

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

A meeting of Council will be held at Council Chamber, Fenland Hall, County Road, March on MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2023 at 4.00 PM and I request you to attend accordingly for transaction of the following business:

This is a public meeting but can be viewed via YouTube:

<https://youtube.com/live/fAYJ6P5Ro5g?feature=share>

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 16)

To confirm and sign the minutes of 17 July 2023.
- 3 Civic Engagements Update. (Pages 17 - 18)
- 4 To receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Council and/or the Head of Paid Service.
- 5 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.
- 6 To receive questions from, and provide answers to, councillors in relation to matters which, in the opinion of the Chairman, accord with the provisions of Procedure Rules 8.4 and 8.6.
- 7 To receive reports from and ask questions of Cabinet members with portfolio holder responsibilities, in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2. (Pages 19 - 74)
- 8 Motion submitted by Councillor Dr Haq Nawaz (Pages 75 - 76)

Motion submitted by Councillor Dr Haq Nawaz concerning the County Council and Combined Authority war on motorists.
- 9 Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor (Pages 77 - 78)

Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor concerning weeds.
- 10 Motion submitted by Councillor Gary Christy (Pages 79 - 80)

Motion submitted by Councillor Gary Christy concerning Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).
- 11 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report (Pages 81 - 90)

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report reflects what has been undertaken and achieved by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during

2022/23 and takes a forward look at the programme of work and challenges for the Overview and Scrutiny in 2023/2024.

12 Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 91 - 100)

To report the commitment and effectiveness of the Audit and Risk Management Committee's work from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Fenland Hall
March



Chief Executive

Friday, 22 September 2023

NOTE The Council may, by resolution, as exemplified below, exclude the public from a meeting during the consideration of any item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100 I of the Local Government Act, 1972

"Resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for Item No./Minute No. on the grounds that the item involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act"

COUNCIL



MONDAY, 17 JULY 2023 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor N Meekins (Chairman), Councillor B Barber (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor C Boden, Councillor G Booth, Councillor J Carney, Councillor G Christy, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor D Cutler, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor K French, Councillor A Hay, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Marks, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor J Mockett, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Dr H Nawaz, Councillor D Patrick, Councillor M Purser, Councillor B Rackley, Councillor D Roy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor M Summers, Councillor T Taylor, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor S Wallwork and Councillor Woollard

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Count, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor A Gowler, Councillor D Oliver and Councillor E Sennitt Clough.

C1/23 **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2023 were confirmed and signed.

C2/23 **CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE.**

Councillor Meekins drew members' attention to the civic activities undertaken by himself and the Vice-Chairman in the weeks preceding Full Council but reported that unfortunately he had been unable to attend the Mayor of Thetford's Civic Reception on 4 June.

C3/23 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.**

Councillor Meekins informed members that he will be holding the Chairman's Civic Reception on Friday 15 September at Gorefield Community Hall. He will also be hosting a coffee morning in aid of the East Anglian Air Ambulance at a date to be arranged and looks forward to seeing as many members as possible at these events.

Paul Medd, Chief Executive, made the following announcement:

"I am delighted to announce that the Council has once again been reaccredited for Customer Service Excellence. CSE is a national standard that recognises public bodies that provide customer focused, high quality services. Fenland is one of the few councils that have consistently achieved this rigorous standard for all its services. Following an assessment in June, the CSE assessor was highly complementary stating that Fenland's staff continue to put the customer at the heart of everything in line with corporate values and have an ethos of working smarter not harder. He continued, the Council work with an ever-increasing range of partners on numerous projects and initiatives that meet the area's needs and leave no stone unturned in our efforts to identify and reach out to any group or person needing help. In his report our assessor noted several key strands which related to the Council's corporate values which drive a focus on the customer and the Council's framework of core and management competencies which also supports service improvement. The use of staff insight into delivering excellent services is at a high level through people taking ownership and being able to implement ideas. The Council's transformation agenda is creating new access channels to services and enhancing the Council's digital offer whilst

maintaining traditional channels for those residents who need them”.

Paul Medd invited Councillor Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Communications, to be presented with the CSE reaccreditation certificate from Councillor Meekins.

Councillor Tierney commented that he was receiving the award on behalf of the staff who deliver the service, they work hard and are deserving of the credit. The assessor had said that he did not think he would find any additional work that could be undertaken this year as he had been so impressed the previous year, yet once again the boundary had been raised.

C4/23 **TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM, AND PROVIDE ANSWERS TO, COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO MATTERS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF PROCEDURE RULES 8.4 AND 8.6.**

Councillor Meekins stated that no questions had been received under Procedure Rule 8.6 and asked if there were any questions under Procedure Rule 8.4 from Councillor Booth.

Councillor Booth commented that the Leader had made a commitment at the last meeting to have a discussion on affordable housing and asked when that would be scheduled? Councillor Boden agreed it is a very important and serious issue which is being looked at but it is not yet been possible to bring everything together so that the options available can be published. Therefore, he cannot give a specific date currently, but it will be before the next meeting of Cabinet or at Cabinet itself. He reiterated the importance given to this and the urgent need to deal with the lack of affordable housing. Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Boden and added that it is important to drive this through as a policy for people to be able to live in the communities they have grown up in.

Councillor Booth said in respect of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the equalisation appears to show that there will be no changes to it in future years. He asked whether Councillor Boden believes this to be realistic given FDC’s considerable underspend in the past which would have gone into the equalisation reserve and further asked if Councillor Boden could confirm the final underspend for the last financial year? Councillor Boden agreed that the figure for the budget equalisation reserve is both wrong and unrealistic, however, this is deliberate because it is ultimately a balancing figure based at the end of each financial year on whether the Council has an overspend or underspend, comparing income with expenditure and what was agreed four years ago was that in those years where there is an underspend, more money will be transferred into the budget equalisation reserve to be used against future years where there is an overspend, or to help keep Council Tax levels down. However, he had not anticipated four years ago that every year there would be an increase in the reserve because every year there would be more income than expenditure. Councillor Boden stated that there has been systemic underbudgeting in the organisation but stressed this is not a criticism of officers as they can only budget for what they know about and the Council never knows what money Government are going to give in the forthcoming 12 months, which makes it very difficult to budget but officers are prudent as well as consistent, and they say that if there is not the promise of specific money from Government then they will not budget for it. He has asked officers to continue in this way so they are always comparing like for like and, therefore, do not get an unpleasant or unwanted surprise. In respect of Councillor Booth’s question about last year’s underspend, Councillor Boden added that it is still subject to audit, but currently looks like being an excess of income over expenditure of nearly £800,000, taking our budget equalisation reserve to £1.8 million and this money will provide cover to help deal with any unexpected challenges or to help keep Council Tax down. He stated his absolute confidence in the work that is being done by the finance officers and he has explicitly asked them to continue to operate the budget process in the way they have done in the past. Councillor Booth asked for a breakdown in how there is such variance in the figures between February and now and where that extra £700,000 has come from since February? Councillor Boden responded that the breakdown has been given in the agenda item 6 of today’s Cabinet

meeting.

Councillor Booth asked Councillor Boden for an update to the commitment regarding the moving of the March Fountain and what action has been taken since the last meeting? He further asked if any partners have been contacted regarding the concerns raised and in respect of the possibility of reviewing the current proposal and if any feedback had been received from them regarding this? He felt this information would be particularly useful as background information considering the next item on the agenda being the petition received regarding the fountain. Councillor Boden said the specific actions taken have been firstly that the current proposed location of the fountain has been outlined on the carriageway in red for anyone to view, there have also been regular weekly coffee mornings held by Octavius Infrastructure for people to ask questions, held at the former Barclays Bank Building, with Octavius being the County Council appointed contractors to oversee the work and Fenland District Council has entered into a contract with County Council, and there has also been a high level member briefing note regarding the potential changes in location. However, he stated that the difficulty is that there is no allocation in the budget for redesigned drawings so members will have to look at the risks involved and there is also the potential for delivery delay as it will need to be brought to September Cabinet, there could be increased costs incurred depending on the level of change and there is the danger that Planning Committee may not agree, however, a small change may not require planning permission. Councillor Boden further added that checks are required with Historic England being a statutory consultee and, in his opinion, as a statutory consultee the Council is obliged to listen to them but does not have to follow what they said yet he has been informed that the one time when a suggestion was made that the fountain be moved to the Market Place that Historic England vetoed it and he does not have the advice about whether or not Historic England do have the right of veto or if they are just a statutory consultee that the Council needs to take into account but he has been told that Historic England gave as its rationale for the proposed location is that this was the closest available location to the existing position. He stated that there is also the reputational damage of any failed attempts to relocate the fountain which will need to be taken into account and there are larger environmental and wider design details, with significant civil engineering redesigns which may be necessary and then there is the issue of stakeholder co-ordination with the Council's partners, including funding partners. Councillor Boden made the point that there are still a number of issues still to be resolved and a report will be produced subject to what is decided at Council today for Cabinet to consider and decide upon in September but his personal position remains as it was at the last Full Council meeting to the extent that if it is possible and reasonable to do so he would like to make sure the Council gets the best decision and the fact that a decision has already been made should not be the end of it, members should look as rationally as possible as to whether or not an alternative may be credible but he retains that open mind and willingness to listen recognising that it was possibly the wrong decision last year and something different is required.

C5/23 PETITION - THE FOUNTAIN, MARCH FUTURE HIGH STREETS SCHEME

Councillor Booth presented the petition on behalf of the people that had signed it regarding the proposal to move the fountain in March, with the petition reading

“As part of the March regeneration project Fenland District Council have approved the moving of The Fountain. The intended location is in front of Malletts, without any consultation with the proprietors or their near neighbours. It is unacceptable to place The Fountain in front of a retail unit with a shop window for display and this petition is to ask for your support with the appeal to have it at another location.”

Councillor Booth stated that the petition has been signed by thousands of people, 3087, and when it was first sent to the Council it was approximately 3,200 and it could have been a lot more with further time as people were still signing it in their hundreds per week. He made the point that there is a substantial number of people who have signed the petition from the area including March, the surrounding villages and even people outside the District and these are the very people that use

the facilities of March and keep March going at the moment and these are the people that members should want to keep using the facilities in March, with those members also needing the town to grow.

Councillor Booth stated that the people that signed the petition believe the proposed move of the fountain outside of Malletts Jewellers is unacceptable. He further added that it is important to note this in the context of the High Street regeneration project because that is about growing what there is in March and keeping it a vibrant place.

Councillor Booth referred to the report mentioning the consultation that took place, however, it is known from feedback received and from comments in the Council Chamber that the consultation process was not robust, 102 consultation comments compared to over 3,000 petition signatories, which shows the disparity between what people's thoughts are and the strength of feeling against what is being proposed. He stated that a number of councillors have also received correspondence about this issue which suggest an alternate or better location, which would be moving it to the open space near the riverbank and bridge, with the District Council having recently brought the old Barclays site and is yet to determine what is going to happen here so there is a possibility that moving it there might be a better location but that is yet to be determined and an open mind needs to be kept about it but there are possibilities that is within the remit of the District Council that can help shape something that is going to improve the situation and the environment of March High Street.

