn for 2022/23. As the Council had already accrued for £106,000 of contributions (£64,000 in the revenue account and £42,000 from the Horizons A14 reserve), the balance of £1,008,600 (£1,114,600 less £106,000 already accounted for) has been accounted for in the 2022/23 outturn. This is included in the Resources and Customer Services outturn figure as detailed in Appendix A(i).
- 4.6 To fund this, the balance on the Horizons A14 reserve of £1,008,000 (£1,050,000 less £42,000 already accounted for) has been transferred to the revenue account as detailed in Appendix A(i).
- 4.7 Consequently, the impact on the Council's revenue account for 2022/23 is just £600 (£1,008,600 less £1,008,000 funded from reserve). In addition, the Council will be saving £32,000 per annum from its' revenue budget going forward.

5 Capital Programme

- 5.1 The Capital Programme has been underspent by £949,000 (excluding Commercial and Investment Strategy). This compares with an under-spend of £1,233,000 in 2021/22. The variation principally relates to the re-profiling of several of the high-profile grant-funded regeneration schemes which the Council is currently delivering at various locations across the District. Additionally, the timing and extent of capital works which need to be undertaken at Council-owned buildings and facilities has been reviewed and this has resulted in changes in the budget required.
- 5.2 There is no loss of resources arising from this re-phasing as shown in Appendix B(i), which has been input to the 2023/24 programme as appropriate.
- 5.3 An updated Capital Programme for 2023-26 will be presented to Cabinet at the September meeting.

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of Revenue Estimates

Service Summary	Revised Estimate 2022/23 £	Outturn 2022/23 £	Variation compared with Revised £
Growth & Infrastructure	1,443,724	1,156,511	-287,213
Communities, Environment, Leisure & Planning	4,561,575	3,905,999	-655,576
Resources & Customer Services	8,836,910	9,644,643	807,733
NET COST OF GENERAL FUND SERVICES	14,842,209	14,707,153	-135,056
Corporate Items			
Drainage Board Levies	1,707,900	1,707,909	9
Contributions to(+)/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-522,008	9,506	531,514
Contribution from(-) Business Rates Reserve	-983,656	-965,340	18,316
Contributions from(-) Horizons A14 Reserve	0	-1,008,000	-1,008,000
RTB/VAT Sharing Income	-128,350	-249,281	-120,931
Financing Charges - <i>Interest/Minimum Revenue Provision</i>	864,814	893,827	29,013
Investment Income and Property Funds	-695,000	-722,365	-27,365
New Homes Bonus	-823,959	-823,959	0
Lower Tier Services Grant	-169,351	-169,350	1
Services Grant	-255,198	-255,198	0
Business Rates Levy Account Surplus allocation	-31,046	-31,046	0
Corporate Adjustments	-1,035,854	-1,613,298	-577,453
Net Expenditure after use of balances/reserves	13,806,355	13,093,856	-712,509
Core Funding			
Revenue Support Grant	-589	-589	0
Business Rates - Income due in Year			
Business Rates Funding	-9,319,912	-9,319,912	0
Tariff Payment to Government	6,027,242	6,027,242	0
Renewable Energy Rates Retained	-1,954,839	-1,954,839	0
Business Rates Pool - FDC Share of Benefit	-300,000	-474,529	-174,529
Business Rates S31 Grants due in year	-2,860,107	-2,887,825	-27,718
Business Rates Levy due in year	727,714	911,645	183,931
	-7,679,902	-7,698,218	-18,316
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit(+)	1,835,529	1,835,529	0
Council Tax Collection Fund Deficit(+)/Surplus(-)	-43,760	-43,760	0
Council Tax	-7,986,741	-7,986,741	0
Business Rates and Council Tax Funding	-13,875,463	-13,893,779	-18,316
Surplus(-)/Shortfall(+)	-69,108	-799,924	-730,825
<i>Surplus at year-end transferred to Budget Equalisation Reserve</i>			

Summary of Revenue Provisional Out-turn 2022/23 - Main Variances

Over(+) / Under
spend (-)
£000 £000

Service Area	Description		
<u>One-Off Variations</u>			
Fees and Charges	Income variations across a variety of services		
	Enforcement Fees (Housing Standards)	17	
	Marine Services	-55	
	Planning & Pre-App Fees	-221	
	Waste Services - bulky waste and recycling	-115	
	Trade Waste	-22	
	Licence Fees	-23	
	Cemeteries	-35	
	Economic Estates	-53	
			-507
Other Income/Costs			
	Additional Government New Burdens - Business Grants assurance, Land Charges, Transparency etc		-53
	Investment Income and property funds		-27
	RTB/VAT Sharing arrangement with Clarion		-121
	Lower contribution to ARP costs due to higher New Burdens grants		-123
	Leisure Contract - support costs to Freedom up to Cabinet approval		151
	Sub-Total One-Off Variations		-680
<u>Service Base Variations</u>			
Employee Costs	Variance across a variety of services mainly resulting from vacancies	-13	
Premises Costs	Lower costs across a variety of services	-46	
Transport Costs	Lower car allowance & mileage costs across a variety of services	-16	
	Higher vehicles/vessel maintenance costs	71	
Supplies and Services	Lower ICT costs - Telephones/Software/Maintenance	-62	
	Homelessness - higher accommodation costs	14	
	Lower costs across all services	-83	
Third Party Payments	Net impact of Housing Benefit subsidy claim and overpayments	46	
	Higher Bad Debts Provision	11	
Capitl Financing Costs	Higher Minimum Revenue Provison (MRP)	29	
Other variations	Other cost/income variations	-2	
	Sub-Total Service Base Variations		-51
	Additional Surplus		-731
Projected Surplus 2022-23 at Revised Estimate (Cabinet/Council February 2023)			-69
Net Surplus 2022-23	Transferred to Budget Equalisation Reserve		-800

Net savings as a % of Gross Budget (£29.117m for 2022/23)

2.75%

Balance on Budget Equalisation Reserve as at 01.04.22	1,067
Transfer of Surplus in 2022-23	800
Balance on Budget Equalisation Reserve as at 31.03.23	1,867

CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FUNDING OUTTURN 2022/23


	Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
Capital Programme (excluding Commercial and Investment Strategy Schemes)	10,436	9,487	(949)
Commercial and Investment Strategy	700	0	(700)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	11,136	9,487	(1,649)
RESOURCES AVAILABLE			
Capital Grants	8,042	7,822	(220)
Usable Capital Receipts - In Year	540	390	(150)
Reserves used in year to fund Capital Section 106's and Other Contributions	106	50	(56)
Borrowing (Internal and Prudential)	1,551	1,002	(549)
	10,436	9,487	(949)
Borrowing (Prudential) - CIS	700	0	(700)
Total Available Resources to fund Expenditure	11,136	9,487	(1,649)

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE VARIATIONS 2022/23

SCHEME	VARIATION £000	REASON
Leisure Centres		
Building Improvements	(183)	Roofing works at Hudson Leisure centre is now complete. Other scheduled improvement works have been re-profiled to the 2023/24 financial year.
Regeneration Programmes		
Heritage Lottery Fund - Non-FDC Properties	(98)	Some minor works to other privately-owned properties on the High Street have been re-profiled to reflect revised timelines received from property owners and other works on the High Street are being appraised.
Heritage Lottery Fund - 24 High Street, Wisbech	(89)	Works ongoing and re-profiled to 2023/24. Appointed contractor started on site early June 2023. Cabinet receives regular updates on the High Street works.
Railway Station Master-Planning	33	This project is now complete and the car park at Manea Station is due to open in July 2023.
Future High Street Fund, March	1,050	The works on the March High Street have started and progressing well. This over-spend is mainly due to the purchase of 1 Broad Street, March which is the old Barclays bank building and funded from DLUHC grant.
Growing Fenland - Capital Grants	(33)	Work remains ongoing to finalise the allocation of funds to local businesses in line with applications received and assessed during 2022-23.
Cemeteries		
Cemetery Chapels Condition Survey Works	(57)	Work remains ongoing to complete the works required in the findings of the conditions surveys.
Highways		
Street Light Improvements - FDC (Cat 2)	(10)	Expenditure re-profiled and due to be incurred over the life of the project.
Environment		
Replacement and Grant-Funded Additional Litter Bins	(27)	Replacement programme ongoing and expected to be complete in 2023/24.
Pollution Monitoring Equipment	(14)	Capital Budget not required, revenue budget has been utilised.
Parks and Open Spaces		
Parks, Play Areas and Open Space - Doddington	(30)	The project is completed and final costs were less than required.
Wisbech Water Park and Pavillion	(11)	Wisbech Water Park has been completed and the Wisbech Pavillion works have now started with budget re-profiled to 2023/24.
Vehicles and Plant		
Vehicles	(136)	Replacement vehicle purchases have been reprofiled into 2023/24.
CCTV Cameras	(6)	The works are ongoing and due to be completed in 2023/24.
ICT System Replacement Programme & Infrastructure Upgrades		
Information Technology	(17)	This scheme reflects a multi-year investment in the Council's transformation programme. Total planned investment across three years to 31 March 2024 remains unchanged.
Improvement of Assets		
March Mooring Improvements	9	Pump-out facilities improvement works completed in 2022/23.
Energy Efficiency Improvements to Clarion Properties	(850)	This project is now complete with fewer properties improved than originally anticipated. The scheme was funded by government grant and the underspent grant will be returned to BEIS in 2023/24.
Nene Waterfront Infrastructure Improvements	(20)	The works are ongoing and will be completed in 2023/24.
Economic Estates		
Replacement of AV Equipment/WiFi at Business Centres	(39)	The works are ongoing and will be completed in 2023/24.
Private Sector Housing Support		
Disabled Facilities Grants	(414)	Expenditure dependant on throughput of grant applications. Remaining budget committed but not spent and carried forward to 2023/24.
Other Minor Variations		
	(7)	Minor budget variations.
Total	(949)	

Key

() indicates the scheme is underspent by the amount shown
+ indicates scheme is overspent by the amount shown

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17 July 2023	
Report Title:	Update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 – 2027/28	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

To consider and recommend to Council an update and re-positioning of the current adopted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

2 Key issues

- The current MTFS was adopted by Council at their meeting on 20 February 2023. Following 4 years of 0% Council Tax increases (from 2019/20 – 2022/23) in line with the Council motion agreed at their meeting on 18 July 2019, Council agreed to reduce Council Tax by 2% for 2023/24.
- For the remainder of the MTFS (ie. 2024/25 – 2027/28), a 0% Council Tax increase was modelled and adopted.
- It is however important to note that although the MTFS has been adopted by Council, this is not set in stone and is based on the best information available at that time. Only the budget, precept and Council Tax for the following financial year is formally required to be approved by Council at their February meeting. At this meeting the MTFS is also updated and adopted by Council.
- Officers have been requested to re-position the currently adopted MTFS by modelling the effects of keeping the cash amount of Council Tax raised at the current level over the MTFS period.
- With the estimated increases in Council Tax-base over the MTFS, this will equate to a reduction in Council Tax levels rather than the previously adopted 0% increase.
- At this time, the re-positioning of the MTFS is an ambition, recognising that the Council continues to face significant financial challenges and uncertainties that may not allow this ambition to be met.
- As a consequence of the above, the forecast shortfalls over the MTFS will also increase from £1.918m to £2.300m by 2027/28. These are however, based on previous expenditure forecasts (February 2023) which have not been updated for this exercise.
- The risks associated with the MTFS were explained in detail as part of the report to Council in February 2023. The re-positioning of the MTFS places even more emphasis on achieving savings and/or additional income through, for example the transformation programme currently being developed.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended to Council that :-

- (i) The Medium Term Financial Strategy be re-positioned by keeping the cash amount of Council Tax raised at the current level rather than the previously adopted 0% increase, while recognising that the Council continues to face significant financial challenges and uncertainties that may not allow this ambition to be met.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance
Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	Budget Setting Reports Medium Term Financial Strategy working papers

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Council at their meeting on 20 February 2023 approved the budget for 2023/24, which included a 2% reduction in Council Tax and adopted the MTFs to 2027/28 with a 0% increase in Council Tax each year from 2024/25.
- 1.2 It is however important to note that although the MTFs has been adopted by Council, this is not set in stone and is based on the best information available at that time. Only the budget, precept and Council Tax for the following financial year is formally approved by Council at their February meeting. At this meeting the MTFs is also updated and adopted by Council.
- 1.3 The Council's currently adopted MTFs is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Current MTFs – 2% decrease in Council Tax in 2023/24; 0% increase in 2024/25 onwards.