Councillor Booth stated that as a councillor it is the duty and for the majority the motivation to improve the District for its residents and to make sure the Council delivers the best it can for the people of the District. He referred to the recommendation of the report where Council can either note the petition or it can refer it to Cabinet, which he feels is the option that should be taken because it can be looked at again and see what the options are, take it forward and it will show that the Council actually listens to people.

Councillor Booth referred to the comments of Councillor Boden on the last item about the risk of reputational damage and he thinks that if Council does not listen to what people have said and a better alternate location is not found then there is going to be worse reputational damage and the Council could be seen as almost being arrogant and not listening to the people for what they want to see happen in the market town of March.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Seaton thanked the Leader as he had voiced a lot of what he is was going to say in his earlier response on the previous item but he feels it is important to give an update as to where the March Future High Street project is. He stated that work on Broad Street has begun, with the successful installation of new gas and water utilities by Cadent and Anglian Water and Octavius Infrastructure are now on site delivering the first phase of the wider Broad Street scheme and have already removed much of the southbound carriageway, street furniture and kerbs. Councillor Seaton stated that as part of phase one and for the new road layout to be implemented, the historic fountain must be relocated and having reviewed several design options during the design phase relocation was the only option that achieves all the committed outputs to both the MATS and the future High Street fund and is affordable and deliverable within the timeframe. He made the point that planning for the proposed new location was approved by Planning Committee in February 2023 and was supported by Historic England, with the scheme for March only working with the implementation of a mini roundabout which replaces the existing lights at the northern end of Broad Street and it is not physically possible to create a mini roundabout at the northern end of Broad Street without the relocation of the fountain as there is not enough road space to allow for a mini roundabout properly. Councillor Seaton advised that the fountain is programmed for removal in the next few weeks following initial ecological delays caused by nesting birds which have now been overcome. He referred to the petition received and an

alternative location for the fountain, with there being several implications which Cabinet will need to be aware of before consideration of an alternative location, firstly relocating the fountain to an alternative site will lead to delays in overall programme delivery, the need for reassessment, redesign and potential modifications to a new location can significantly extend project time and these delays can also be built in to the project via the contractor for their time on site while this work is ongoing. Councillor Seaton advised the second implication is that any change to existing design will incur varying level of cost depending on level of change allocated, there will be at risk cost of work to redesign elements of the scheme before any planning approvals can be sought, there is currently no budget allocation remaining for this level of intervention and funds would need to be identified either from outside of the project budget or through potential scope reduction of the wider public realm scheme. He made the point that the existing location has all planning approvals in place but a change to the design will require the planning process to be reopened, risk exists and the revised plans may not align with the existing permissions granted or that an alternative site is not granted approval and there is also a risk associated with Historic England granting permission to an alternative site. Councillor Seaton proposed that this issue be referred to the September Cabinet for further consideration.

- Councillor Tierney stated that for people watching this and members of the public who are present they perhaps do not understand why so many councillors had to leave and he worries that they might take the wrong idea from this, each member has their own reason for leaving but the most common reason will be that it conflicts with their seat on the Planning Committee and there is legal reasons why they had to leave the room so as not to be pre-determined. He feels there is nothing worse when the Council has made a decision and afterwards it becomes clear that a large number of the public feel that it is the wrong decision, with a Council being 'pig-headed' about it and sticking to it and saying it is not changing the decision which has been seen elsewhere in the County, which is a dangerous position to take, the Council has always got to be listening and learning and if the wrong decision has been taken it should be revised. Councillor Tierney stated that he does not know whether this is the right or wrong decision but he does support having another think about it at Cabinet.
- Councillor Taylor advised that a few comments that he has received about a new location near Barclay Banks is that a lot of the military personnel are concerned about it being next door to the War Memorial, having two items so close together of historical interest and both being in use at the same time.
- Councillor Hay expressed the view that with so many people signing a petition it is only right that it should be referred back to Cabinet and Cabinet can look at the cost implications and the reasons why so many people object to it being outside Malletts as she does not understand why it is being objected to in this location but until you actually look at those reasons a valued decision cannot be made.
- Councillor Mrs Davis clarified that she was on the Planning Committee at the time the decision was taken but she is no longer on the committee so she feels that she can speak freely and make an unbiased decision. She stated that at the Planning Committee meeting there was no real material consideration that could be taken to not go the route the Planning Committee did if they were following the Local Plan and other policies and advice. Councillor Mrs Davis stated that having seen the size of the petition and realising the number of people that are against the proposal this is a second chance to go away and look at things differently but it is not known what other information can now come forward so she agrees that it should be referred to Cabinet.
- Councillor Woollard stated that as a newly elected member of the Council he has been thrown into this issue in March, he is a March man himself and there is a tremendous amount of feeling within March regarding the moving of the fountain, it is known that it must be moved but there is this opportunity now to reconsider the proposals, see if there is a viable cost-effective alternative and he fully supports it being referred to Cabinet.
- Councillor Nawaz stated that he sees the petition has attracted 3,587 valid signatures but asked why the public were not consulted and is this the normal modus operandi that the

system sees fit to impose on the residents.

- Councillor Boden welcomed the tone of the debate and particularly liked the comment made by Councillor Tierney in that he is correct that it is very easy if you are in control of decisions to be 'pig-headed' and say that is the decision that has been made, which is not a positive in business. He referred to Councillor Nawaz's question and stated there was a significant amount of consultation and at the time there were comments made that people were unsatisfied with the nature of the consultation being undertaken, more than 100 comments were made which is quite exceptional for a consultation, but the Council now needs, in his opinion, to step back, listen very carefully to the advice of officers, to look at what alternatives realistically exist and hopefully be open-minded in looking at alternatives, which may result in a small, slightly larger or a much larger change. Councillor Boden stated that he will remain open-minded about these possibilities and will wait for the reports to come out and look at it in a fair and unbiased way as he has no scheme in keeping things as they are currently proposed, there is no advantage to saying that it is not going to change but there is every opportunity for the Council to look at alternatives, looking at them with an honest approach but this is not to say that they will end up recommending a change until the information is seen that will be provided by officers.
- Councillor Booth stated that he supports a lot of the comments that have been made, particularly about attitudes to change the project and notes the risks that have also been highlighted by Councillor Seaton, but he would ask that there is a can do attitude when looking at this issue to see what the Council can do and not be stuck in processes that are going to hinder what needs to be undertaken. He expressed the opinion that the relocation is not on the critical path of things that need to happen, the fountain is going to be in storage for at least 12 months so he does not think this is a critical thing and there is time but it must not be allowed to fumble along and nothing gets done so engagement needs to be made with Historic England as soon as possible to try and get them on side. Councillor Booth urged members to support the proposal to refer the issue back to Cabinet so they can look at it and get a better reputation for this District Council and improve people's opinions as the views in March and the wider area of the Council are not good presently.
- Councillor Seaton stated that Councillor Booth is right that this will not be kept on the back burner, it is this intention that this will move forward to the next Cabinet in September and between now and then there is a lot of work that needs to be done by officers to determine the risks and outline the costs so members can make a correct decision but also listening to what has been said both by the petition and by councillors today. He said that Cabinet will have an open mind and intend to give the issue its proper and due consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Boden and agreed that the petition be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

(Councillors Benney, S Clark, Connor, Hicks, Imafidon, Marks, Murphy, Purser and Rackley declared an interest by virtue of being members and substitute members of the Planning Committee, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Miss French declared an interest by virtue of being a member of the March High Street Regeneration Committee, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Mrs French declared an interest by virtue of being a member of the Planning Committee and Chairman of the March Area Transport Study, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Mrs Laws declared an interest by virtue of being Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Planning, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Mrs Mayor declared an interest by virtue of being a member of Planning Committee at the time the Fountain application was considered, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(Councillor Booth and Meekins registered that they had been lobbied on this item)

C6/23 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.

Members asked questions of Portfolio Holders in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 as follows:

- Councillor Mockett referred to the Cabinet meeting earlier in Agenda Item 6 where it was reported that the £1.85 million liability this Council had with the Department of Transport towards the cost of the A14 improvements was eliminated during March this year and cost the revenue budget just £600, asking Councillor Boden to explain how this has occurred? Councillor Boden responded that the finances of the Council are fastidiously looked after by officers and members of the Cabinet, with him being the Portfolio Holder for Finance so it is always being looked at carefully to ensure the Council gets best value for money and sometimes that involves how money is managed itself. He stated that members will be aware that going back to Councillor Clark's time as Leader the Council was strong-armed and persuaded by the authorities that it needed to make a contribution towards the building of the new A14 of £800,000, being given 25 years to pay that contribution off working out at £32,000 per year. Councillor Boden added that in March 2019 he worked very hard to obtain monies from Cambridgeshire Horizons and also received an additional £1.05 million from Cambridgeshire Horizons which represented a portion of their liability towards the A14 improvements so the Council ended up with a liability of £1.85 million in the Council's balance sheet at the end of 2021-22 to make payment over to the Department of Transport and that £1.05 million was also able to be paid over 25 years representing £42,000 per year. He made the point that the £42,000 was fully funded as the money was received to meet the liability, however, the £800,000 that had been agreed was entirely unfunded and once the Department of Transport woke up and started asking the Council for the money it was known that each year for 25 years £32,000 would need to be paid out of the budget but the Department of Transport did not start asking the Council for money and year after year went by without any request and being an optimistic person he thought that the Council were not going to be asked for this money at all. Councillor Boden stated that he was wrong and earlier this year the Department of Transport asked for the money or wanted the Council to start making payments before the end of the financial year of 31 March 2023 and then the Treasury came up with an idea that if they allowed the Council to commute its payment to make a one-off payment to meet the liability over the next 25 years at 20 basis points below what the Public Works Loan Board lent money out at they would make a nice return and from the Treasury point of view that made a great deal of sense. He made the point that instead of the liability being £1.85 million once that was commuted at a discount rate of 4.86%, the Council had to pay £1,114,600.00, which was a saving of £735,400. Councillor Boden reiterated that the Council has some very prudent finance officers so what they had assured was that the £32,000 had been in the budget for the last two years and last year provision was made for the money to be paid out of the Cambridgeshire Horizons money of £42,000 so by the start of this calendar year the Council had already made provision of £106,000 against the final liability so when this is taken off the £1,114,600.00 this left the Council having to only find £1,008,600.00 to pay and the amount of cash the Council had available from Cambridgeshire Horizons was £1,008,000.00 which left a revenue charge of £600 to remove the liability. He stated that this process has been simplified and he could talk about the time value of money and the loss of potential interest.
- Councillor Booth asked Councillor Mrs Laws what is the position and progress with recruiting new Planning personnel, both in the Planning and Policy Teams? Councillor Mrs

Laws stated in relation to Planning Policy staff to further develop the Local Plan a report is going to the next Employment Committee, which if agreed will lead to the advertisement of staff in this area. She added that in the Planning Team the Council has advertised for a Principal Planning Officer and two Senior posts for some time and has received no interest, with these roles being covered by agency staff at present and officers and herself continue to give thought to how those roles can be made more attractive in a very competitive market but filling the positions in this area is a national issue and the Council is not alone in trying to recruit planning staff. Councillor Mrs Laws made the point that the Council had a positive track record of growing its own in this area and this will be continued. Councillor Booth stated that he understands the issue is a national issue but the concern he has is performance with particularly the minor applications and also the cost with using agency staff so wondered if there were any other alternatives that the Council could look at that will encourage more people to come to work at Fenland planning. Councillor Mrs Laws responded that no stone is being left unturned and the Council is in a position where it has to employ quality agency staff, which is an important factor and at the moment headway is being made with the applications but members have to understand in the last 3 years the increase in applications has been incredible and it is being managed by the staff the Council has with the support of agency staff. She assured members that they are looking at alternatives but the disappointment was losing the contract with Peterborough City Council in March and that is not something that can easily be made up.

(Councillor Marks left the meeting following this item and was not present for the remaining agenda items)

C7/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23

Councillor Boden presented the report to members and stated that it is notable for a number of things, especially that it shows that the Council's gross debt as of 31 March 2023 was lower than it was on 1 April 2022 and given all the circumstances which existed that is astonishing and is a reflection of the care which officers have taken in the management of the finances. He made the point that during the course of 2022-23 interest rates increased constantly and when you are in this situation you do not get any points for earning more money as a result, it happens almost naturally, but what is notable is just by how much that the Council managed to increase the amount of money that it received bearing in mind the Council did not know when much of that cash had to be repaid to the Treasury. Councillor Boden explained that the reason the Council did not know how long it had access to the cash as the amount of cash that was held or cash equivalents changed dramatically during the year, with at the beginning of the year, 1 April 2022, the Council holding approximately £32 million of capital cash and by 31 March 2023 the Council was holding £19 million, a loss of almost £13 million, which was not viewed as disastrous as the reason the Council had as much money as it did was due to Covid and all of the Covid schemes that were funded through local government as Central Government provided local authorities with significantly more money than it ended up paying out and has demanded all monies back which has not been paid out.

Councillor Boden reiterated his thanks to officers for the way in which they have managed to achieve so much more than what would have happened if they had just allowed things to drift, actively managing funds available to the Council but in the knowledge that in increasing the cash because the Council did not know from one week to the next when Central Government would demand millions back of the money which they had overpaid the Council.

Councillor Connor gave his thanks to officers and Councillor Boden for the way the finances had been managed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Connor and agreed that the Treasury Management Annual Review 2022/23 be noted.

Councillor Boden presented the report to members and stated that the purpose of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is to set a high-level overview of the direction of travel, giving a consistent view as to what is perceived to be likely to happen based on certain assumptions. He stated that MTFS have always provided a challenge for local authorities and every single local authority has a MTFS which shows a position where there is going to be a deficit at some stage in the next 5 years and the Council's challenge and the challenge of officers is to manage to meet that gap, having not just met that gap in the last 10 and more years but exceeded it.

Councillor Boden reminded members that 4 years ago he proposed a change to the MTFS and what he suggested was, to give greater challenge to officers and members to ensure the available resources were managed properly, the assumption about Council Tax would be changed as previously the assumption had been that every year it would be increased by the maximum amount that was legally permissible and it was agreed that it be assumed for the purposes of the MTFS that there would be a 0% increase in each of the following 4 years, which at the time was commented as being totally unrealistic and unachievable but it was achieved and over achieved by £1.8 million, which is now in the budget equalisation reserve. He stated that he is proposing today to tighten that to increase the challenge slightly more so instead of assuming there will be a 0% Council Tax increase for the next 4 years that the total funding from Council Tax will be assumed to remain static each year for the next 4 years, which is not the same thing as it fails to take into account the expected increase in the Council Tax base.

Councillor Boden acknowledged that it makes it more challenging, it increases the potential deficit but it has been managed in the past and he has a great deal of confidence that it will be managed in the future. He made the point that if there is a need to go back on this because of circumstances then this can happen but he is trying to increase the targets and quoted from Michelangelo "the greater danger for most of us lies in not setting our aim too high and falling short but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark" and he does not want to just achieve the mark but set the aim high.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Tierney stated that he has expressed previously how much he supports this policy and its direction. He thanked officers who have worked so hard to deliver these priorities but he feels something extraordinary is happening here in Fenland and what is different is in some other councils around the country they nod through endless Council Tax rises on the proviso that there is no other way, that it is unaffordable and you cannot continue to deliver good services without rising Council Tax but this Council does not take this view, this is a difficult time for people and it is appreciated that every penny added to the Council Tax hits people in the pocket and some people are just barely managing so for the last 4 years the Council has said what it said it was going to do, freezing Council Tax every year and in the final year it was cut, with the intention to try to do the same in the next 4 years. Councillor Tierney expressed the view that there are no other local authorities doing what Fenland is doing and feels this is real leadership but also without massive cuts to Council services, just reorganisation, transformation and old-fashioned hard work, being proud of what Fenland is doing.
- Councillor Booth stated that he applauds what is trying to be achieved and it is very interesting the approach that Councillor Boden is proposing. He proposed something similar in that there should be a flat net service expenditure so the budgets were not increased, which he has said for many years and whilst it would not have quite the same effect it would mean that there would be the same budgets every year without having to increase it automatically but he was told that this would be illegal in some instances but he does not believe it would have been, it would have just been setting a policy to not increase the budget and it needs to be adhered to much like the commercial industry has to do.

Councillor Booth stated that he agreed with what is being proposed but he does not agree that the services are great, such as the example with Planning where performance is not doing very well on the minor applications and the number of complaints he receives about how long people have to wait on the phone before they speak to someone, with their being much more to do to improve the service for the ordinary people of this District.

- Councillor Hoy stated that she would implore the Lib Dems here to express their views to their colleagues at County because last year they put the Council Tax up by the maximum amount possible and she imagines they will do the same again this year, with the County making up the largest share of the Council Tax so sometimes it feels whatever this Council does is a 'drop in the ocean'.
- Councillor Connor stated that he does not agree with Councillor Booth's comments regarding Planning as members have just heard from Councillor Mrs Laws and there has been a massive spike in planning applications in the last two or three years and everything possible is being undertaken to recruit new staff, having to employ agency staff in the meantime.
- Councillor Booth made the point that he is just relaying what people are telling him quite regularly.
- Councillor Miscandlon commended Councillor Tierney for his comments because councils do not have any money, all the money spent is rate payers money but the Council is mandated to spend that money in the most meaningful manner for the benefit of the constituents and he feels with the current strategies that are being taken that is what this Council is doing. He knows that Councillor Boden attended a conference recently and people have asked how this Council is doing it and he thinks that some of those people should be invited to Fenland to see what the Council is doing and what the officers are doing because they are doing a great job of supporting members in getting the message over to the public.
- Councillor Boden stated that it is very welcome to see the interest from members on the MTFS and agreed that Councillor Booth has commented about having figures appicated as flat expenditure but ultimately it comes to pretty much the same thing but utilising a different mechanism and, in his opinion, a more difficult mechanism but the end result is the same and he is grateful that they are going in the same direction even if they are slightly different routes to get there. He feels that Councillor Booth is wrong to say there are issues as far as service delivery is concerned as generally there is a great deal of satisfaction within the services the Council provides and ultimately when it comes to maladministration one of the objective criteria is how many complaints have been submitted about Council services to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and have been found against the Council, the Council will not find out officially until sometime next week what the position is but he is anticipating astonishingly for the fourth year in a row that there will be no complaints raised against the Council to the LGO, which the LGO will have upheld, which to achieve for 4 years means that the Council is certainly not in the worse performing quarter of local authorities in the country. Councillor Boden referred to Councillor Booth mentioning Planning twice at the meeting and stated that he advised, two weeks ago, CMT and the Portfolio Holder that the financial side of things was not the objective here so far as staffing is concerned, there is money set aside and there is money available for those things which are needed and the Council needs to have a better staffing structure and arrangements within Planning but the problem is not finance but availability of staff, with credit paid to officers who have been so careful with the way in which the finances of this Council have been managed over the course of the last few years.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and agreed that 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.

Councillor Boden presented the report to members and advised that this is a legal requirement and all councils every 4 years must conduct an independent review of councillors remuneration, with the last full review being conducted in 2019 and an interim review in 2021. He made the point that members should play no part in the decision on who is going to be appointed to the panel, which is a role for officers.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Booth stated that as Councillor Boden said this is a legal requirement and he has two questions, the first being about Parish and Town Council allowances as at the previous review it was last minute that it was realised that a review or set guidance for local parish and town council allowances but it is not clear from this report whether the allowance scheme for them will be considered. He feels doing a search on the Council's website for Members' Allowances does not result in anything that give anyone, even a member of the public, what the existing allowance scheme is so he feels clarification is needed that this will include the allowance scheme for Parish and Town Councils. Councillor Booth referred to the selection criteria with it having that they must live in Fenland and his understanding is of the previous reviews that this has not been so restrictive and actually appointed people outside the District, who have had good experience so he wonders why it is being restricted in this manner. Councillor Boden responded that he was going to have to try to remember what it says in the Local Government Act 1983 concerning Parish and Town Council allowances, whilst it might be viewed that Parish and Town Councils do not get allowances this is not what the legislation says but if his recollection is correct where it is agreed by a Parish or Town Council that they will make a payment to their Chairman or their Mayor then it is permissible for them also to make a payment to their councillors but so far as that is concerned the Council's review does not cover those amounts as these are to be set by the individual Parish or Town Councils if they wish to do so but to his knowledge no Parish or Town Council have ever made payments.
- Councillor Tierney confirmed that it is absolutely allowed for Parish or Town Councils to pay an allowance to the councillors as it did come to Wisbech Town Council a couple of years ago and it was rejected. He would urge any councillor who sits on a Parish or Town Council to do the same as one of the things that is powerful about parish level councils is the fact that they are all volunteers and the role is undertaken to help the area for no payment and paying an allowance even a small one changes the nature of the contract with the voting public. Councillor Tierney stated in regards to the District Council it is a legal requirement and when it is undertaken there is the possibility of being interviewed by the panel and his advice would be to tell them is that councillors do not want or need any allowance rise during this financial time of hardship.
- Councillor Boden referred to Councillor Booth's second question in relation to restricting applicants to Fenland and answered that those who live in Fenland are more likely to understand Fenland and what actually happens here but it is also appropriate to look to provide opportunities for people within Fenland where it is possible rather than spread the net wider unnecessarily and there are plenty of people who are qualified within Fenland to do this role and there is not the need to look outside of the District.
- Councillor Booth stated that it was down to the Independent Panel to make a recommendation for Parish and Town Councils to take into consideration and there are two different types of allowances in Parish and Town Councils, a Chairman's allowance and a general councillor allowance but reiterated that it was only realised at the last review that this needed to be looked at and was reported later and is the reason why he is raising it so the Council does not fall foul of this issue again.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Booth and agreed

- to note the requirement to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel;
- to delegate oversight of the appointment and final selection of Independent Remuneration Panel members to the Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director for Governance in consultation with Group Leaders and in accordance with the Job Description and Person Specification set out at Schedule A; and
- that the scope of the Member Allowances Scheme review be as set out within the report and the associated timetable at Schedule B and to include the recommendation for Parish and Town Council allowances.