	Estimate	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure					
Net Service Expenditure	15,926	15,885	16,196	16,366	16,783
Corporate Items	754	1,052	813	929	1,542
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-740	-131	-42	42	42
Contribution from Business Rates Reserve	-211	0	0	0	0
Net Expenditure (before use of balances)	15,729	16,806	16,967	17,337	18,367
Funding					
Revenue Support Grant	-173	-173	-173	-173	-173
Business Rates Funding	-7,756	-7,916	-7,862	-7,891	-7,916
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit	211	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus(-)	-87	-50	-50	-50	-50
Council Tax (2% decrease in 23/24; increases of 0% in 24/25 onwards)	-7,928	-8,023	-8,119	-8,215	-8,310
Total Funding	-15,733	-16,162	-16,204	-16,329	-16,449
Shortfall(+) before use of balances	-4	+644	+763	+1,008	+1,918
Contribution to Budget Equalisation Reserve	4	0	0	0	0
Shortfall(+) after use of balances	0	+644	+763	+1,008	+1,918
Estimated Council Tax-base	31,059	31,434	31,809	32,184	32,559
Implied Band D Council Tax level	255.24	255.24	255.24	255.24	255.24
<i>Change in Council Tax level</i>	<i>-2.00%</i>	<i>0.00%</i>	<i>0.00%</i>	<i>0.00%</i>	<i>0.00%</i>

1.4 As detailed in the report to Council in February 2023, there is still considerable uncertainty around the estimates for 2023/24 and the forecasts for the medium term. Currently there are a number of 'unknowns' which could both positively and negatively impact on the forecasts including:

Risks associated with the MTFS forecasts:

- The ongoing impact of the Finance Settlements on 2024/25 and the medium term;
- Impact of potential changes to the New Home Bonus methodology and allocations from April 2024;
- Impact of the business rates revaluation from April 2023 and longer-term changes to the Business Rates Retention system from April 2025;
- Impact of potential additional costs and income in 2024/25 from the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for managing packaging waste;
- Impact on income streams being greater than anticipated due to external factors such as Port Income (sale of Port Sutton Bridge);
- Continuing impact of homelessness temporary accommodation costs in 2023/24 and the medium term and the impact on recovery of housing benefit subsidy;
- Potential for additional support for the Leisure Management contractor in 2023/24, (over and above the provision provided in the estimates) and over the medium term, as a result of the energy costs crisis. A full year's Management Fee income from the Leisure Contractor has currently been included in the 2023/24 estimates and each subsequent year of the MTFS;
- Impact of increases in Fees and Charges (where feasible) on the 2023/24 estimates and MTFS;
- Impact of service developments eg. Car Parking Enforcement (CPE);
- Revenue impact of funding new capital schemes not currently included in the capital programme. There are currently a number of schemes which require consideration with potentially substantial funding needed over the medium term;
- Potential impact of the Council's future transformation programme with associated savings. Further detailed work is required to quantify the scope of this programme and associated savings;
- Review of the recharge of staff time to the LATCO (Fenland Future Ltd) to quantify potential revenue savings. Currently recharges of £125k in 2023/24 onwards have been assumed in the MTFS;
- Potential net benefits from FFL of loan interest and dividends from future developments over and above already included in the MTFS, generating revenue income;
- Commercial and Investment Strategy and future potential positive returns to the Council;
- Review of the General Fund Balance and Earmarked Reserves to ensure they align with the future requirements of the Council;
- Potential positive impact over the MTFS of implementing the outcomes from the Accommodation Strategy.

1.5 **Whatever impact the above issues may have however, there will remain a significant structural deficit for the Council to address over the medium term.**

2 Re-positioning the MTFS

2.1 Officers have been requested to re-position the currently adopted MTFS by modelling the effects of keeping the cash amount of Council Tax raised at the current level over the MTFS period.

2.2 Table 2 below summarises the impact of this on the MTFS:

Table 2 – Updated MTFS – 2% decrease in Council Tax in 2023/24; cash amount of Council Tax 2024/25 onwards remaining unchanged.

	Estimate	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure					
Net Service Expenditure	15,926	15,885	16,196	16,366	16,783
Corporate Items	754	1,052	813	929	1,542
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-740	-131	-42	42	42
Contribution from Business Rates Reserve	-211	0	0	0	0
Net Expenditure	15,729	16,806	16,967	17,337	18,367
Funding					
Revenue Support Grant	-173	-173	-173	-173	-173
Business Rates Funding	-7,756	-7,916	-7,862	-7,891	-7,916
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit	211	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus(-)	-87	-50	-50	-50	-50
Council Tax (2% decrease in 23/24; cash amount same level in 24/25 onwards)	-7,928	-7,928	-7,928	-7,928	-7,928
Total Funding	-15,733	-16,067	-16,013	-16,042	-16,067
Shortfall(+) before use of balances	-4	+739	+954	+1,295	+2,300
Contribution to Budget Equalisation Reserve	4	0	0	0	0
Shortfall(+) after use of balances	0	+739	+954	+1,295	+2,300
Estimated Council Tax-base	31,059	31,434	31,809	32,184	32,559
Implied Band D Council Tax level	255.24	252.19	249.22	246.32	243.48
<i>Change in Council Tax level</i>	-5.22	-3.05	-2.97	-2.90	-2.84
	-2.00%	-1.19%	-1.18%	-1.16%	-1.15%


2.3 With the estimated increases in Council Tax-base over the MTFS, this will equate to a reduction in Council Tax as detailed in Table 2 above, rather than the previously adopted 0% increase. Over the period of the MTFS to 2027/28, this would currently equate to a cumulative reduction of £11.76 (4.61%) in the headline Band D Council Tax. The actual change in Council Tax levels will be dependent on the actual Council Tax-base for each year.

2.4 As a consequence of the above, the forecast shortfalls have increased from £1.918m to £2.300m by 2027/28. This is based on the previous forecast expenditure levels and estimated tax-base figures which have not been updated for this exercise. The updated shortfall places even more emphasis on achieving savings and/or additional income through, for example the transformation programme currently being developed.

- 2.5 The forecast figures in the above table should be considered with extreme caution. Future announcements and consultation outcomes will also determine government policy and therefore the funding in future years.
- 2.6 At this time, the re-positioning of the MTFS is an ambition, recognising that the Council continues to face significant financial challenges and uncertainties that may not allow this ambition to be met.
- 2.7 Updated estimates for 2024/25 and forecasts for the medium term will be presented to Cabinet and Council during the budget setting process later this year.
- 2.8 In addition, the Council's reserves will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process to ensure they align with the future requirements of the Council, particularly in relation to funding future transformation initiatives and potentially for using to mitigate the impact of future local government funding reforms.
- 2.9 The Council will need to continually consider its strategy to meet the estimated shortfalls shown at Table 2 (which will be updated later this year), particularly if there are additional impacts from the funding reforms from 2025/26 onwards together with the impact of new capital schemes.
- 2.10 As detailed in the budget report in February 2023, there are a number of potentially significant new capital schemes which will require consideration over the MTFS and for which no allowance has currently been made either within the approved capital programme or the associated financing costs within the revenue budget. These will be brought forward for Cabinet's consideration together with a review of the current capital programme as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 later this year.
- 2.11 The implications of not increasing and/or reducing Council Tax over the remainder of the MTFS is that the Council will be reducing its financial base permanently as it would not be able to recover potential revenue foregone due to the cumulative year on year impact. The consequences of continually setting zero and/or reduced Council Tax levels and not achieving the necessary savings/additional income have been clearly demonstrated by the events at other Councils. The ability to achieve significant year on year savings (without increasing existing and/or introducing new revenue streams together with transformational change) to balance the budget becomes progressively difficult without eventually impacting on front-line services and delivery.
- 2.12 Currently a 1% increase in Council Tax raises around £79,000 revenue per annum. Table 3 shows the implications of increasing the Council Tax in 2024/25 by 3% per annum (the current referendum limit) and thereafter compared to maintaining the cash amount of Council Tax at its current level (as detailed in Table 2 above).

Table 3: MTFS Deficits at Differing Council Tax levels from 2024/25 onwards

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Deficits with cash amount of Council Tax remaining unchanged from 2024/25 onwards (Table 2 above)	+739	+954	+1,295	+2,300
Additional CT with 3% increase p.a. from 2024/25	-336	-683	-1,046	-1,420
Net shortfall at 3% increase	+403	+271	+249	+880

Agenda No:	Item	8	
Committee:	Cabinet		
Date:	17 July 2023		
Report Title:	Property, Assets & Major Projects – On and Off-Street Parking Enforcement Update Paper		

1 Purpose / Summary

1.1 To update members on progress made so far by FDC and Cambridgeshire County Council in respect of the CPE implementation works, following the previous Cabinet update paper on 13th June 2022.

2 Key Issues

- Cambridgeshire County Council CPE Progress
- Traffic Regulation Order Survey, Review and Corrective Works
- Agency Agreement and Service Level Agreement
- Off Street Parking Places Regulation Review
- Project Delivery Timeline
- On and Off-Street Enforcement and Administration Costs
- Project Risks and Funding
- Liaison with Key Partners
- SCDC, HDC CPE Progress

3 Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the progress being made by FDC and CCC in respect of moving the introduction of CPE forward.
- b) Notes the predicted increase in budget in relation to the scheme and requests that further updates are brought forward as they become available and prior to a final decision being taken as to how this will be funded
- c) That the member/officer CPE project team meet to discuss and agree the draft agency agreement and service level agreement red flags.

Wards Affected	ALL	
Forward Reference	Plan	<i>[Insert Reference No. From Forward Plan. (It is a legal requirement to include key executive decisions on the forward plan for 28 days before the decision requested in this report is taken).</i>

Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden – Leader of the Council Cllr Jan French – Deputy Leader of the Council
Report Originator(s)	Garry Edwards - Engineering Manager gedwards@fenland.gov.uk
Contact Officer(s)	Garry Edwards - Engineering Manager gedwards@fenland.gov.uk Peter Catchpole - Corporate Director (Finance) petercatchpole@fenland.gov.uk
Background Papers	FDC Cabinet Paper 13-06-2022

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

Cambridgeshire County Council CPE Progress

- 1.1 Progress on the CPE project unfortunately stalled between August 2022 to February 2023 following Cambridgeshire County Councils request for FDC to fund design package works associated with reviewing traffic regulation order sign and line corrective works. Fortunately, both the County Council and GCP agreed to fund the £150k for each of the districts to cover the County Councils design consultants working for Milestone. Given the budget implications to FDC little progress was possible during the County Councils funding approval period until confirmation was received in February that the County Council would be covering these costs as the districts had envisaged.
- 1.2 Following a decision being reached for the design work funding, the County Council placed works orders with Milestone and works commenced on developing the design work packages.
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire County Council and FDC officers have been in regular communication and progress has been made on various aspects of the CPE project.
- 1.4 A draft application to the Department for Transport for a Civil/Special Enforcement Area Designation Order for the introduction of CPE in Fenland has been prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with FDC. The application will be finalised following the CPE Agency Agreement and SLA between both authorities being agreed and FDC's enforcement and administration service provider being determined.
- 1.5 The County Council have informed the Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London (PATROL) of FDC's legal representative to inform the Agreement/Memorandum of Participation. Communications have also been had with the Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC) in respect of allocating PCN prefixes to denote FDC On and Off-street parking contraventions.