(Councillor Mockett left the meeting during the discussion on this item and was not present for the remaining agenda items)

C10/23 CO-OPTION OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Boden presented the report on behalf of the Chairman of the Conduct Committee and advised that the Town and Parish Council representatives have been in the Constitution for a long period of time, being able to co-opt up to 2 representatives. He stated that a communication was sent out to all Parish and Town Councils asking for any volunteers and only two expressions of interest were received and it was deemed by the Chairman of the Conduct Committee that both were more than suitable and it was agreed by the Conduct Committee to recommend to Full Council that the two individuals be appointed.

Councillor Boden stated that the two individuals are Councillor Martin Field from March Town Council and Councillor Jason Ablewhite from Benwick Parish Council.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Booth asked if the vote has to be for both candidates en bloc or can they be voted for individually as looking at one of the candidates and his history he has some reservations about appointing them to the Conduct Committee given the reasons why they resigned from a prominent political role. The Chairman responded that in light of his comments they would vote individually for the two candidates.
- Councillor Tierney stated that he did wonder if someone would raise this issue but his personal view is that sometimes people make errors of judgements or mistakes in the past and then can move on with their lives, there is a member sitting on the Conduct Committee right now who is subject to a decision against them by the committee for a fairly serious issue but he believes members understand people make mistakes and it does not bar their entire life. He stated that as far as he knows none of the individuals standing has a criminal record or a conduct complaint against them so he does not know the truth of the allegations but if someone has a lot of experience and are a current sitting councillor there should be no reason why they cannot be appointed.
- Councillor Booth made the point that he does not really know the individual and only what he has seen in the press and he believes there was a complaint put to the Conduct Committee at the Council they were politically elected to but what he does not see in the report is that those issues have been resolved, only what is in the public domain and how is it that they have moved on and at present he has concerns.
- Councillor Connor endorsed both Councillor Field and Councillor Ablewhite to be co-opted onto the Conduct Committee.
- Councillor Boden stated that what was noticeable was the expressions of interests of the candidates and this particular candidate that he believes Councillor Booth is referring to, given his experience within the old standards regime, is undoubtedly the best qualified candidate from either Councillors or Town or Parish Councillors on the Conduct Committee if he is selected today and he is confident that he will prove to be an exceptional member.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Connor and agreed to the co-option of Councillor Jason Ablewhite and Councillor Martin Field to the two vacant Town and Parish Council Representative vacancies on the Conduct Committee for a term of 4 years.

C11/23 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: ESTABLISHMENT OF EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Councillor Boden presented the report and reminded members that it was mentioned that these proposals would be brought forward at the last Full Council meeting and he is excited about what the possibilities are both for the Culture, Arts and Heritage Executive Advisory Committee and the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee where there will be an opportunity for many members of the Council to contribute to areas where there is a real need to progress and for a voice to be given to sections of Fenland's community that currently do not have the voice they should have. He stated that the Project Review Executive Advisory Committee is set up so the Overview and Scrutiny Panel is not overburdened, which has a full calendar of work anyway but where there may be some specific proposals where either Cabinet or another committee would like to ensure that more members are involved in consideration before a decision is made.

Councillor Boden stated that the Culture, Arts and Heritage Executive Advisory Committee and Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee will both be set up in the normal way with a Chairman and Vice-Chairman but that will not be the case with the Project Review Executive Advisory Committee where many individuals may be barred depending upon which particular committee is referring a matter to them so at that point a Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be elected for each individual project. He made the point that this will ensure more members are involved in the work of the Council, it will change some of the direction of the work of the Council and give greater prominence to Culture, Arts and Heritage and Rural and Farming and is probably something that is long overdue.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Miscandlon stated that with these three new committees coming forward it is right that more councillors are being involved in the actual work of the Council. He feels it is imperative, with a lot of new councillors, and a great way of learning how the Council works.
- Councillor Booth referred to the Project Review Executive Advisory Committee where it says that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be one of the members who join the project board but wonders if this is too restrictive as there could be members that sit on this committee that have a particular expertise that are not the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.
- Councillor Booth announced his appointments as follows:
 - Culture, Arts and Heritage – Councillor Hicks
 - Rural and Farming – Councillors J Clark and Roy
 - Projects – Councillors Booth and J Clark

He stated that it would be himself that sits on Audit and Risk Management Committee.

- Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that this will be an opportunity not merely for the Council to expand the work that it does but to get more members and newer members involved in the work of the Council, which he feels can only be a good thing. He stated that the reason for having the arrangements of Chairman and Vice-Chairman to be decided at each meeting or project of the Project Review Executive Advisory Committee is because it will not be known which particular members would be excluded because they are a member of the committee which has referred the particular item and it does give the opportunity for members with particular expertise to be the Chairman or Vice-Chairman for that one project.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Seaton and agreed that

- **the establishment of 3 new Executive Advisory Committees be approved as follows:**
 - **Culture, Arts and Heritage Executive Advisory Committee with 7 substantive and 5 substitute seats**

- **Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee with 7 substantive and 5 substitute seats; and**
- **Project Review Executive Advisory Committee with 11 substantive and 6 substitute seats;**
- **the proposed amendments to the Constitution to reflect the changes set out at Paragraph 3.1 of the report and as set out in Appendix A be approved;**
- **the proposed allocation of seats to the new and existing committees and panels in accordance with political proportionality requirements as set out in Appendix B in the column entitled 'Adjusted' be approved;**
- **the proposed appointments to seats allocated in accordance with Paragraph 3.3 of the report and as set out in Appendix C be approved;**
- **arrangements are made for the Culture, Arts and Heritage Executive Advisory Committee to meet three times per year and the Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee two times per year; and**
- **consideration is given to the application of the Members' Allowance Scheme to these committees as part of the IRP's Review and future recommendation to Full Council.**

5.49 pm

Chairman



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Civic Engagements

From July 17, 2023 to September 22, 2023

July 26, 2023	Orchard House Care Home event Attended by the Chairman
August 2, 2023	Lyncroft Care Home event Attended by the Chairman
August 19, 2023	Wisbech Park Run Inaugural Event Attended by the Chairman
September 1, 2023	Barton Manor Care Home Opening Event Attended by the Chairman
September 3, 2023	March Armed Forces Fair Attended by the Chairman Sutton Bridge RAF Memorial Event Attended by the Vice Chairman
September 7, 2023	RAF Wyton Annual Reception Attended by the Chairman
September 15, 2023	Fenland District Council Civic Reception Attended by Chairman and Vice Chairman
September 17, 2023	Thetford Town Council Battle of Britain Service Attended by the Chairman

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Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

**October 2023
(For performance in
June, July & August 2023)**

Cabinet Members



Cllr Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



Cllr Ian Benney
Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth & Skills



Cllr Jan French
Deputy Leader of the
Council, Portfolio Holder
for Revenues & Benefits
and Civil Parking
Enforcement



Cllr Sam Hoy
Portfolio Holder for
Housing & Licensing



Cllr Dee Laws
Portfolio Holder for
Planning & Flooding



Cllr Alex Miscandlon
Portfolio Holder for
Leisure & Internal
Drainage Boards



Cllr Peter Murphy
Portfolio Holder for
Refuse & Cleansing,
Parks & Open Spaces



Cllr Chris Seaton
Portfolio Holder for
Transport, Heritage &
Culture



Cllr Steve Tierney
Portfolio Holder for
Communications,
Transformation, Climate
Change & Strategic
Refuse



Cllr Susan Wallwork
Portfolio Holder for
Community, Health,
Environmental Health,
CCTV, Community
Safety & Military
Covenant

Communities

Projects from Business Plan:

Support Vulnerable Members of Our Community

ARP updates (Cllr French)

The performance of the Anglia Revenue Partnership continues to be positive. In terms of Business rates, collection exceeded target in the first quarter, it will be closely monitored in the current economic climate.

Council Tax collection (in terms of number or days to process and amount collected) was also on target at the end of Quarter 1. The level of automation ARP currently undertake with our Universal Credit notifications and new claims is helping performance, whilst smoothing the customer experience. The collection in this area will be also closely monitored throughout the year in the current economic climate.

The team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

- Local Council Tax Support
- Single Person Discount
- Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges including possible retrospective charges. Work on the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub has commenced following East Camb's and Fenland approving the business case to extend the Fraud and Compliance work for the two partners. This has aligned the Fraud and Compliance work currently being carried out for other partners of the Anglia Revenues Partnership as indicated in the fraud savings on the quarterly performance report. Funding for 2 additional posts from County has been secured for until the end of the financial year and those posts have been filled.

Supporting residents to manage the effects of the costs of living (Cllr Boden)

The review of newly awarded Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes. The team are working with the largest Social Housing provider in the authority to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse.

ARP are also developing new online 'contact us' form designed to be a streamlined one stop access point for customer contact. An intelligent information gathering tool linking into online forms will ensure we gather the correct information at the first contact and route it to the correct team, thereby enabling quicker decision-making and payment processes.

Homelessness and meeting housing needs (Cllr Hoy)

The Housing Options team has successfully prevented 81 households from becoming homeless so far in 2023/24. Total homeless presentations for this period are 697. Housing

advice has been given to 430 households where no duties were owed. There has been a 4.4% increase in homeless presentations compared to this point last year (2022/23 = 670 presentations).

The team continues to be focussed on homeless prevention and supporting those in need within the Fenland community. Despite the numerous challenges, we continue to have some success with discharging cases via the private rental sector. This is becoming increasingly difficult with rent increases and Housing Benefit not keeping pace – the gap continues to grow. We are attempting to streamline the referral process into single person supported accommodation by working with external providers to reduce the number of referral forms required. Discussions are ongoing.

We remain committed to reducing our B&B use which has also seen a 22% increase over the past year. We have a number of additional temporary accommodation properties that are now available which enable us to move households out of B&B quicker. Further properties will be available in the future via grant funding received through the Local Authority Housing Fund. This will significantly reduce the time period spent in B&B for households with a family commitment.

A combination of a significant reduction in existing social housing properties becoming available for relet alongside the availability of many new affordable homes being delayed has meant that households are spending longer in temporary accommodation (particularly B&B). The Council is meeting with Clarion on a weekly basis to discuss what properties are becoming ready for relet to match our households who are in B&B and temporary accommodation. This partnership work is working well.

We anticipate that there will be a further uplift in the number of households requiring housing advice as the cost-of-living crisis continues into the autumn and winter months. The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work for the year is currently 46% (81 preventions divided by 178 households where duties were owed). It is envisaged that performance will continue to improve as void times in social housing reduce and new affordable homes are completed and become available for let.

Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)

As at 31.07.23, under the Rough Sleeper Initiative Project (RSI), The Council were supporting 12 rough sleepers, as well as 5 clients who were placed in temporary accommodation and 1 who was sofa surfing, therefore working with a total of 18 individuals.

Of the 12 rough sleepers, 2 have no recourse to public funds (called “Restricted Eligibility”). However, through the support of Outreach and notice served from the Home Office to one of the individuals, they have since taken steps to be able to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme and the Council are in contact with the Home Office Escalation Service to push these decisions through. In addition, 1 of the 5 clients placed in emergency accommodation at The Ferry Project also had Restricted Eligibility. However, through the links established with the Home Office, this case was able to be escalated within 2 weeks and the client was granted full settled status, therefore preventing them from becoming street homeless again.

The remaining 10 clients who are rough sleeping are being supported by our Outreach team

as well as Ferry Hub. Outreach carries out 1 x early Outreach session each week and remain present around town daily, carrying out support sessions with clients. Our rough sleepers are also encouraged to access support at the Ferry Hub to shower, access laundry facilities and engage with further professionals to seek support. Of those rough sleeping we have 4 who are also engaged with our other key partners such as Changing Futures partnership and Housing First programme. Changing Futures is identifying cases of complex needs individuals across Cambs and Peterborough and developing a collective public sector response to get to the root cause of accommodation issues. Housing First is a programme that provides a home and then builds intense support for the individual's needs. This is our core group of rough sleepers who have higher support needs and require a multi-agency approach to be able to move on.

There continues to be a strong link between the RSI project and Operation Luscombe during the bi-weekly meetings to support those rough sleepers who do not engage well with services and cause anti-social behaviour around Wisbech town centre. One particular rough sleeper is currently being progressed through the Op Luscombe route and the Police are looking to act against them due to their lack of engagement with the support on offer as well as continuing to offend.

Through the RSI project and with support from partners, over the course of July 2023 we were successful in moving 4 clients on either from the streets or from being in temporary accommodation in to settled accommodation. One client who was rough sleeping in Whittlesey and would not engage with support services, successfully went into temporary accommodation. They were referred to Changing Futures and following intense multi-agency support from partners, the client moved into mental health supported accommodation during July and has settled extremely well. This multi-agency way of working for our core-group of rough sleepers will remain in place, through the strong relationships built with partner agencies, to ensure that the right accommodation is found for those who are rough sleeping.

Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)

Since the last portfolio update presented to Full Council we have had two Golden Age Fairs (Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey on Friday 16th June and Christchurch Community Centre on Friday 30th June). Both were very well attended by partners and at the events we had the following organisations join us to provide information, advice and guidance; Clarion Housing, Fitness Rush, Careline, FACT, Communities Service Team (CCC), Anglian Water, How Are You? Fenland, East of England Ambulance Service, Caring Together, Breathe Easy, PECT, Neighbourhood Watch, The Bobby Scheme, Age UK, Model Railway, Library Service, Versus Arthritis, CamSight, Care Network, Active Fenland, Women's Institute, Fraud and Cyber Prevent, Healthy You, Royal British Legion, Cambs Fire and Rescue, College of West Anglia, Country Court Care Home and Hereward Rail Partnership.

We had in excess of 100 over 60's visiting the Whittlesey Fair and over 75 visiting the Christchurch event with some great feedback from partners and residents alike.

The Golden Age Team would also like to officially welcome our three newest members to the Team; Cllr Nick Meekins, Cllr Brenda Barber and Cllr Jan French.

Housing Enforcement Policy & Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy) - DH

The Council investigated 49 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation in the period April 1st to July 31st 2023. The Council has undertaken 13 positive interventions in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district.

Council officers intervened to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to make them safe for the residents. From these inspections, 8 formal notices and 9 Civil Penalty notices have been served.

The geographical spread is as follows:

Town	HMOs investigated	Privately Rented Homes investigated
Wisbech	9	32
March	1	6
Chatteris	0	2
Whittlesey	2	1
Villages	1	8

VILLAGE BREAKDOWN

Benwick = 0

Coates = 0

Coldham = 0

Christchurch = 1

Doddington = 0

Eastrea = 0

Elm = 1

Fridaybridge = 1

Gorefield = 0

Guyhirn = 2

Leverington = 4

Manea = 0

Newton = 0

Parson Drove = 0

Throckenholt = 0

Tydd = 0

Turves = 0

WSM = 0

Further to the team having completed the HMO guidance booklet for landlords, the document has now been emailed to those landlords on the marketing distribution list and is available on the council's website. Officers are now working to produce a similar document intended to provide advice relating to single/family let accommodation.

The team approach to their enforcement work is now embedded into a holistic approach to legislative breaches, incorporating alongside Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessments, Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) and Electrical Installation Condition regulations (EICR). Since the last

update, officers have now served 6 MEES notices, 6 EICR notices and 2 EPC fines.

Recovery of unpaid fines continue, utilising additional powers (over and above the normal recovery processes that the Council has) to recover outstanding fines that is available for recovery of Civil Penalty Notices. The power available is a Money Judgement Application.

Performance profile is on track as the reports for investigations increase in the winter months.

Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy)

The tables below represent properties bought back into use up to and including 31 July 2023.

Table 1

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use, through officer involvement, from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	24	5
Total for the period	1.4.23 – 31.3.24	29

Table 2

Represents the number of properties brought back into use for the New Homes Bonus from 4 October 2022 to 2 October 2023 (CTB1 submission date)

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	56	6
Total for the period	4.10.22 - 2.10.23	62

Several homeowners have been supported by the officer to apply to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to remove their properties from council tax for the duration of the property renovation. This is proving to be successful, and owners feel supported by the Council, through the officer's work and monitoring of the renovation. Several of the renovations are now complete and have been brought back into use and are paying council tax, providing valuable homes to Fenland residents. Historically there has been no officer monitoring of deleted properties from council tax and consequently some properties have never been brought back into council tax. Through the empty homes approach the officer ensures the property is occupied and the property brought back into council tax.

During July, the officer completed visits to empty properties in Wisbech, March and Manea. Several of the properties were occupied, so council tax was updated, and the property removed from the empty list. Following reports from members of the public, using the online reporting system, the officer checked the properties referred and determined they were empty, and the owners had not updated council tax.

Case Example:

The officer identified that property A had been purchased, a renovation started but never finished and the property was empty. The officer approached council tax who confirmed the owner of property A informed them they moved in following purchase and were granted single person discount. The officer used a tracing company to search for the owner as they clearly were not residing in the property and located them elsewhere in Fenland. Property B where the owner was allegedly residing indicated the owner of A had left and had moved to the

empty property and the account holder for property B had claimed single person discount. Consequently, both accounts have been referred to the fraud team within council tax. Property A has never been occupied and the empty status was awarded and backdated advising the owner they were liable for a premium charge and the single person discount will have to be repaid.

During property visits the officer always leaves a card confirming the visit date. If they receive a call from the owner this indicates the frequency of visits by the owner to the property and highlights those properties where no visits take place, alerting the officer to monitor this more closely. Although letters generate initial contact the property visits still provide the most detail about a property and are one of the most valuable tools in the officer's toolkit, including:

- Condition assessment of the property
- The impact of the empty property on neighbours and surrounding area
- Intelligence from neighbours about the owner's/frequency of visits
- Evidential pictures of the condition
- Confirmation of whether it is furnished as this informs Council Tax decision and empty status.
-

During June and July 2023, the annual survey letters have been sent by ARP. Owners often contact the officer directly to provide an update on their property. The surveys always provide a useful update on changes to a property and prompt the owner to consider the future of the property. The officer will liaise with council tax to follow up on the properties which do not respond to the survey.

Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Leisure Centre and Freedom Leisure Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)

Leisure centre performance continues to be at around the challenging levels that Freedom had set at the start of the year.

Learn to Swim

3,030 children are taking part in the learn to swim programme every week. This is a significant level of performance, however it falls slightly short of the target, with a challenging additional 250 attendees targeted this year. Improved use of pool space and additional qualified swimming teachers have allowed growth in the number of children learning to swim. The most challenging site is the George Campbell as it lacks the learner pool enjoyed by the Hudson and Manor.

Memberships

Membership levels are also slightly below challenging targets with over 4,400 members across the four facilities. Despite the cost of living issues, membership levels remain firm in the facilities with little or no impact at this time.

Recent improvements to the Manor men's changing room and the soon to open George Campbell gym changing rooms will support the teams with highlighting the facilities available to local members.

Staffing challenges

Recruiting staff into the facilities remains a challenge, with appropriately skilled instructors for swimming or exercise classes short in Fenland. Freedom continue to offer training opportunities to current staff to increase the resilience of the staffing base.

Excess Energy Cost Support

FDC Cabinet has considered a report regarding support for Freedom regarding excess energy costs. The Council has decided to continue to support Freedom in this regard through to 31 March 2024. Unfortunately, energy costs remain unlikely to drop back to early 2022 rates for some time.

Swimming Pool Support Fund bid

FDC has submitted a bid of approximately £175,000 to the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund for revenue support for excess energy costs. Feedback is expected in the coming months, although indications – taken from the application specification – seem that the Council will not be successful with this grant bid.

Sport England opens a further Swimming pool Support Fund round, this time capital only, in early October. Although this fund is also likely to be many times oversubscribed, the Council has more of a chance of some success with bids for a replacement combined heat and power unit, additional solar PV panels as well as building management control systems to be submitted.

Integrated Care Partnership (Cllr Boden)

An Integrated Care Partnership development session took place in June. The focus of the event was to review progress so far since the introduction of the better care fund.

Since the introduction of this new finance scheme in 2015, many changes have taken place to focus on the key better care national priorities of; staying well, safe, independent and at home for longer, providing the right care at the right place and time.

Pooled budgets are now set for Cambridgeshire (£73,643,397).

The future objectives explored at the session were;

- Build on the good work and learning to date
- Place based delivery at heart of integration vision
- Integrated Neighbourhoods are about supporting people at all stages of their life journey
- Integrating services and budgets at place level
- Focus on prevention and early intervention – support people to remain independent for as long as possible
- When people need support – this is personalised, joined up and people have choice and control.

Sometimes people have crisis situations – we want to:

- Prevent them going into hospital unnecessarily
- Support them to go home safely after a stay in hospital
- System enablers; including shared care record, data developments, workforce development and quality of provision

Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)

The three principle Active Fenland projects continue to deliver opportunities for physical activity and social interaction to the Fenland community. The schedule of sessions can be found here: [Active Fenland - Fenland District Council](#)

All schemes are grant funded. The team's priority is delivering opportunities to be active in a local setting at an affordable price. To ensure the continued viability of sessions, once established at no cost, a small fee to attend is introduced, meaning that the session will continue without grant support.

FDC has funding from the Intergrated Care System for a fourth project stream. Work is underway to plan delivery, expected to commence in the next month.