Traffic Regulation Order Survey, Review and Corrective Works

- 1.6 The On-street traffic regulation order surveys were commissioned by FDC and completed in November 2021. Given the scale of this task the works were divided into four segments which would be referred to as tranches 1 to 4. Each tranche represents one of the four market towns and all the surrounding villages where existing TROs are in place. As anticipated, hundreds of inaccuracies were observed, and query lists produced with the data being digitally mapped for County Council use, however a higher rate of sign and line inaccuracies were found to be present. The data sets were then forwarded to the County Councils Policy and Regulation team to commence the checking process at the end of March 2022.
- 1.7 Following County Council officers working through the TRO query lists to determine how best to rectify the inaccuracies, the information was passed to the County Councils framework contractor (Milestone) to prepare the signing and lining work design packages and quotations for FDC consideration. Due to some delays associated with the design package funding mentioned above, progress has been somewhat slower than anticipated.
- 1.8 To date FDC have so far only received a target cost for T2 (Chatteris) with T1 (Whittlesey) anticipated to be received in July, T3 (March) at the end of July and T4 (Wisbech) in September. It is important to note that these costs are target costs (associated with the NEC contract option D) and not actual costs, with actual costs unlikely to be known until nearer works completion.
- 1.9 Milestone had previously provided FDC with an estimated target cost for the corrective signing and lining works of £268k which is nearly double the budget allocated within FDC's CPCA grant funding. The County Council have now advised that Milestone are predicting a large uplift in the previous target costs, having obtained estimates from one of their preferred sub-contractors. FDC are not scheduled to have the overall target cost for the sign and lining works until end of September, but by applying pro-rata rates from the target cost information received for T2 to the other tranches it would indicate that the costs purely associated with the signing and lining works will rise to circa £507k. Hunts DC have also seen their estimate costs rise from £280k to £950k and FDC officers have recently been in communications with HDC in respect of this matter.
- 1.10 The County Council Have requested that FDC commit to each tranche by placing an order with Milestone for each tranche as the target costs become available to avoid any contractor resourcing issues. Officers have advised that FDC would not commit to individual phases without the overall target costs being known. At this stage it does raise major concerns in terms of FDC's ability to deliver the CPE project within the available grant funded budget of £400k. Based on the latest predicted sign and line delivery costs the likelihood is that there would be a substantial shortfall in the overall budget to deliver the whole CPE project.

Agency and Service Level Agreement

- 1.11 Cambridgeshire County Council are the Highway Authority as defined in The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and have responsibility for all roads in the County of Cambridgeshire. The Highway Authority would need to apply to the

Department for Transport for a Civil/Special Enforcement Area Designation Order for the introduction CPE in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004. A first draft of the application has been undertaken by CCC and FDC officers but there are several areas that cannot be completed until decisions on the enforcement and administration providers have been reached.

- 1.12 For the County Council to discharge certain functions to FDC and to act as an agent to the County Council for the delivery of on-street enforcement and notice processing, an agency agreement needs to be formed. A service level agreement will form part of the agency agreement and define responsibility for things such as enforcement officer patrol requirements, PCN processing and appeals, sign and line maintenance, CPE surplus and deficit and CPE monitoring and reporting.
- 1.13 Both documents have been initially drafted by officers, however it is now essential that focussed member time is set aside to provide a steer to officers on the acceptability of various clauses prior to seeking legal advice. The detail within these agreements will impact on both the necessary resources needed to operate CPE and the annual revenue impact on FDC.
- 1.14 It is the view of officers that there are a number of potential red flags within the agreement centred around FDC becoming responsible for various functions on the highway network. These would include the administration of all parking suspensions, waivers, dispensations on the highway and the potential impact that future changes in legislation such as pavement parking would have on the number of enforcement officers that FDC would need to provide. Further concern is associated with the absence of a specific County Council budget for sign and line maintenance. Post CPE implementation this would have a huge impact on FDC enforcement officers potentially unable to carry out enforcement where defective signs and lines have been reported and not corrected within an agreed timeframe.

Off Street Parking Places Regulation Review

- 1.15 In preparation for the implementation of CPE, all FDC owned/managed Off-street public cars parks have been surveyed and layout plans produced in preparation for any signing and lining modifications. These will be necessary to ensure no waiting and short and long stay parking requirements are met.
- 1.16 Car Parks with existing Off-street parking place orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 shall be brought up in line within the requirements of CPE under the Traffic Management Act 2004, with new orders placed upon those sites currently without orders. A new district wide CPE Off-street parking places order has been drafted and FDC officers now require members input into the allocation of short and long stay facilities and maximum permitted parking periods for all FDC's off-street car parks.

Project Delivery Timeline

- 1.17 Due to delays associated with design work funding and the timeframe required to produce the design work packages, FDC put forward an extension of time

request to the CPCA for the CPE funding grant. Fortunately, FDC's request was approved, and the CPE implementation date revised to December 2025. It is recognised that a great deal of work has still yet to be completed by both organisations and there are several factors which could inadvertently result in project slippage.

- 1.18 The Department for Transport generally invites CPE applications for submission to the Secretary of State in April and October each year and the time taken for the DfT to consider and reach a decision is ordinarily around 6 months. Completion of the application would be dependent on a draft Agency Agreement and SLA being agreed by both organisations along with the enforcement and administrative model being known. Assuming all implementation costs are known and have been agreed it would be intended to put forward a CEA/SEA application in April or October 2024.

On and Off-Street Enforcement and Administration Costs

- 1.19 The FDC CPE feasibility study outlined several models for delivery of enforcement and administrative services for the implementation of CPE in Fenland. FDC officers have since explored potential external service provision with FDC's neighbouring local authorities with three organisations potentially able to offer both the administrative and enforcement services under a shared service provider contract. Progress on this aspect of the CPE project has been paused until the fundamentals between both organisations have been agreed.
- 1.20 Various CPE delivery models were looked at and considered during the CPE feasibility works undertaken in 2019. In the absence of FDC having its own internal parking or civil enforcement team the preferred and cheapest administration and enforcement service model was based on using external service providers. The estimated annual revenue deficit at the time was considered to be in the region of £50k per year. Since that time various global, and economic factors have impacted on material, fuel and wage increases and therefore it is predicted that this cost would have risen. These figures are currently being remodelled and the findings will be shared with the CPE project team as soon as this information becomes available.

Project Risks and Funding

- 1.21 The £400k grant funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is to be used to cover the FDC CPE capital set-up costs. Included within the capital costs is provision of £140k for any corrective sign and line works. The TRO survey works revealed an unusually large number of sign and line anomalies which has taken considerable CCC officer time to review and will have an impact on the corrective works cost. Progress has been slower than anticipated on preparing the design work packages but CCC have advised that the target cost for all four tranches will be known by September.
- 1.22 It is however predicted that the corrective works cost will be in the region of £507k which is well in excess of the overall project funding allocation of £400k

meaning a further £350k+ would then be required to deliver the remaining elements of the project.

- 1.23 Following receipt of the estimated sign and line corrective works in September, FDC could look to procure the works outside of the CCC framework contract, however preparation of such tender documentation along with the advertising period required is likely to take 3 to 4 months assuming resources are available. Delivery costs are anticipated to be lower but given the high level of sign and line corrective works required, the original budget provision is still predicted to be somewhat inadequate.
- 1.24 Until such time as the Agency Agreement and Service Level Agreement has been agreed by both organisations, the CEA/SEA application to the DfT would not be put forward by CCC as this could cause financial risk to both FDC and CCC. The application period takes at least 6 months and this needs to be taken into consideration in respect of the revised implementation date. The latest an application could be made is April 2025.

Liaison with Key Partners

- 1.25 Cambridgeshire County Council formally consulted all statutory consultees and partner organisations on the implementation of CPE within Fenland at the end of March 2022. Due to the lack of response received from some essential partner organisations, all consultees were given a further month to register their comments or objections. No objections were received, and the collective feedback will form part of the CEA/SEA DfT application.

SCDC, HDC CPE Progress

- 1.26 A draft application to the Department for Transport for a Civil/Special Enforcement Area Designation Order for the introduction of CPE in South Cambridgeshire District Council has been prepared and submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with SCDC. Implementation works are now at an advanced stage with the go live date soon approaching.
- 1.27 The On-street TRO survey works for HDC have been completed with all queries and anomalies forwarded to Cambridgeshire County Councils Policy and Regulation team for checking. An unusually large amount of sign and line defects were observed. It is understood that County Council officers have now completed reviewing the majority of the associated TRO queries to determine how best to rectify the inaccuracies. Work on the design work packages have commenced and using pro-rata rates from both SCDC and FDC, and the County Council have predicted that HDC's sign, and line corrective works costs are likely to rise to £950k.
- 1.28 HDC officers are considering if the corrective sign and line works could be delivered within their allocated budget if the works were procured outside of the CCC framework contract.
- 1.29 Huntingdonshire District Council have been working on a draft CPE agency and service level agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council following member

consultation. At this stage it is understood that little progress has been made on agreeing some of the red flag areas.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Note the progress being made by FDC and CCC in respect of moving the introduction of CPE forward.
- 2.2 Notes the predicted increase in budget in relation to the scheme and requests that further updates are brought forward as they become available and prior to a final decision being taken as to how this will be funded.
- 2.3 That the member/officer CPE project team meet to discuss and agree the draft agency agreement and service level agreement red flags.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 N/A

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The only alternative option is to continue as is now with the police carrying out any enforcement duties although this is not seen as a priority area of focus for the police. Additionally given the current non-compliant status of the vast majority of the districts' signs and lines enforcement in any guise is considered challenging at present.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

- 5.1 The legal implications so far as they are currently known are as set out within the main body to this report. Once a full review of the contractual documentation has taken place more detailed legal advice will be sought and provided to the working group.

Financial Implications

- 5.2 At present there are no new financial implications but unless further external funding is obtained there is likely to be a significant budget shortfall as described in paragraph 1.22 above.

Equality Implications

- 5.3 None.

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Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17th July 2023	
Report Title:	Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 At the Cabinet meeting held on 12th June 2023 Members considered a report titled “Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund” and agreed to recommend:
- Acceptance of £436k Rural England Shared Prosperity Funding (RESPF) from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for a two-year period commencing in 2023-24 and ending in 2024-25.
 - To delegate to Officers responsibility for approving and finalising with the CPCA the RESPF Grant Funding Agreement; and
 - To note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet for approval of the detailed proposals in relation to the projects, procedures and documentation associated with the onward administration of the funding.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to determine the legal, financial and governance arrangements in relation to the administration of the District Council’s RESPF allocation to include approval of the utilisation of the fund for 2023-24 and the associated processes, decision making structures and grant funding agreements.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 At the time of writing this report the final agreement from Government on the RESPF funding is still awaited and it is anticipated that this will be provided imminently. To reduce the risk of not drawing down the whole of the RESPF 2023-24 budget, decisions need to be made in advance of the final agreement about how the funding for 2023-24 will be utilised.
- 2.2 The allocation of RESPF for Fenland is £436k with £109k in 2023-24 and £327k in 2024-25. The investment priorities for RESPF are Business Growth and Community and Place. Given the relatively limited funds and time available for delivery the focus will be on business growth in 2023-24.
- 2.3 To note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet for approval of the RESPF programme for 2024-25.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider and agree for 2023-24 that the RESPF monies should be allocated exclusively for business growth purposes. The split of the

2024-25 RESPF to be allocated between business growth and community and place and will be determined at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Ian Benney
Report Originator(s)	Anna Goodall, Assistant Director Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Background Papers	Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 As reported to Members on the 12th of June Cabinet meeting, the Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund (RESPF) builds on, and is complementary to, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The RESPF is a top-up to the UKSPF and is available only to eligible local authorities in England.
- 1.2 The RESPF objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities for:
- Business Growth
 - Community and Place
- 1.3 The RESPF provides capital funding to:
- Support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams.
 - Support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.
- 1.4 The Government has allocated £3.2m RESPF for the four rural districts of Cambridgeshire over a two-year period commencing 2023/24. The Government allocation for Fenland is £436k with £109k in 2023/24 and £327k in 2024/25. The allocation is determined nationally by Government is based on factors developed in line with the scheme objectives including the size of rural populations.
- 1.5 The RESPF in Fenland covers all of the District with the exception of Wisbech which is classed a non-rural urban location.
- 1.6 The Government's allocation for Fenland of £109k in 2023-24 means that there are relatively limited funds available to deliver projects in the investment priorities of Business Growth and Community and Place.
- 1.7 The final agreement from Government on the RESPF funding is still awaited and it is anticipated that this will be provided imminently. To reduce the risk of not utilising the whole of the RESPF 2023-24 budget decisions need to be made about how the funding for 2023-24 will be utilised before the final agreement is received.
- 1.8 An assessment has been made by Council officers in terms of which of the investment priorities could have projects that can make the most effective use of the relatively limited funds available and deliver before the end of the 2023-24 financial year. This assessment is summarised as:
- Community and Place

1. Active travel schemes (along with any other transport schemes) are mostly very complex and very expensive. There are various schemes that could be supported but they all fall into the complex and expensive. Moreover, one active travel scheme of any reasonable size could easily take the whole of the RESPF £436k budget.