A highlight for Active Fenland activities in the past few months includes providing financial support for the volunteers who have set up the new **Wisbech ParkRun**. This is no small feat and requires a good number of committed people to move such a project forwards. The first session was incredibly popular and was attended by Cllrs Miscandlon, Wallwork and Imafidon and the Mayor and Mayoress of Wisbech. Cllr Meekins was also present as he is the lead organising volunteer who has managed the adult parkrun with assistance from many others.

The impact of the opportunity that the community now has on a Saturday morning in Wisbech Park should not be underestimated. With 4 events completed at the time of writing, the event has seen an average of 158 people take part every week – already 630 people in 1 month. 46 volunteers have been involved so far. ParkRun's can be undertaken by running, jogging or walking and are not competitive. The events also form a social setting for people, as well as the opportunity to be active.

Active Fenland Project delivery information:

Prevention of poor health in the Community – funded by the Integrated Care Board

1. What's being delivered

- park run Wisbech launched in August
- wellbeing dance & stretch both launched in August
- 3 x library events in summer holidays
- 3 x Tea Dances (Chatteris / March / Wisbech)

2. Who is this project targeting:

- Park run – mass participation: All ages – walking or running
- Wellbeing dance & stretch: Adults – those looking for fun, fully inclusive dance classes
- Wellbeing stretch & breathe – lunch time, end of week, de-stress & breathe session, very inclusive (chair based) – originally targeting those working on lunch break but in reality, most attending are retired/not working
- Let's Get Started programme – complete beginners to the leisure centre environment, those who wish to build confidence and peer relations.

3. Feedback

- Tea dances – lots of positive comments & enjoyment, asking for *“more to be run in the future “*
- A participant who attended the first initial tea dance *“she has now attended all the tea dances and has met and created new friends. Shes also now interested in other*

activities we run”

- Wellbeing Dance & Stretch – *“really fun, lots of laughing, been looking for a girls night out in town but able to get active at the same time. “*

April – August attendance and session information

- No. of sessions 57
- No. walks delivered: 78
- No. new participants: 133
- No. attendees: 740

Healthy You Project – funded by CCC Public Health Team

1. What’s being delivered

- The 3 x badminton sessions (social, no strings and Intermediate)
- Walking football
- Forever fit sessions are continuing to run at the Hudson Leisure Centre
- General Yoga sessions at the Oasis Centre, Wisbech
- Beginners and intermediate sessions in Wimblington
- Strength and Balance sessions are running at The Oasis Centre, and Doddington Court
- Wellbeing walks - These are continuing to be run in all 4 market towns, with 2 running on different days and locations in March
- Ready Steady Go family activities were run at Wisbech, March and Whittlesey Libraries during the holiday in August to support the Libraries Summer Reading Challenge.
- Twilight Workshop sessions to go into schools to do a presentation on how to develop more of an Active lifestyle for children from September.

2. Who are we targeting?

Various age groups from older people in care homes and at leisure centres with the classes held on a regular basis. The tea dances and the walks also attracted older people.

Schools were also targeted to support families during the holidays.

April – August attendance information

- Tea dances 103
- Wellbeing Walks 520
- Hudson Leisure Centre Activities 495
- Yoga 345
- Strength and balance 107

Healthy Weight – Community Programme funded by CCC public health team

The following programmes have been delivered for this project;

- **Run for Fun** Wisbech, (Feb – May)
- **First Step Fitness** – March, (April – August)

- **Netball for Novices** – Wisbech, (April – July)
- **Run for Fun** – March, (July – October)
- **Football to Fit** – Leverington, (Sept – Nov)
- **First Step Fitness** – Wisbech, (Sept – Dec)
- **Run for Fun** – Chatteris, (Sept – Nov)

The netball programme has been a huge success with all participants wanting another club to be delivered - another Netball club in Wisbech and another fitness class in March will be set up

Number of attendees from April

50 attendees from 5 different programmes.

Health Prevention Pathways – (New project) - funded by the Integrated Care Board

Pre-Fit – Whittlesey

- Aiming to start the sessions at the beginning to mid-October.

Cardiac Phase IV sessions

There have been good partnerships built around this aspect of this project with GP's, social prescribers & care networks. Discussions with hospitals regarding the programme are imminent. It is anticipated that 2 new instructors will be trained to deliver this project as skilled staff that could deliver this programme are very limited in the District.

- Sessions will be delivered at the leisure centres initially
- Sessions starting in January
- Cardio rehab Community team is looking to set up Level 3 Cardio rehab in Wisbech alongside one already running in Doddington. Phase III will signpost into the Phase IV sessions.
- Phase IV sessions will link with the Healthy You Stop Smoking Team as smoking prevalence directly links to cardiac issues.

Diabetes Level 4 sessions

- Instructors are being sought to be trained to deliver the Level 4 Diabetes course
- Session development will begin once instructors are identified

Get Active – A Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity

The Government has launched **Get Active – A Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity**. An extract from the Strategy may be found below;

The government wants to help build a healthier nation by tackling high levels of inactivity, and by making sure that the sport and physical activity sector thrives for future generations. This strategy sets out how the government will work with the sector to achieve these aims by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be active. Central to this will be a focus on establishing a lifetime habit of being physically active amongst children and young people, including playing sport, supporting the sector to be welcoming to all, and ensuring the sector is prepared for both future challenges and

opportunities. Whoever you are, or wherever you live there should be good facilities, a strong network of sports clubs that are open to you, great sport and physical activity opportunities in schools, and confidence in sport and the sector. This strategy sets out a blueprint to make that a reality.

The government cannot deliver the changes needed alone, so we will work alongside the sector to deliver this vision. This strategy is a call to organisations across the country which deliver sport and physical activity to go further on the challenge of building a happier, healthier and more active nation. This is especially the case as we come out of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and experience challenging economic circumstances. This doesn't just include traditional sports clubs, schools and other public sector organisations but also private sector businesses, the outdoor activity sector and organisations with a core objective of getting the nation more active.

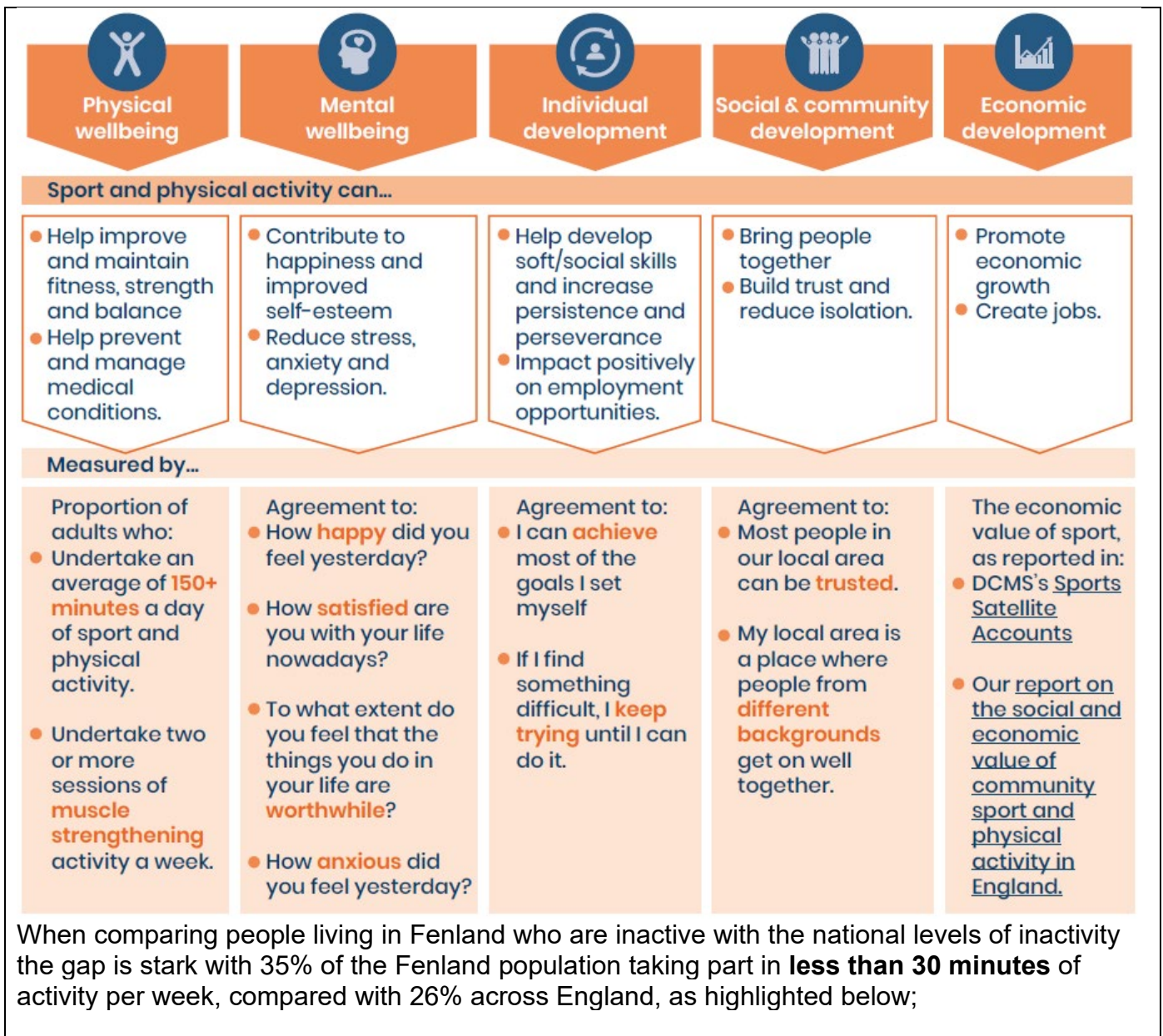
The outcomes of being more active are well known – now is the time to shout about them and to embed activity at the heart of government policy. The more active we are, the healthier we become both physically and mentally, the stronger our communities, and the more prosperous our society. Great work has been done by so many groups, but we now need to go even further to ensure everyone feels this benefit. This strategy sets out the framework for the government and the sport world to do exactly that.

Sport England – Active Lives Survey

National picture regarding physical activity levels

Sport England recently reported on national activity levels – tracking recovery from the pandemic.