2. From a community's perspective, for many of the potential RESPF community opportunities the mobilisation of this work would be complicated from a resourcing and potentially a governance/procurement perspective and present a significant risk that they would not be implementable in 2023-24.

Business Growth

1. The Council has a track record in the effective engagement with Fenland businesses and over the last three years the Council's Economic Growth Team has built a business database of over 2,500 businesses.

1.9 Based upon this assessment, the recommendation is that the Council allocates the whole of the 2023-24 RESPF of £109k to the Business Growth priority investment. This would comprise a single project providing capital grants to rural businesses. Officers are confident that such a grant scheme could become operational quickly and utilise all the 2023-24 RESPF allocation.

1.91 The key elements of a RESPF Business Growth Grant Scheme will be:

- A maximum grant of up to £5k per business.
- Businesses will need to contribute a minimum of 50% towards the total cost of the project.
- Only businesses with between 3 and 20 employees will be eligible.
- Only businesses located within the defined Fenland RESPF area.
- Capital grants will be available for businesses to promote business growth and for the purchase of for example capital equipment, expansion of business premises and so on.

1.92 The criteria used in assessing applications for RESPF will include:

- Projects that create and sustain rural jobs.
- The diversification of income streams.
- Certain types of rural businesses will receive priority including farming and tourism business.

1.93 The RESPF Business Grant Scheme will be delivered by the Council's Economic Growth Team. The grant decision making process will be advised by the North Cambridgeshire Place Development Board (PDB). The PDB is comprised of representatives from the local business community with the Council represented by the Leader and Chief Executive. The final decision on whether to support an application will be made by the Council's RESPF Grants Team consisting of Officers from Finance, Audit, Communications and Economic Growth.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The reason for the recommendation is to gain Cabinet approval that for 2023-24 the RESPF monies should be allocated exclusively for business growth purposes. The split of the 2024-25 RESPF to be allocated between business growth and community and place and will be determined at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Engagement with partners such as Cambridgeshire Acre, CPCA Growth Works, Growth HUB and the Start & Grow pilot has enabled external views and policies to be incorporated into the RESPF Business Growth Grant project.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 An alternative option would be not involving the PDB in the process. The PDB is made up of representatives from the Fenland business community will bring expertise and experience in evaluating private sector business investments and will help to ensure the most effective use of the business sector RESPF grant funding. This breadth of experience and expertise is not available within the Council.
- 4.2 Another option might be that the final decision is taken by a member or members rather than the Council's RESPF Grants Team. The final decision on grant applications is an operational rather than strategic decision. The Leader of the Council sits on the PDB and contribute to its recommendations as to whether to support or otherwise each application.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.1.1 Authority has been given for Fenland District Council to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the CPCA who are passporting RESPF central government funding from DLUHC/DEFRA. In order now for the Council to distribute the funding to the intended recipients and in accordance with its bid, further governance is required.
- 5.1.2 In relation to the allocation of funding connected with RESPF Business Growth Grant Scheme, it is important for the Council to ensure that a fair and proportionate process is in place to assist with the determination of applications. The process for undertaking initial and full assessments of those applications received is as set out in this report. Recommendations will then be made by the EGT and PDB before a final decision is taken by the RESPF Grants Team which will be comprised of officers who have had no prior involvement in the process, An appeal mechanism will exist where again, decisions will be taken by officers who have had no prior involvement and are of greater seniority than the original decision maker(s) seeking input from members where necessary. This is consistent with ordinary and fair decision-making processes and will be supplemented and supported with detailed information for applicants about the

scheme; what the criteria are, how the decision will be made and by whom and how their data will be processed, shared and stored. Information sharing, conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements/policies will be drawn up with the PDB and each successful applicant will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement to receive the monies. This will ensure that the applicant understand what is expected of them upon receipt of the funding, for officers to be able to undertake periodic reviews and ultimately for the Council to clawback the monies in the very unlikely event the need to do so arises. Decisions relating to this scheme will be published in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations and having regard to any exemptions which may exist. Subsidy control will be assessed and documented on each occasion to safeguard the Council's interests and in compliance with its obligations under the CPCA GFA.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 It is currently being assumed that there will be no carry over of the RESPF funds allocated for 2023-24 into 2024-25. The Economic Growth Team are aware of this risk and have undertaken mitigating actions.

5.3 Equality Implications

- 5.3.1 The Business Growth Grant Scheme and services have been assessed to ensure equality of access, etc.

6 SCHEDULES


Schedule One – RESPF Business Grant Fund Scheme

Schedule One – RESPF Business Grant Fund Scheme

1. The RESPF Business Grant Fund Scheme will provide access to pump-priming grant funding in Fenland for rural businesses to enable them to drive local economic growth, productivity, R&D, energy saving, business innovation and skills development to secure access to market opportunities and boost long-term skilled employment.
2. The project will support existing rural businesses with more than 3 and fewer than 20 employees.
3. The project will be managed by the District Council's Economic Growth Team (EGT) ensuring quick mobilisation of the project. The EGT has an extensive programme of engagement with Fenland businesses including one to one support for over 40 businesses per year.
4. Rural businesses will submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form to the EGT for consideration. Once assessed using a standardised scoring process those applicants that exceed the scoring threshold will be invited to complete the full grant application form and will receive support to complete the form from the EGT.
5. Those businesses invited to complete a Full Application Form submitted into the EGT will be assessed and scored. Each Application Form will be supported by an Officer fully funded by the UKSPF Shared Prosperity Fund who will also ensure due diligence, supporting evidence has been provided, subsidy control has been reviewed, etc.
6. The grant decision making process will be advised by the North Cambridgeshire Place Development Board (PDB). The PDB is comprised of representatives from the local business community with the Council represented by the Leader and Chief Executive. The final decision on whether to support an application will be made by the Council's RESPF Grants Team consisting of Officers from Finance, Audit, Communications and Economic Growth.
7. A council cannot contract out its decision making to another body unless it is permitted by the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act. The decision on whether to support an application will be made by the Council's RESPF Grants Team consisting of Officers from Finance, Audit and the Economic Growth Team. Decisions relating to the allocation of funding will be published on the Council's website in line with transparency requirements and the associated exemptions under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
8. As the PDB will have access to information about businesses that have applied for an RESPF grant including potentially commercially sensitive data. The members of the PDB will be required to declare any conflicts of interest with any applicant business before the application is considered by the PDB. All applicants will be made aware of who comprises the PDB and what the application process is so that they can equally flag any potential concerns to the Council before their data is shared. The application pack will include a

privacy statement to ensure we are compliant with GDPR, transparent and how the data will be shared with others to assess and determine the application.

9. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they can request a review of the decision. The review will be undertaken by a group of Council officers, including the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (s151 officer) and the Monitoring Officer. This officer group may wish to consult with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Portfolio Holder for Finance on any complex decisions.
10. Grant requests up to a maximum of £5,000 will be considered. The requirement for a private sector match of at least 50% increases ownership by the applicant and increases the return on investment for the project.

Agenda Item No:	10	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17 July 2023	
Report Title:	Draft Consultation Statement of Community Involvement	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 Every 5 years the Council is required to update the Statement of Community Involvement for the planning service. An updated document has been prepared (Appendix 1) and Cabinet is requested to consider its content and approve it for public consultation.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The existing document was not found in need of any major changes as it complies with current legislation. Consequently, the changes being proposed are minor in nature.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Statement of Community Involvement for the purposes of public consultation.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/14JUN23/01
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Dee Laws (Portfolio Holder for Planning)
Report Originator(s)	Nick Harding – Head of Planning
Contact Officer(s)	Nick Harding – Head of Planning
Background Papers	Current Adopted Statement of Community Involvement

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Council is obligated to update its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) every 5 years. The Statement provides information about how the Council will consult on planning and related matters such as: planning applications, the emerging local plan and neighbourhood plans. The existing SCI was adopted in July 2018 and so a review is now due. The draft, if approved by Cabinet will be subject to public consultation. The results of the consultation will be brought back to Cabinet with a report which may identify revisions to the SCI and recommend its adoption.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Planning is all about creating successful places that enable people to live healthier, more prosperous, and better-connected lives. It's also about supporting local businesses and making sure that the things that make our places special are protected. Planning decisions can be small in scale like an extension to your home or nationally significant like utilities upgrades and everything in-between. Planning genuinely affects everyone who lives, works, and visits in a place. So, it is important that local communities and stakeholders are aware of and can participate in the planning process and be involved in planning decisions.
- 2.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council will engage and consult with the local community and other stakeholders on planning matters. It explains the key stages and provides information on how and when the local community and other stakeholders can get involved in the preparation of planning documents and in planning application decisions.
- 2.3 The existing SCI is some 5 years old, and it has been reviewed to see if there are any elements that have become out of date as a consequence of legislative changes. Whilst the need for change in relation to this has not been identified, it has been noted that the document would benefit from:
- a) The insertion of web links to where people can view planning application, appeal and enforcement information.
 - b) Clarification that the neighbour consultation arrangements as stated in the document relate only to planning applications and no other types of application which are not subject to public consultation e.g., EIA screening opinions or which are subject to prescribed consultation arrangements e.g., householder prior notification applications.²
 - c) Stating that we do not consult on pre-applications.

And so, these changes have been made to the document.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 There will be a 6-week consultation period (as required by the legislation) and will be publicised not least through:
- a) Notification to all Town & Parish Councils
 - b) Notification to developers & agents that attend the developer / agent Forum.
 - c) The consultation page of the Council web site

The outcomes of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet in due course.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The only alternative would be to not review the existing SCI, but this would result in the Council failing to meet its obligation. This option should, therefore, be ruled out.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.2 The current system of plan making is contained in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and supported by the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. The Authority has a statutory duty pursuant to Section 18 of the PCPA 2004 to prepare a statement of community involvement which is a local development document that sets out the authority's policies on giving advice and guidance for neighbourhood planning and on how it will involve those persons with an interest in matters relating to development in their area on the preparation of specified planning documents.

- 5.3 An up-to-date SCI is required to minimise the risk of legal challenge when preparing the Local Plan. The Local Plan has an impact on the delivery of all the Council's corporate objectives. A current SCI will also reduce the risk of a successful Ombudsman case against the Council.

5.4 Financial Implications

- 5.5 There are no direct financial implications associated with the content of this report other than staff time being taken to produce the document and manage the publicity process.

5.6 Equality Implications

- 5.7 The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The Statement of Community Involvement will be

subject to public consultation the community will have the opportunity to be involved in helping to shape the future planning and development of the district both through plan-making and the consideration of development proposals.