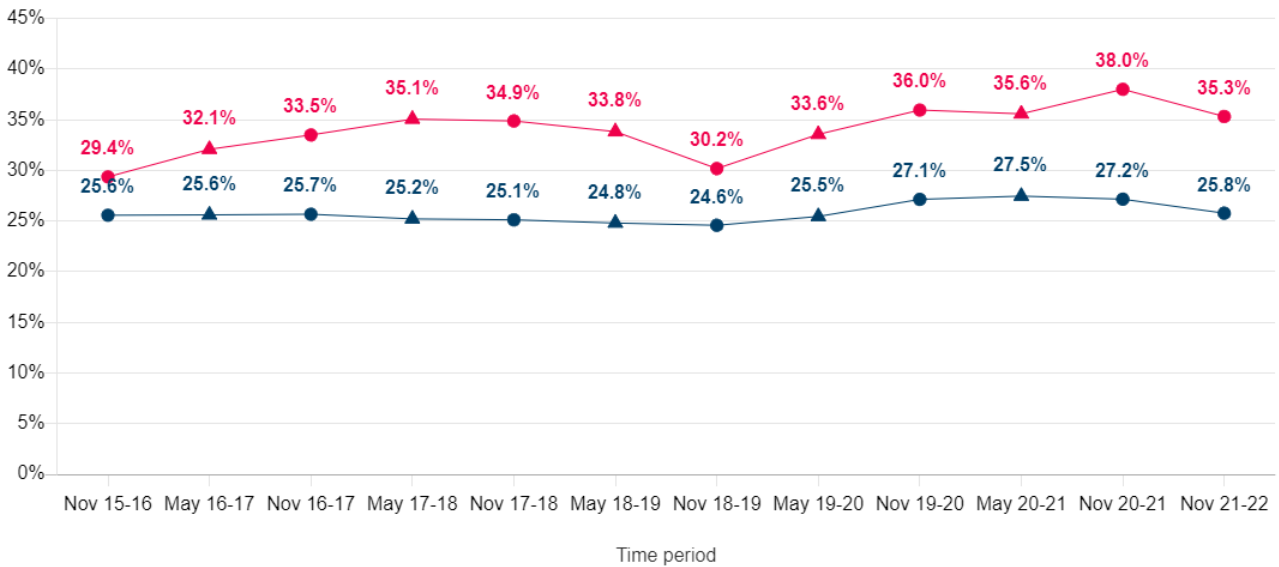
Levels of physical activity and sport undertaken by the population is important for several reasons as highlighted by the report;



Inactive: less than 30 minutes a week Fairly active: 30-149 minutes per week Active: at least 150 minutes a week

Show values

Percentages Population



% Levels of activity (Main - 3 categories) by Location:

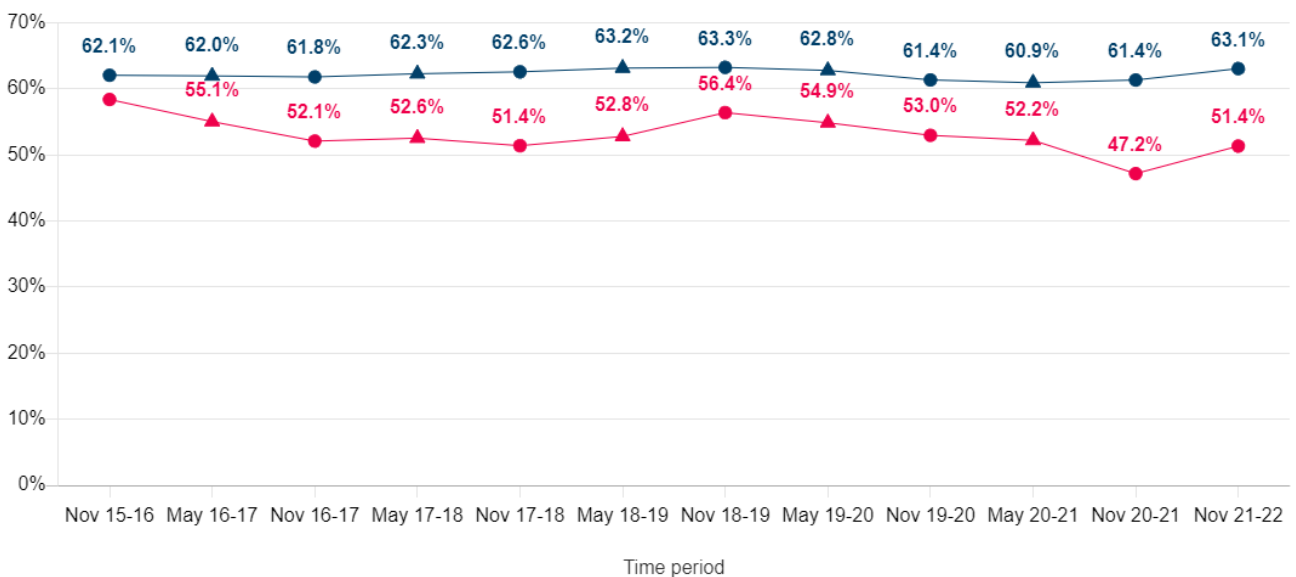
England (Nation) Fenland LA

The recommended level of physical activity for adults is 150 minutes per week. This is not referring to just sport – it is any physical activity. Again, those meeting this target in Fenland is significantly below the national level;

Inactive: less than 30 minutes a week Fairly active: 30-149 minutes per week Active: at least 150 minutes a week

Show values

Percentages Population



% Levels of activity (Main - 3 categories) by Location:

England (Nation) Fenland LA

National swimming participation picture

The chart below highlights that the number of people swimming continues to recover following the pandemic – as reported by Freedom, particularly with the significant increase in children on the learn to swim scheme. However, the overall trend since 2015 sees a national reduction in the number of monthly swimmers;

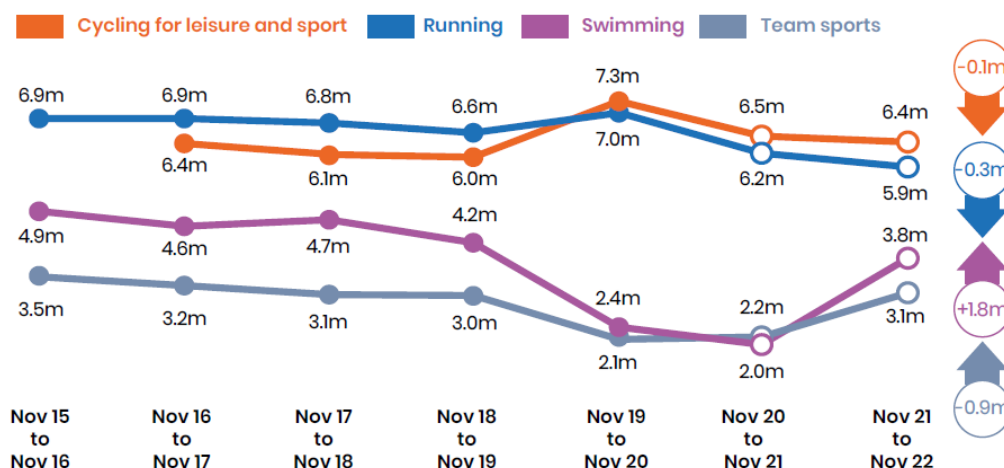
Running and swimming activity levels have declined over the long term

This page shows four notable activity groups, the previous page looked at the three activity groups with the most people taking part.

Cycling for leisure and sport, and running (includes treadmill) both had slightly falling numbers before the pandemic and both saw numbers increase during it. However, since the pandemic we've seen different outcomes for each with cycling for leisure and sport remaining up on pre-pandemic (by just over 300,000) and running dropping further, continuing the prior trend (down by nearly 1m since Nov 15-16).

Swimming and team sports both had downward trends before the pandemic but were perhaps the most impacted activities given the nature and locations of taking part in them. While swimming has seen significant recovery, levels remain below pre-pandemic and we see a continuation of the downward trend (down by just over 1m since Nov 15-16). In contrast, team sports has recovered to pre-pandemic levels with indications of a stabilisation at around 3.1m players.

Taken part at least twice in the last 28 days (age 16+) for selected activity groups



Deprivation and being active

The same report also highlights the continuing disparity between areas that are most deprived and those that are not. Activity levels fell across all places during the pandemic, however the scale of the drops were greatest in the most deprived places (IMD 1-3). The picture of recovery also differs by deprivation level. The least deprived places (IMD 8-10) see a return to pre-pandemic levels, with indications of an underlying upward trend. The mid-deprived places (IMD 4-7) haven't seen full recovery to pre-pandemic levels, remaining 0.8% down but still see activity levels above November 2015-16 (up 1.0%). However, it is again the most deprived places (IMD 1-3) that fare worse, with activity levels remaining below both pre-pandemic (down 3.1%) and November 2015-16 levels (down 2.6%);

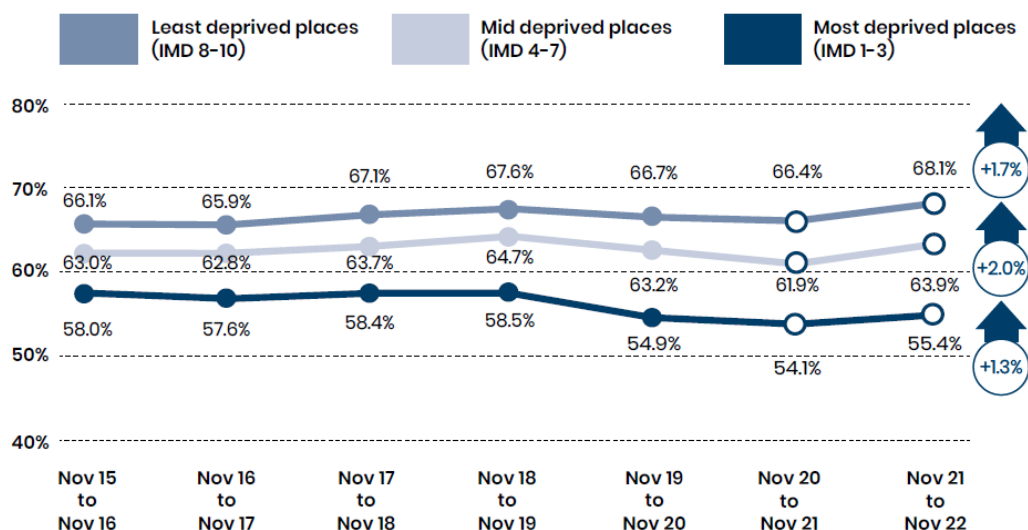
Those living in the most deprived places are yet to see activity levels fully recover

Activity levels fell across all places during the pandemic, however the scale of the drops were greatest in the most deprived places (IMD 1-3).

The picture of recovery also differs by deprivation level. The least deprived places (IMD 8-10) see a return to pre-pandemic levels, with indications of an underlying upward trend. The mid-deprived places (IMD 4-7) haven't seen full recovery to pre-pandemic levels, remaining 0.8% down but still see activity levels above November 2015-16 (up 1.0%).

However, it is again the most deprived places (IMD 1-3) that fare worse, with activity levels remaining below both pre-pandemic (down 3.1%) and November 2015-16 levels (down 2.6%).

Active: 150+ minutes a week



Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

This information is significant for Fenland and continues to highlight the need for a focus on our more deprived Wards with regard to encouraging people to become more active.

Increase the use of local open spaces and collaborate with local activity providers and other partners to address health inequalities (Cllr Wallwork)

FDC was awarded Levelling Up Parks Funding this year. This money has supported the play area improvements in Wisbech park as well as tree assessments and tree works in the same park. In addition the funding supported three different activity streams taking part over the summer in Wisbech Park;

- Wild Play
- Art Take a Seat
- Multi-activity sessions

These sessions were all provided for free using the funding from DLUHC, with many people taking part in the sessions over the summer holidays.