6 SCHEDULES

Adopted Statement of Community Involvement - [Statement of Community Involvement - Fenland District Council](#)

Appendix 1 - Consultation Draft Statement of Community Involvement

fax

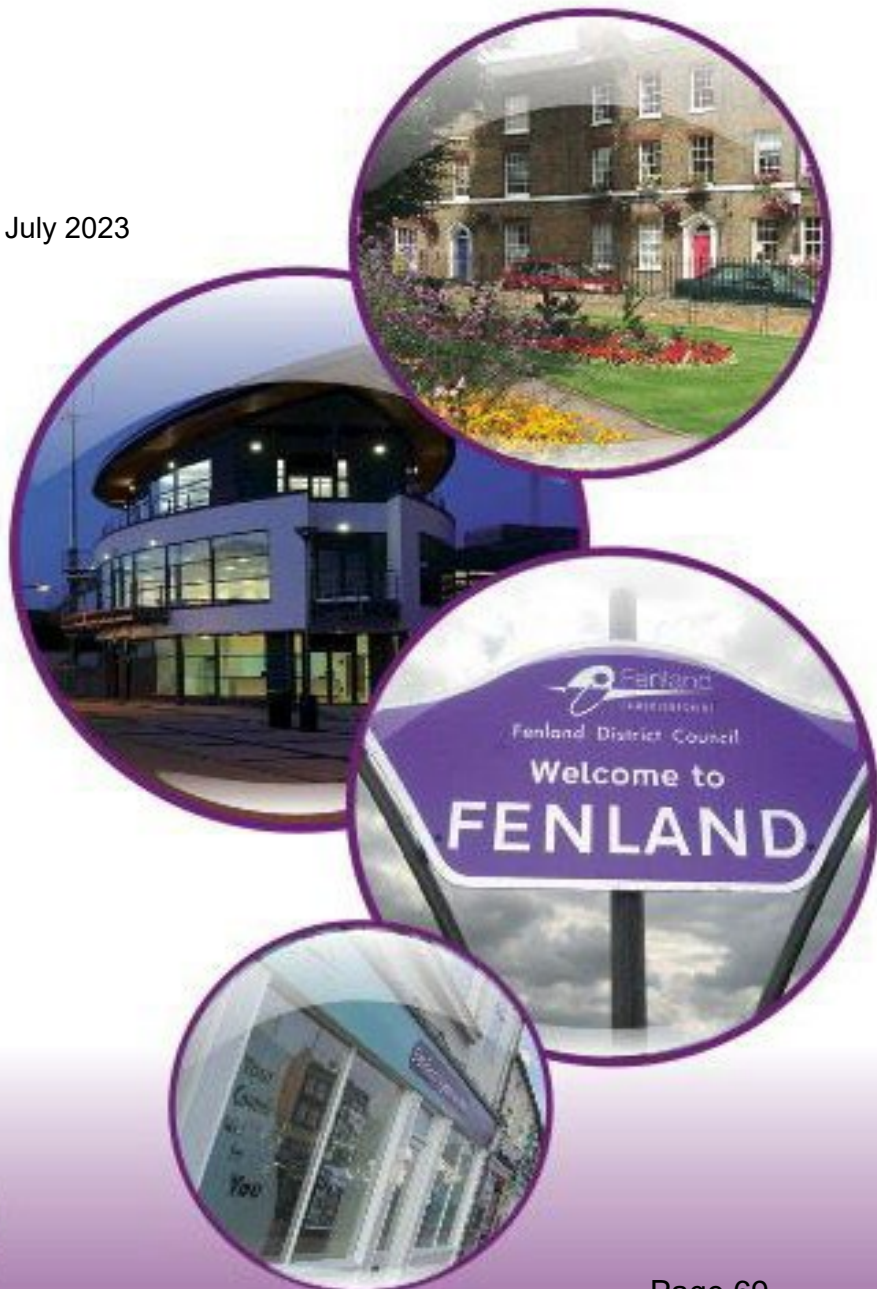
DRAFT Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

A guide as to how we will:

- *consult you on Planning Applications;*
- *consult you on emerging Planning Policy; and*
- *assist you with Neighbourhood Planning*

July 2023

This document was presented to Cabinet in July 2023
For approval for public consultation



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Part 1: Introduction

Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how Fenland District Council ('the Council') will involve and consult with the public and wider stakeholders when planning for the future of the district. Whilst government sets out minimum requirements for public consultation on planning matters, this SCI sets out the Council's additional local commitments to consultation. The SCI will also compliment the Council's Consultation Strategy, which is committed to involving local people in shaping their area and the services they receive.

This SCI covers:

- Consultation arrangement in respect of Planning Applications;
- Consultation arrangements in respect of planning policy matters (such as a new Local Plan); and
- Arrangements for community involvement in, and the requirements of, the Neighbourhood Planning process, including how the Council will assist in the preparation of neighbourhood planning matters.

The commitments set out in this document are binding on the Council, unless national legislation states otherwise.

What is planning?

Most new buildings, certain changes to existing buildings (including their use) or significant changes to the local environment need consent – known as planning permission.

Fenland District Council, as your local planning authority, is responsible for deciding whether a development - anything from an extension on a house to a new shopping centre – should go ahead. In determining planning applications, regard must be had to the planning policies which have been adopted for the area (for example, a Local Plan, a Neighbourhood Plan or a Supplementary Planning Document).

How to get involved

There are a number of ways that you can get involved in the planning decisions affecting you and your community. The main ways that you can get involved are:

- Having your say during public consultation periods for planning policy documents (such as a Local Plan);
- Having your say on planning applications affecting your community;
- Reporting planning control breaches (such as a neighbour building a large extension to their home without planning consent);
- Commenting on appeals relating to applications that have been refused by the Council; and
- Preparing your own plans and policies for your local area under the Neighbourhood Planning rules.

Please note that this SCI was written based on the Council's understanding of national legislation that existed as at June 2023. Should national legislation change, there may be elements in this SCI which no longer apply. The Council will endeavour to update this SCI as soon as possible after significant national legislation change.

Part 2: Consultation Commitments on Planning Applications

Step 1: The Pre-Application Stage

What needs planning permission?

Most kinds of development require planning permission; however, there are a number of circumstances where certain types of development are automatically permitted. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) contains a number of 'blanket permissions' for a variety of different works.

If your proposed development falls within what is termed 'permitted development' you will not need to apply for formal planning permission to carry out the works. Permitted development rights are often subject to compliance with standard conditions. It is the owner/developer's responsibility to check and comply with these conditions.

Some developments are subject to a system of 'prior approval' of details. Prior approval means that the proposed development is 'in principle' permitted development. The Council can consider whether prior approval of certain details is required in advance of a formal decision being issued. Following an application, if no information is requested by the Council within fixed timescales, the application is approved. For certain types of prior approval, the Council will notify occupiers of neighbouring properties and allow them to submit comments.

The Council's pre-application advice service

Pre-application is the phase before a developer formally submits a planning application. Discussions with the Council at this stage are recommended as they can ensure that future development enhances the built and natural environment whilst potentially speeding up the formal planning application process. Further information relating to the pre-application stage is available on the Council's website: <http://www.fenland.gov.uk/planningpreapplication>. The Council does not consult the community on the pre-application applications it receives.

Developer pre-application consultation with the community

Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011¹ introduced a duty for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. This duty is in force for only certain applications.

However, even if not compulsory, the Council would encourage applicants to engage in pre application consultation with the local community so they may raise issues with and make suggestions to the developer. This might reduce local opposition, increase the chances of a timely and positive decision from the planning authority and improve the resulting quality of development.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/122/enacted>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/2931/made>

Step 2: Planning Application Process

Community consultation on planning applications

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that at any time before a decision is made on a planning application, stakeholders and the local community should have the opportunity to comment on any aspect of the proposal. The level and extent of consultation will vary depending on the size, scale, location and nature of the proposed development.

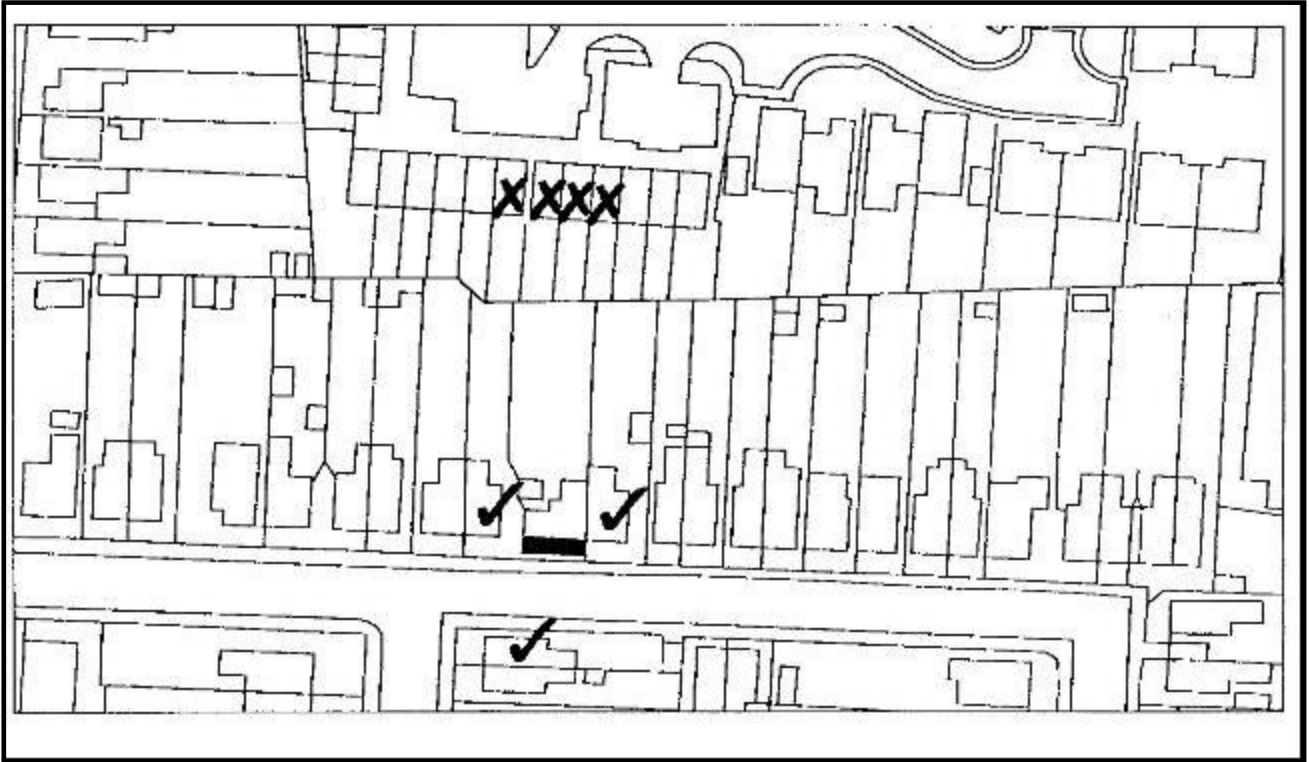
Consultation on planning applications will take place with both statutory and non-statutory consultees. Who is consulted on each individual application will depend on the nature of the proposal and its location. All consultees have 21 days from the issue of the consultation notice to make comments on the application (extended as appropriate where the period extends over public or bank holidays). However, some bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment where this is prescribed by legislation. The minimum statutory requirements are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

How the Council consults on planning applications is set out below:

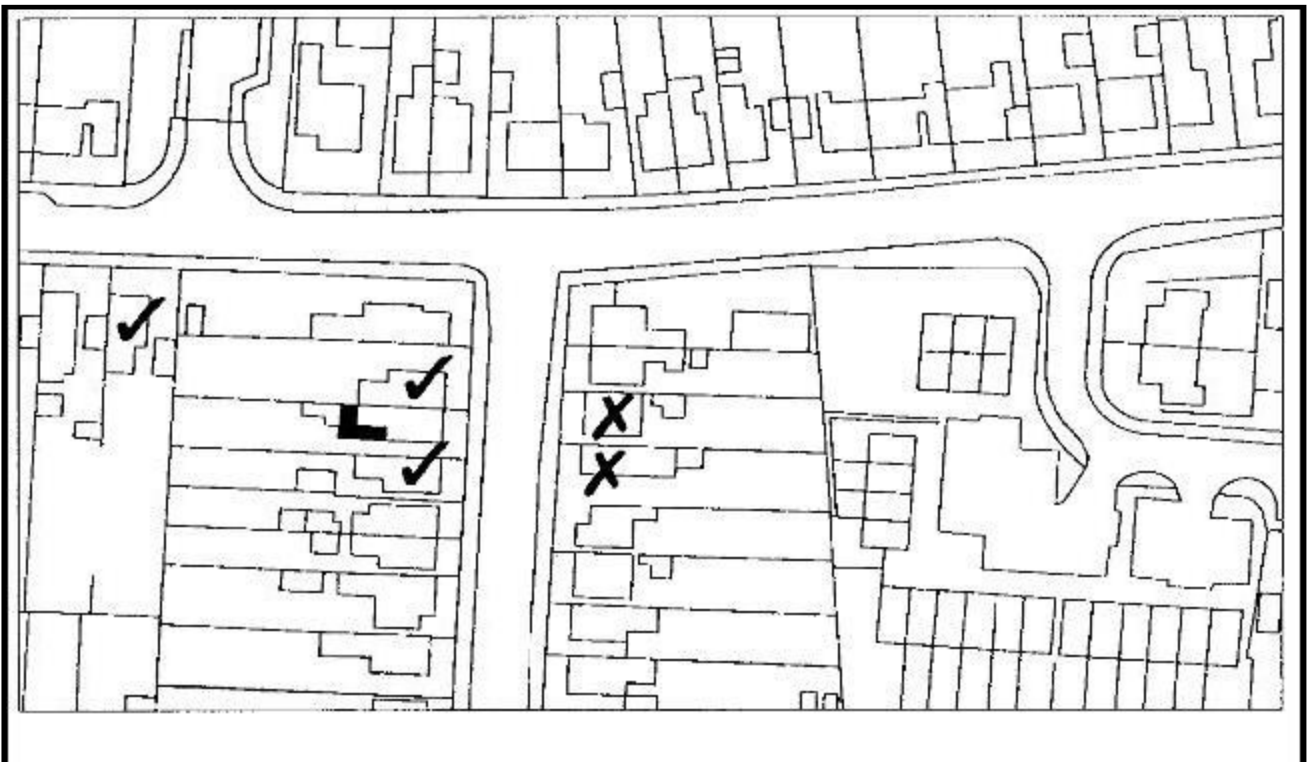
Development type/size	Fenland District Council consultation commitments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major developments (residential sites of either 10 dwellings or more, or 0.5 hectares or more, or commercial developments of 1000 sq. meters or more in floor space or one hectare or more); • Applications subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); • Work affecting listed buildings or conservation areas; • Applications affecting public rights of way, bridleways or byways. 	<p>Newspaper notice, site notice and neighbour letters</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other developments 	<p>Neighbour letters and sometimes site notice where neighbours cannot all be identified</p>

To help illustrate how we will fulfil the ‘neighbour consultation’, please see the two illustrations overleaf. Where a site has a road frontage, occupants of properties immediately opposite will only be consulted and notified when the development entails new building operations which would be visible from the property opposite, changes to the external appearance of buildings visible from the property opposite, changes of use, or the formation of a new vehicular access on to the road between the application site and the property opposite (see diagram ‘Road Frontage Consultation’). Where a site has a common boundary with properties whose occupants would not be able to view the proposals, occupants of those properties will only be notified when the development entails a change of use (see diagram ‘Common Boundary Consultation’).

Road Frontage Consultation



Common Boundary Consultation



Please note that the above does not apply to certain applications the Council receives (these are not actually classed as planning applications, including, but not exclusively householder prior notification applications, certificate applications and EIA screen and scoping applications).

Planning applications can be viewed online using the Council’s Public Access system, available on our website [Simple Search \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://fenland.gov.uk). Using the system, it is possible to search for, view and comment on planning applications. It is also possible to track the progress of an application using the system. Customers may also use it to receive automatic notifications of applications in the area that is of interest to them.

Once a valid application has been received, we aim to provide a decision within 13 weeks if it is a major planning application or within 8 weeks if it is an application for minor or other development. Applications for development subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment have a longer time within which we aim to provide a decision at 16 weeks. We will determine planning applications as soon as is possible after the 21 day consultation period has ended.

All comments on planning applications must be submitted in writing (letters and emails) to the Council within the specified 21 day consultation period. All such communications received are placed on the planning file which is available for public inspection. They cannot be treated as confidential.

Consultation on amended planning applications

Sometimes the applicant will make a change to the development proposal to overcome particular issues. We will consult on these changes as set out below:

Level of change	Re-consultation
Where the change is insignificant and would not impact on neighbours	No re-consultation will be undertaken
Where the change significantly alters the appearance or layout of the proposal and would be of interest to neighbours/ community groups	Notification letter sent giving a minimum 14 days for comment. A revised site notice and press article will be displayed for significant alterations, or for major/ EIA/ conservation area/ listed building/ right of way applications.

Occasionally developers may wish to make amendments to a development that has already been granted planning permission. Where the proposed change is minor and classed as a ‘non-material amendment’, no consultation will be undertaken. Where the amendments are more significant and are classed as a ‘material amendment’, re-consultation will take place, as set out under consultation commitments above. Applications to delete or vary a condition attached to the permission will also be re-consulted on as set out under the consultation commitments.

Who makes the decision on planning applications?

The Council receives approximately 1,200 planning and related applications a year. The decision on the majority of these applications is delegated to Officers in accordance with the details set out in the district council’s Scheme of Delegation and its Standing Orders. Generally speaking, the more minor a proposal, the more likely it is delegated to Officers to decide the application.

The Planning Committee is, at the time of adopting this SCI, made up of 7 councillors. The councillors have the task of deciding planning applications in accordance with planning policy unless material considerations dictate otherwise. Generally speaking the Committee considers only the larger applications, those that are contrary to policy or subject to significant local interest. There are

opportunities for objectors, applicants and others to speak at the Committee meeting before a decision is made.

The planning officer's report, setting out all the planning issues and representations made, is made available a week before the Committee meeting and will make a recommendation to Planning Committee stating whether or not an application should be approved, having been considered against the Local Plan and any material considerations.

Reporting on decisions

The results of consultation on planning applications will be taken into account during the decision making process. Progress of planning applications, and the decisions made, can be tracked on the 'Public Access' system on the planning pages on the Council's website.

Planning appeals

If the person who applied for planning permission does not like the decision that the Council has made on their application (e.g. planning permission refused, or onerous condition applied to a planning permission), they may lodge an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate. No one else has the right to appeal the decision (for example, you cannot appeal a decision if your neighbour gets approval for an extension you objected to) other than by way of a judicial review to the High Court.

When a decision has been appealed against, the Council informs all parties who objected during the application stage that an appeal has been lodged. All copies of letters and comments received during the original application stage are forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate.

If an application is then approved by the Planning Inspectorate, the only recourse available to third parties would be to apply for judicial review of the decision to the High Court. This is an extremely rare event.

You can view / search appeals via the Public Access system on our web site [Simple Search \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://www.fenland.gov.uk). Please use the Advance tab and select Appeals. You can then view the original refused planning application by viewing the Related Cases tab.

Step 4: Enforcement

Community involvement in planning enforcement

Planning Enforcement (also known as Planning Compliance) describes the processes involved in ensuring that people comply with planning law and the requirements of a planning permission. The process involves no formal public consultation, as most investigations are confidential. The majority of cases come about from referral by members of the public, councillors or planning officers. Whilst there is no public consultation on a compliance case, the Council will ensure that the complainant is informed of the outcome of our investigations.

A complaint can be made in respect of a development or advertisement that is occurring without planning permission; without complying with conditions that have been attached to a permission; or that is not in accordance with an approved plan. There is an electronic form on the district council's website for reporting what you think is a planning breach, alternatively please email planningenforcement@fenland.gov.

If, following investigation, it is necessary to serve a formal notice (e.g. Stop Notice, Enforcement Notice or Breach of Condition Notice) it will be placed on the public enforcement register of notices.

This register can be viewed via Public Access on our web site [Simple Search \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://fenland.gov.uk)
(please use the Advanced tab).

Part 3: Consultation Commitments on Planning Policy

Introduction to Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains that the Local Plan (sometimes referred to as a 'Development Plan Document' or, in the future, it may be referred to as a 'Strategic Plan') is a plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the local community.

The primary purpose of a Local Plan is to:

- set the vision for how the local area will grow and change;
- set policies for use by developers when preparing their proposals; and
- be the key reference tool by decision makers (Officers, Councillors or Planning Inspectors) when determining applications for planning permission.

The Local Plan deals with planning issues across the whole Council area, and makes the big decisions on the location of housing, employment and roads, for example.

At the time of writing, Fenland's latest adopted Local Plan is dated May 2014.

Should any joint plan be undertaken which covers the Fenland District Council area, then the provisions of this Statement of Community Involvement will equally apply to a joint plan as to the district wide Local Plan.

There are other planning policy related documents which the Council produces (or local communities, in the case of Neighbourhood Plans), with the main ones as explained below:

- The **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**, will, when a new Local Plan is to be produced, set out the timetable for its production.
- **Policies Map**: This is a map on an Ordnance Survey base for the whole of a local planning authority's area which shows where policies in the Local Plan and any Neighbourhood Plans apply. The Policies Map includes inset maps for particular areas to show information at a larger scale. The Policies Map is updated each time that a Local Plan (including a Minerals and Waste Plan produced by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council) or Neighbourhood Plan is adopted.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**: These can cover a wide range of issues on which the planning authority wishes to provide guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in its Local Plan. They do not form part of the statutory development plan and are not subject to independent examination. The district council can decide to produce an SPD on any appropriate subject whenever the need arises, or it might be produced by another body e.g. the County Council.
- **Neighbourhood Plans**: Parish and Town Councils can now prepare Neighbourhood Plans (NPs), putting in place policies to guide the future development of the area. Any NP must be in general conformity with 'strategic policies' in the Local Plan and with national policy. It is up to local Parish and Town Councils to decide if it wants to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. Any NP, if 'made' (i.e. adopted by the District Council) has the same status as a Local Plan for decision making.
- **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**, i.e. this document.
- **Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR)**: This is a report which must be produced by the local planning authority (on an annual basis) to explain how the LDS is being implemented and the extent to which policies in the Local Plan are being achieved.

Who will we consult on an emerging Local Plan?

When producing a Local Plan there are a number of groups that the Council must consult with. These are identified as ‘specific consultation bodies’ and include:

- Parish Councils;
- Neighbouring authorities; and
- Relevant government agencies.

In addition, there are also a number of ‘general consultation bodies’ who the Council may consult with if it is considered relevant to the document that is being prepared. These include:

- Voluntary bodies, some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the district council’s area;
- Voluntary bodies which represent the interests of :
 - Different racial, ethnic or national groups in the district council’s area
 - Different religious groups in the district council’s area
 - Disabled people in the district council’s area
 - People carrying on business in the district council’s area

There are also people and organisations that the Council considers it important to consult with, for example, residents, land owners, businesses, planning consultants, solicitors etc. Where requests have been made we will also consult directly with these people and organisations.

Although those identified above will be specifically contacted during the preparation of Local Plan documents, any individual, business, organisation or group is welcome to submit comments during consultation periods.

When we will consult

There are a number of stages in the plan preparation process where it is possible for the public, businesses and the consultation bodies identified above to become involved and make comments. The main stages of preparation and consultation are set out below.

Is it worth adding another row: Call for Sites exercise (after Retgf 18) along these lines?

Set out of the plan preparation there may be a

<p>Public participation (Regulation 18)</p>	<p>During the first stage of public involvement the Council will, as a minimum, contact the ‘specific’ and ‘general’ consultation bodies as appropriate to inform them of the commencement of the plan preparation process, and invite representations on the scope and content of the plan. This may include a call for sites exercise for landowners wishing to promote sites and applications from any person or body for Local Green Space designation. There will be a minimum period of 6 weeks for comments to be made. Following this first stage of consultation, the Council may undertake one or more further 6 week consultations on either more detailed options for the content of the plan or on a revised draft of the Plan. This will inform later stages of the plan preparation.</p>
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<p>Pre-submission publication (Regulation 19)</p>	<p>Following the consideration of all comments received at the above stage, a draft plan will be produced, known as the pre-submission or proposed-submission document. On publication of this document, all of the specific and general consultation bodies and any members of the public, businesses, land owners etc who made comments at the previous stage of consultation will (unless we are advised otherwise, and subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations) be notified that the pre-submission documents are available for inspection. A statement of representation procedure will be available alongside the notification of pre-submission documents. In addition, any individual, business or organisation can submit comments during the consultation period, even if they did not make comments at the</p>
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	earlier stage. All comments must be received within the stated consultation period, which will be a minimum of 6 weeks.
Submission (Regulation 22)	The Council submits the Local Plan to the Secretary of State together with the representations received at the Regulation 19 stage. This is not a stage for further public comments to be made.
Independent Examination Hearing	The submitted document, and the representations received, will be considered by a Planning Inspector at an independent examination. Those individuals and organisations who have made representations may be invited by the inspector to submit a written statement during the examination. Individuals and organisations who made an objection to the document and have requested to speak at the examination will be contacted by the Inspector to be informed of the procedure for being heard.
Inspector’s Report	The Council will notify all those who have requested to be notified, as soon as reasonably practicable following the receipt of the Inspector’s Report. The report will also be made available on the Council’s website.
Adoption of the DPD (Local Plan)	<p>Assuming that the Inspector concludes that the document is sound, either with or without modifications, the Council will consider whether to adopt the Local Plan. On adoption, the Council will prepare a statement setting out the date of adoption, the modifications (if any) and where and when the adopted documents can be inspected. The opportunity to apply for judicial review will also be explained.</p> <p>The adoption documents will be made available on the Council’s website, and also at the locations where the submission documents were made available. The adoption statement will also be sent to any person who has requested to be notified, and (unless we are advised otherwise, and subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations) to all those who made representations on the Regulation 19 document.</p>

How we will consult

At the commencement of consultation periods, the identified specific and general consultation bodies that we have to consult with, as well as any individuals, organisations or bodies who have requested to be notified or whom we think might be interested (subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations), will be contacted directly either in writing or via email.

All consultation and submission documents will be made available on our website (www.fenland.gov.uk) and paper or electronic copies will be available to view at local libraries. ~~the main Council office.~~ If appropriate, additional paper copies of some of the documents may be made available to view at other locations. In addition to this, we may, if appropriate and cost effective, use other methods of consultation such as press releases, community events and meetings.

During all consultations it will be possible to make comments in writing, or electronically via email or, if available, an online consultation portal. Verbal comments will not be recorded.

Consultation Arrangement for Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) can be produced to supplement and add further detail to policies within the Local Plan. They may provide further guidance for development on specific sites or issues such as design.

When preparing an SPD, any individual, business or organisation can take part in the public consultation stage(s). If the Council believes that there are specific individuals, businesses or organisations that will have a particular interest in an SPD, they will be invited to make comments (subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations).

We will invite comments on the draft version of any SPD that is produced. The consultation period will be a minimum of 4 weeks.

At the commencement of the consultation period, the draft SPD will be made available on the Council's website and at local libraries. If appropriate, additional paper copies of documents may be made available to view at other locations.

During all consultations it will be possible to make comments in writing, or electronically via email.

Following its adoption, the SPD will be made available on our website and at local libraries.

Part 4: Neighbourhood Planning

Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced through the Localism Act in 2011. It enables parish councils and (for those locations where a parish council does not exist) communities to develop a planning strategy for their local area to be used in making decisions on relevant planning applications.

By virtue of Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, subsection 2(B), this SCI must set out the Council's policies for giving advice or assistance on Neighbourhood Planning. For the purpose of this SCI, reference is made to a 'neighbourhood plan', though if a parish or town council is interested in preparing a considerably rarer 'neighbourhood development order' then the provisions set out in this SCI for neighbourhood plans equally apply.

A neighbourhood plan can include policies on the development and use of land, however they cannot be used to propose a lower level of growth than that proposed within local authority planning policies.

Importantly neighbourhood plans are required to meet a number of 'basic conditions', which are that the plan must:

- Have appropriate regard to national policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area; and
- Not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations.

This Part 4 of the SCI has been produced to set out the key stages in undertaking a neighbourhood plan and to clarify what can be expected from the Council at each stage. More detailed independent advice on neighbourhood planning is available via the internet, such as <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>.

Formal stages of neighbourhood planning

When preparing a neighbourhood plan there are a number of formal stages that are required by legislation to be undertaken. These stages are set out below and indicate what you should do and what you can expect from the Council at each stage.

Stage 1: Neighbourhood Area Designation

In order to produce a neighbourhood plan, the applicable area must be formally designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. A Neighbourhood Area is the geographic area that your plan will cover.

A Neighbourhood Area normally matches the boundary of the applicable parish area. However, it could be just part of a parish area or it could cover more than one parish area, but, if it does so, it should be supported by all parish councils. If more than one parish council is proposing a joint plan we would suggest making a joint application with one parish taking the lead as the 'qualifying body'.

An application for designation as a Neighbourhood Area will need to confirm that the organisation making the application is the parish or town council, stating why the proposed area is appropriate, and must be accompanied by a map clearly showing the area being applied for (FDC can provide a PDF map if needed). An application form is available on the website <http://www.fenland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>.

When submitted, the Council will validate the application by checking that all of the necessary information is provided. If the application is not valid you will be contacted by a planning officer to discuss the reasons and offer advice on the next steps.

Once validated, if the application is made by a Town or Parish Council for the whole of their area, no consultation is required and the Council must designate the area.

If the application is not for the whole of a Town or Parish Council's area, or is for more than one parish area, the Council will publicise notice of the application, and consult on the application for a period of 6 weeks.

Representations will be considered by the Council and a decision will be made on whether to approve the Neighbourhood Area.

With all applications, the Council will also decide whether to also designate the area as a Business Area: this will only be the case where the area is wholly or predominantly business in nature.

What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 1

We will aim to validate your application or notify you of any problems within 10 working days.

Where an application is by a Town or Parish Council for the whole of their area the Council must designate the area. The Council will aim to do this within 5 working days of the application being validated.

If consultation is required, we will publish your application on the District Council's website and advertise as necessary in at least one of the following (provided one of these exist): local library; community centre; parish/town council building and/or local notice board, for the consultation period with details of how long the consultation will run and how to make representations.

We will make a decision on whether the area should be designated:-

- Where an area falls within the areas of two or more local planning authorities – 20 weeks from first being publicised;
- For all other areas – 13 weeks from first being publicised.

If these timescales are missed, the default decision is that the area applied for is designated.

We will publicise the decision on whether or not to designate the neighbourhood area on our website.

Stage 2: Produce your neighbourhood plan

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to producing a neighbourhood plan. Each plan will be produced according to the intended content and the nature of the area. It is important to be realistic about the amount of resources and time you can put into the plan.

Effective consultation and engagement is particularly important as it is the community who will ultimately vote on whether the plan should be adopted by Fenland District Council (see Stage 6).

The Council sets out below how it will assist at this stage, as a minimum.

This list is not exhaustive, however assistance will be limited to resources available at a given time, and so it is recommended that you should develop a clear project plan to plan for when you

anticipate needing assistance from the Council. It is important to note that the District Council's duty to support does not extend to financial assistance i.e the Council does not have any funds available to pass to the Parish Council in order for the Parish Council to do any of the work.

When you are reasonably certain about the policies your plan will contain, the District Council will screen your plan for any environmental impacts. If your plan changes significantly between the screening and the formal submission, it may need to be screened again.

What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 2

Advice on matters relating to the neighbourhood plan will be given upon request, but may be capped at four officer working days in total for this stage (unless we agree to extend the number of days). Such advice may include:

- an initial meeting (requests for meetings may be limited to one)
- Advising on potential topics for your plan
- Making data available or advising where to find useful data to provide evidence for your plan;
- Providing advice on the legal requirements for your plan;
- Assisting with preparing any necessary reports;
- Advising on organisations that may be able to help with the production of your plan;
- Advising on ways to engage your community;
- Reviewing a draft of your plan and feeding back comments; and
- Providing up to 5 copies of Ordnance Survey base maps of the neighbourhood area, and printing of up to 20 copies of a draft Neighbourhood Plan

Timescales for a response to any request will vary depending on the nature of the request, but every effort will be made to respond at the earliest opportunity.

We will aim to provide an informal view of whether the plan is likely to meet the basic conditions within 20 working days of receiving a request. This will require a mature draft of the plan being provided prior to the pre-submission consultation.

Stage 3: Pre-submission Consultation

Regulations require that your proposed plan undergoes a 6 week consultation prior to submitting it (see Stage 4) to the District Council. This requirement, which is the Parish or Town Council's responsibility to undertake, includes:

- Publicising the plan so that it is brought to the attention of people who live, work, or own a business in the neighbourhood area;
- Notifying a number of bodies such as the Highways Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency;
- Notifying service providers that operate in the area such as utility providers, a Primary Care Trust, and Network Rail;
- Notifying local organisations that represent racial, religious, national, business, and disability groups;
- Notifying voluntary bodies that operate in your neighbourhood area;
- Notifying parish councils within the neighbourhood area; and
- Sending your plan to the District Council.

Prior to publicising your plan, it is recommended that you contact the Council who will advise on who (subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations) you should be notifying and can advise on how to publicise your plan in your neighbourhood area.

You will need to plan the consultation and make sure that your plan can be viewed by the community and other organisations, both in electronic format and in hard copy. You will also need to consider how you will bring the proposed plan to the attention of the community using means such as mail drops, posters, press adverts, etc.

Once the 6 week consultation period is complete you will need to review the comments and collate them into a consultation statement, including a response to the key issues being raised. This will demonstrate what changes, if any, will be made to the plan. You will then need to amend the plan to be ready to submit to the Council. If significant changes are made, it is recommended that you repeat this Stage 3 six week consultation.

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What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 3

Assist with identifying the organisations that should be contacted as part of the pre-submission consultation and advise on how to publicise the proposed plan to the community. We will aim to provide this within 10 working days of a request in the run up to the consultation.

If asked by you to do so, publish a notice of your plan on the District Council's website and place copies of the proposed plan at the Council office and other relevant locations such as libraries for the public to view for the consultation period.

Provide a response to the proposed neighbourhood plan, including a view on whether it is considered to meet the basic conditions.

Stage 4: Submission and publication of the plan

First you will need to take account of the comments made to the pre-submission consultation (and make any amendments to your plan as you think necessary). Next, you will need to formally submit your plan to the Council. At this point you cannot make any further changes to the plan and you hand over control of the plan to the Council.

Your plan must be accompanied by a number of other documents, specifically:

- A map or statement clearly identifying the area to which the plan relates;
- A consultation statement which clearly documents the pre-submission consultation, including who was consulted on the plan and how they were consulted, a summary of the main issues raised, and information on how the representations have informed the content of the plan. The consultation statement may also demonstrate what previous consultation has been undertaken throughout the production of the plan.
- A basic conditions statement to demonstrate how the plan meets the basic conditions and how the plan has been produced in line with legislative requirements.
- An environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; or where it is considered that the plan proposal will not have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for determination.

When your plan is submitted, the Strategic Planning Team will check your submission to ensure that it contains all of the necessary information to be published and will notify you of whether or not it is valid.

If the submission is valid, your plan and the accompanying documents will be published as soon as possible for 6 weeks (i.e this is a second 6 week consultation, in addition to the 6 week consultation at Stage 3) on the Council's website and in hard copy at an appropriate Council location. The Council will also publicise the consultation as necessary, including information about where to view the plan, how to make comments on it and when comments must be received by.

Following the consultation, the Council will gather the representations made on the plan and send them, along with the neighbourhood plan and accompanying documents, for examination.

What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 4

We will help you, capped at four officer working days in total (unless we agree to extend the number of days), to consider any representations received at Stage 3, and help you determine what appropriate action should be undertaken with them (eg amend policy wording) prior to you submitting the plan.

Once submitted, we will aim to confirm whether your submitted plan is valid within 10 working days of submission.

If valid, we will arrange for publication of the plan on the District Council's website, have hard copies placed at an appropriate District and Parish Council location, publicise the consultation as necessary and notify the consultation bodies as required, including those who submitted comments at pre-submission stage (subject to any legal requirements arising from the General Data Protection Regulations).

We will provide a formal response to the submitted plan, including a view on whether it is considered to meet the basic conditions.

We will cover all costs associated with meeting minimum requirements for the publication of the plan. We will consider helping with any additional minor costs, such as printing posters or leaflets, if the parish or town council asks us to.

Stage 5: Independent examination

During the publication stage the Council will commence appointment of a suitably qualified individual to undertake the independent examination. This appointment will be made in conjunction with the Parish Council submitting the plan.

After the publication, the neighbourhood plan, accompanying documents and representations made on the published plan will be sent to the examiner. Examinations are normally conducted by written representations, but the examiner may decide to hold a public hearing to discuss any points as needed. The examiner will only consider whether the plan meets the basic conditions.

Following the examination, the examiner will provide a report that sets out a recommendation on the plan. The possible recommendations are:

- The plan meets the basic conditions and should proceed to referendum;
- Modifications are needed for the plan to meet the basic conditions before the plan should proceed to referendum; or
- The plan does not meet the basic conditions and no modifications can be made so that it will – as such it should not proceed.

The examiner can also make recommendations as to any changes to the referendum area, though this will be an unusual recommendation.

The Council will make a decision on whether the plan should proceed to referendum based on the examiner's report and publish the Council's decision statement and the examiner's report.

What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 5

We will appoint the examiner in consultation with the Parish Council.

We will manage and fund the process of the examination and act as key contact for the examiner.

We will publish the examiner's report and the Council's decision on whether the plan will proceed to referendum.

We will print and pay for up to 20 copies of the final Plan, in colour, including maps.

Stage 6: Referendum and Adoption

Upon receiving the examiner's report approving the plan to proceed to referendum and the Council's formal decision to proceed (only in exceptional circumstances would the Council not agree to proceed), the Council will arrange for a referendum to take place in the neighbourhood area.

The referendum will allow for the residents of the neighbourhood area to decide on whether or not the plan should be used in making planning decisions in the neighbourhood area, with a simple 'yes' or 'no' vote. The Council will arrange and pay for the referendum to be held.

If the plan gains more than 50% of votes for 'yes' then the Council will adopt the plan at the earliest possible opportunity, making the neighbourhood plan part of the development plan for the area. It will then be used in conjunction with the Local Plan (and any other material considerations) in making decisions on planning applications.

What you can expect from the District Council in Stage 6

We will arrange and pay for the referendum.

We will publish the results of the referendum.

We will adopt the plan at the next suitable Full Council meeting

We will use the plan in making decisions on relevant planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

Agenda Item No:	11	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	17 July 2023	
Report Title:	Wisbech High Street Project – progress update	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update regarding ongoing work related to FDC’s properties at 24 High Street and 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

2 Key Issues

Progress to develop 24 High Street

- 2.1 The project to redevelop 24 High Street continues to move forwards.
- 2.2 Etec, FDC’s contractor has started on site, following the set-up of their compound on the parks area adjacent to the Queen Mary Centre.
- 2.3 Work for the next 6 months will focus on groundwork, piling and underpinning and party wall work. The original hoarding has been removed and a new hoarding is in place to allow access and works. The original hoarding was painted by local volunteers. Unfortunately the original plan to relocate this to 11-12 High Street, opposite 24 High Street, has not been possible as it was beyond its useful life and rotten.
- 2.4 A traffic and pedestrian management scheme is in place, allowing the High Street to safely remain open. There will be occasions, for a short period of time, where the High Street is closed for lorries to deliver materials. Road closures on the High Street will be kept to a minimum.
- 2.5 Following the start in June, progress remains on track with completion due 77 weeks from start on site – November 2024.
- 2.6 As the project is now on site, FDC has applied for 50% of the £210,000 grant funding that CPCA has offered for the project.
- 2.7 Prior to start on site, FDC also applied for £240,000 of NLHF funding. Whilst an application has been submitted, this funding is subject to extending the project as highlighted below.
- 2.8 With this project underway and a large, experienced contractor managing the project, the Portfolio holder will update Cabinet by exception regarding this project in the future.

11-12 High Street

- 2.9 Several options have been developed for the gap site in 11-12 High Street. These have been developed by working with partners, speaking to experienced developers and quantity surveyors.

- 2.10 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHC) has insisted that in order for the original project to be extended and the funding streams to remain in place, FDC should commission a third-party heritage specialist to develop an options appraisal for the 11-12 site.
- 2.11 FDC is seeking to reappoint the original consultant who worked with the Council to develop the original NLHF project to carry out this work over the summer. The expectation is that the Options report would come to Cabinet in September for Members to take a view. This will then inform a discussion with NLHF and consideration as to whether the Lottery Heritage Fund will extend the High Street project and the funding linked to it.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the current position in relation to the two key Wisbech High Street sites and ongoing work to extend the NLHF High Street project to November 2024 and beyond.

Wards Affected	Medworth Ward	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY21APR22/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Seaton Cllr Ian Benney Cllr Chris Boden	Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Originator	Phil Hughes	Head of Service
Contact Officers	Paul Medd Peter Catchpole Mark Greenwood	Chief Executive Corporate Director and S151 Officer Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects

**DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN –
Updated 4 July 2023**



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

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
11 Sep 2023	1. Investment Board Update	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Tierney
	2. RECAP Partnership Waste Strategy Review	Cllr Tierney Cllr Murphy
	3. Accommodation Review	Cllr Boden
	4. Fenland Transport Strategy	Cllr Seaton
	5. Freedom Energy Costs Update	Cllr Sam Clark Cllr Boden
	6. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	7. Wisbech High Street Update (confidential) (TBC)	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
2 Oct 2023	1. Council Tax Support Scheme	Cllr Boden
	2. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	3. Wisbech High Street Update (confidential) (TBC)	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
13 Nov 2023	1. Review & Refresh of Public Space Protection Orders (dog fouling & dog controls)	Cllr Murphy
	2. Open Spaces – Play Area Refurbishment	Cllr Murphy
	3. Climate Change Action Plan Update	Cllr Tierney
	4. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	5. Wisbech High Street Update (confidential) (TBC)	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
11 Dec 2023	1. Draft Business Plan 2024/25	Cllr Boden
	2. Draft Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25	Cllr Boden
	3. Treasury Management Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year review 2023/24	Cllr Boden
	4. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	5. Wisbech High Street Update (confidential) (TBC)	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
22 Jan 2023	1. Fees & Charges	Cllr Boden
	2. Investment Board Update	Cllr Boden Cllr Tierney Cllr Benney
	3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden

TBC = To be confirmed

Agenda Item No:	14	
Committee:	Cabinet/Investment Board	
Date:	17th July 2023	
Report Title:	Local Authority Housing Fund 2 (LAHF)	

This item comprises **EXEMPT INFORMATION** at Appendix A which is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To consider an opportunity to receive a further tranche of grant money from the LAHF programme to purchase 5 homes as a resource to meet the Council's responsibilities with regard to housing Afghan refugees and as a lasting legacy resource to support meeting our wider homelessness duties.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 On the 7th June 2023 the Council received notification from the Department of levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) of a further allocation available to support the refugee crisis. Cabinet approved to receive the first allocation from this fund to purchase 9 homes at its meeting in February 2023 (Minute reference CAB68/22 refers).
- 2.2 For LAHF 2, capital grant funding (under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003), has been offered to the Council with an indicative allocation of £559,990 in funding. The funding would need to purchase 5 properties. As with other affordable housing provision, DLUHC expect the Council to part fund or finance some of the required capital. Government funding equates to 40% of total capital costs plus £20,000 per property to account for other costs including refurbishment. The grant rate per property for the Council is £91,998 (based on median property prices in our area) plus £20,000 per property.
- 2.3 This is an improvement on the first LAHF round which based grant rates on lower quartile house prices in our district.
- 2.4 4 properties must be bought to support the Afghan refugee schemes. The 5th property for this fund can be used for core homelessness temporary accommodation to help ease pressure of the number of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 2.5 The criteria for the 4 properties include an initial use to support the refugee crisis from Afghanistan but in the longer term will be a resource to support our wider homelessness objectives. Revenue support funding is also provided to help the Afghan families settle into a new area.

- 2.6 As with the first tranche the proposed delivery route is for FDC to purchase the properties as set out in confidential Appendix A. Match funding will either be provided through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), capital reserves or use of Section 106 funds secured for the delivery of affordable housing.
- 2.7 Delivery will help reduce the risk of additional temporary accommodation costs and provide an increased pool of properties to support meeting our homelessness objectives. To not receive it would mean that we would continue to have to meet our duties in relation to supporting the refugee crisis without having any additional property resource to facilitate the need.
- 2.8 To receive the funding the Council, need to have submitted a validation form by the 5th July. The Council submitted this and offered to receive a bigger allocation if there was funding not taken up by other Local Authorities. The additional request for funding was for up to 15 homes to be ringfenced for core homelessness temporary accommodation. It was submitted with a caveat that it was subject to Cabinet approval. The Council as with LAHF 1 will also need to sign the Memorandum of Understanding which will be sent to Council's in due course once the final allocation is known.
- 2.9 The properties need to be secured by 29th March 2024. The properties will be purchased outside of PE13 and PE14 post code areas ideally with easy access to the train route through Fenland i.e. March and Whittlesey.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet are recommended to:

- 3.1.1 Approve receipt of the LA Housing Fund 2 grant in the sum of £559,990 for the purposes described.
 - Authorise entry into the prescribed Memorandum of Understanding with DLUHC delegated to the Monitoring Officer in Consultation with Investment Board; and
 - Fund the residual element for the 5 properties to be purchased, delegated to the Section 151 officer to determine in consultation with Investment Board Members and delegate purchase of individual properties to the S151 in consultation with Investment Board. Range of funding needed has been identified in the confidential Appendix A
 - Delegate acceptance of a further allocation from the LAHF fund if additional funding becomes available either through this funding round or future LAHF funding rounds to the Section 151 officer in consultation with the Investment Board, Portfolio Holder for Housing
 - Properties to be purchased outside PE13 and PE14 post code areas.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	

Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Sam, Hoy (Housing) Councillor Chris Boden (Investment Board) Councillor Ian Benney (Investment Board) Councillor Steve Tierney (Investment Board)
Report Originator(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director
Contact Officer(s)	Dan Horn – as above Carol Pilson – Corporate Director Peter Catchpole – Section 151 Amy Brown Assistant Director
Background Papers	Local Authority Housing Fund: Round 2 prospectus and guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Guidance and criteria

3 REASONS FOR EXEMPTION

- 3.1 Appendix A is NOT FOR PUBLICATION in accordance with paragraph 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 in that it contains information relating to financial modelling that is commercially sensitive about the approach to purchasing 5 properties. To publish it would mean that the Council's ability to secure best value could be compromised. The public interest test has been applied to the information contained within this exempt report and it is considered that the need to retain the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

4 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 4.1 As per key issues section 2

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The grant secured means we can deliver housing that is financially prudent. See financial implications and confidential Appendix A.
- 5.2 It helps build an increase in available housing to meet our duties with regard to homelessness.
- 5.3 To not deliver the scheme places further pressure on the Council's emergency accommodation costs.

6 CONSULTATION

There is no formal consultation requirement in relation to this scheme however the proposals have been given detailed and appropriate consideration by officers and members to include debating and determining the recommendation comprised in this report.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Alternative options for the Council included enabling a Registered Provider (RP) to deliver the scheme on behalf of the Council and not submitting a proposal to Government.
- 7.2 Although working with an RP was potentially viable it was felt that the Council had the opportunity to secure a resource directly to help build our assets to support homelessness in a financially prudent way to ease pressure on B&B costs and also reduce Housing Benefit subsidy penalties.
- 7.3 To not submit a proposal is seen as a false economy as to not increase available resource for homelessness increases the risk of additional costs for the Council in meeting its statutory duties.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.2 The constitution
- 8.3 Fenland District Council has a general power to acquire land and property under Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 and may also rely on section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 where the purchase relates to regeneration and economic/social benefits in the council's area.
- 8.4 Fenland District Council also has a general duty to act prudently when purchasing land. To that end, in addition to valuations, appropriate title checks and searches will take place before any final commitment is made to purchase the properties.
- 8.5 Stamp Duty Land Tax will be payable on completion of the purchases and arrangements will need to be made to ensure that the properties meet minimum EPC requirements for rental properties which may require some additional expenditure between the time of purchase and 2028 when all such properties must achieve a rating of C.

- 8.6 Paragraph 10 of Table 5 of Part 3 of the Constitution delegates authority to Cabinet Members to authorise the allocation of external funding awarded to the Council and entry into the associated financial and legal agreements valued at 500,001 and over.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The Council has been advised that the initial grant available to the Council for LAHF 2 is:

- £559,990 for 5 properties.
- As with other affordable housing provision and LAHF round 1, DLUHC expect FDC to part fund or finance some of the required capital.
- The government funding equates to 40% of total capital costs.
- The first tranche of LAHF 2 (30% of the funding) provided by DLUHC will be paid in July/August and the second tranche of funding (70%) will be paid in October/December
- The second tranche of funding is paid once the LA has spent 60% of their first tranche of funding.

- 9.2 The Council needs to identify match funding for this. As properties are identified the source of the match funding will be considered looking at what is the most prudent to help deliver the project in the most commercially advantageous way. This includes:

- Existing capital reserves;
- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB);
- Other funding that the Council can legally use for such a purpose for example financial contributions in lieu of built units.

- 9.3 It is proposed to delegate to the Section 151 officer to determine in consultation with Investment Board Members the proposed match funding approach.

- 9.4 Confidential Appendix A sets out the appraisal that has been developed to explore the financial estimates.

- 9.5 The Council has expressed an interest in receiving a bigger allocation if further funding comes available.

9.6 Equality Implications

- 9.7 The proposal helps support meeting our obligations for housing as set out in the homelessness act.

- 9.8 The funding helps secure additional resource to meet obligations that the Council will face to rehouse refugees from Afghanistan and by receiving this funding this helps support having additional capacity available for all households presenting as homeless. It builds capacity in the system.

10 Timescale for delivery

- 10.1 The properties need to be secured by March 29 2024. The properties will be purchased outside of PE13 and PE14 post code areas ideally with easy access to the train route through Fenland i.e. March and Whittlesey.

11 SCHEDULES

- Appendix A – CONFIDENTIAL financial appraisal

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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