Additionally, the County Council also ran sessions in the park to engage young people in activities.

The positive feedback from families and participants in the activity programme has been overwhelming. FDC will investigate opportunities for funding similar activities next summer, broadening the geographical scope if possible – all third party funding dependent.

Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

The Integrated Neighbourhood Boards (the place delivery mechanism of the Integrated Care partnership) continue to meet monthly and to develop actions in support of local priorities.

Wisbech priorities are, smoking cessation, wellbeing and mental health and community engagement. Membership of the board has increased in the past few months and since the neighbourhood coordinator started in post (this role is to support and manage progress)

successes have increased. In August, the board agreed to support the county council public health smoking cessation pilot initiative, if a successful government fund is achieved. This is an item that was presented to the July health and wellbeing / Integrated Care Board to consider.

The South Fenland Board priorities are access to services, prevention and mental health. The south board has led on a survey to measure access to dementia services. The outcome has identified potential access issues particularly in the southern part of Fenland and work is ongoing to refine this data.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

Delivering the Creativity & Culture Strategy (Cllr Seaton)

The Fenland Cultural Strategy group completed a facilitated piece of work in June 2023 with an independent, Cambridgeshire-based Creative Consultant.

This was externally funded by Arts Council England and saw significant engagement with a range of partners. The report including a future action plan and Theory of Change process, and recommendations have been agreed and accepted. The Fenland Cultural Strategy Board has been re-established and has a separate working sub-group has begun working towards a substantial application to the Arts Council England Place Partnership Fund.

The UK: Shared Prosperity Funded project title Amplifying Community Arts and Culture has levered in additional external funding to enhance the impact made. The Fenland Culture Fund, which includes a small-grants scheme, is due to launch in the Autumn. It includes a further investment of £25,000 from Arts Council England.

The Creativity & Culture Development officer has been successful in securing £50,000 to deliver a programme of events to support young people's mental health using creativity and art interventions. A project plan is being developed with delivery anticipated to commence in late 2023, early 2024.

Working with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage (Cllr Seaton)

The Creativity and Culture Development Officer is an active member of a range of Fenland events and groups. Including:

- Fenland Young Creatives, Local Cultural Education Partnership which is committed to children experiencing art and culture at home in Fenland and creative volunteering and careers.
- National Trust Wisbech Board, a brand-new board designed to monitor the new Project Manager based at Peckover House and supporting the National Trust in realigning its role in Wisbech.
- Wisbech Christmas Fayre Committee.
- March St George's Festival Working Group, supporting Creative People and Places Marketplace and Fenland Arts Association to submit a funding application to enhance St George's Festival 2024.
- Advised Love Wisbech, Rose Fair Committee with suggested partners to invite and

evaluation measures to consider. Enabled Creative Arts East to connect with partners to deliver arts, culture and creative activities in parks and open spaces over the summer.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)

The annual celebration of volunteers will take place later in the financial year 2023/24 and publicity, nominations and ceremony will be planned out between the Council and Fenland Citizen.

6 Market Place Wisbech – Fire Damaged Building (Cllrs Laws & Seaton)

A litter pick and de-weed in and around the scaffolding was undertaken in August and quotes are being obtained for some hoarding which could be used to help screen the site. With regard to the applications for selective demolitions on the site, following consultations and a site meeting with Historic England, the applicant is revising the proposal so that it adopts a staged and iterative approach. Amended proposals are expected soon.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2023/24	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	6.48 days	9.00 days	7.56	
ARP2	Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	5.29 days	10.00 days	10.33	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	246	250	62	
CELP2	The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	53%	57%	46%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	81	50	29	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£98,395	£45,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP6	Number of Active Health sessions per year that improve community health	513	650	262	
CELP19	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	29	30	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP20	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland	£43,000	£201,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
ARP 2 - The number of days to process Housing Benefit in Quarter 1 is just outside the 10-day target. This is higher than we saw in Quarter 1 for 2022-2023 when it was 7.72 days. Heavy workloads in the first quarter have had an impact and the additional workload

from administering the Council Tax Support fund and 2 Alternative Energy schemes on behalf of DESNZ. All 3 were implemented at extremely short notice at our busiest time of the year. The schemes have now ended.

CELP 1 – This target is on track to being met due to the spike in reports for service that take place in the winter months from private sector tenants.

CELP 2 - A combination of a significant reduction in existing social housing properties becoming available for relet alongside many new affordable homes being delayed ready to be available to let has meant year to date for the end of July 2023 the proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through housing options work is 46% against a target of 57%. At July Full Council, this was 33%. It is envisaged with a forecast increase in existing properties becoming available for relet through improved relet performance of our housing association partners alongside a significant increase in new affordable housing completions will continue to improve performance over the financial year.

Environment

Projects from Business Plan:

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

Diverting waste from landfill (Cllr Murphy)

The amounts and make up of waste presented by customers continues to change in response to broader issues such as the cost-of-living increases.

The provisional waste figures for the first 4 months of this financial year demonstrate elements of these changes. The teams have already collected a total of more than 14,500 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste from our customers. Within this total the Residual Waste remains broadly unchanged from last year, overall recycling waste has reduced by around 6% (180 tonnes) and the weather this year has resulted in an increase in garden waste collected of 26% (781 tonnes).

Collected Waste Tonnages	2022	2023	% Change
Overall tonnage	13,956	14,527	4.09%
Residual Tonnage	8,014	7,984	-0.38%
Dry Recycling Tonnage Actual	2,960	2,780	-6.07%
Compost Tonnage Actual	2,983	3,763	26.17%
Dry Recycling & Compost Tonnage Total	5,942	6,543	10.11%

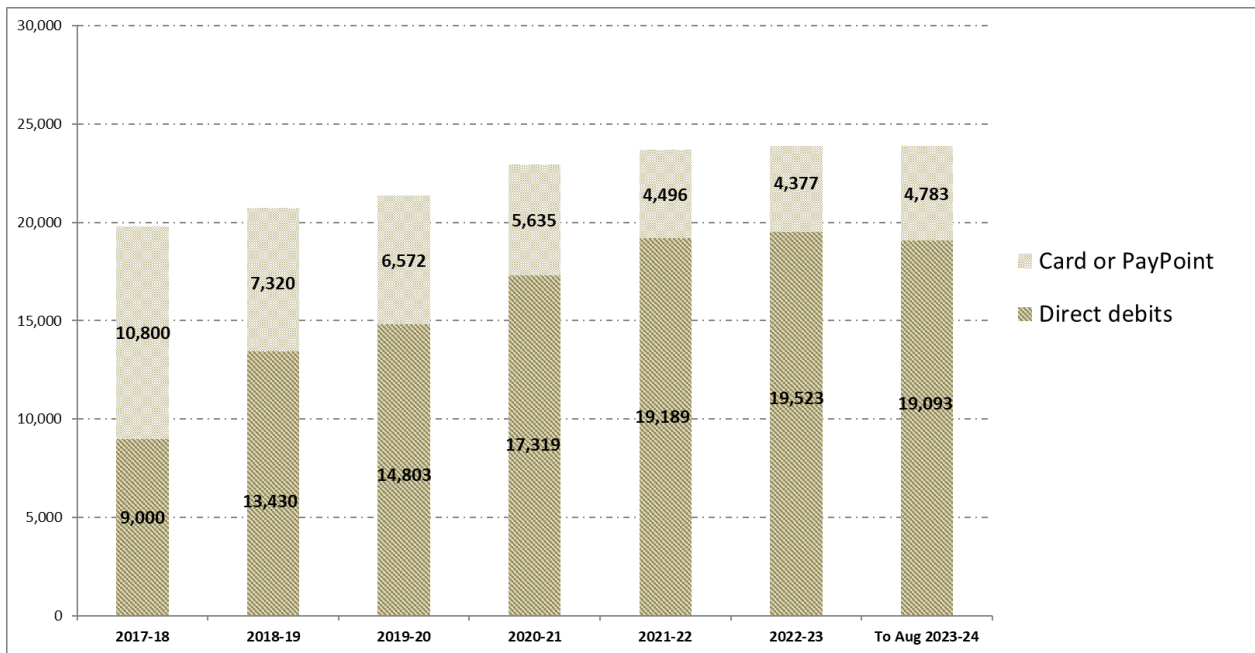
Collected Waste – Percentage Recycling (Blue Bin to Residual)	27%	26%
Percentage Recycling (Blue and Brown Bin to Residual)	43%	45%

The economic pressure on our customers is being seen in the reduced amount of recycling being produced. These reduced levels, along with significant changes in the values of the recycling material markets has seen a change in the income achieved from recycling compared to the highs of last year. In the first 4 months of this financial year, we achieved a net income of £110,182 from the materials presented, which is £92,733 less than the same period last year. This is because of a tonne of Fenland's recycling being worth around £130 a year ago and is now worth closer to £60 which has reduced the income from the materials.

We will continue to support our customers to maximise their recycling efforts and continue to treat their waste as a resource, but it is clear that the economic situation is having an impact across the recycling resource chain and impacting income from the materials collected.

Garden Waste Collection (Cllr Murphy)

The levels of garden waste subscriptions this year are already approaching those at the end of last year. A total of 23,876 subscriptions so far this year, with 80% direct debits, has generated an income of around £968,000 to cover the costs of providing the garden waste service to those who have chosen to make use of it.



This summer has so far produced significantly more garden waste than last year's dry summer and the team have collected more than 3,760 tonnes of garden waste. This material is sent to be composted locally.

Delivering clean streets and public spaces (Cllr Murphy)

The cleansing team works 7 days a week, 364 days a year to keep Fenland's streets and public open spaces clean.

So far this year they have responded to 681 requests from the public to deal with fly-tipping, graffiti, street cleansing or similar requests. Of these 96% (657) were actioned same or next day. Last year the team responded to 1,868 such requests with 96% (1,785) dealt with same or next day.

The scheduled cleansing and rapid response service, with support from Fenland's active local volunteers, including Street Pride groups, deliver clean streets and public open spaces in Fenland. The standard of cleanliness is monitored by Street Scene officers using Keep Britain Tidy surveying methodology across a range of land use types and all wards. In the past 4 months officers have completed 380 surveys for litter and street sweeping and found 378 to be of a suitable standard (99.5%).

Deliver a competitive trade waste service (Cllr Murphy)

Fenland has 594 commercial waste customers, including 28 who make use of the commercial food waste service. From them the team have collected more than 500 tonnes of waste, of which 45 tonnes was recycling and 32 food waste.

Tackling fly-tipping, illegal parking, dog fouling, littering and ASB (Cllr Murphy)

Fly Tipping

Total number of fly tips for June July are shown below. Rural villages have been the most affected across the district.

Month	Total	Chatteris	March	Whittlesey	Wisbech	Villages
June-23	102	3	12	24	30	33
July-23	73	5	10	7	20	31

With August figures to be provided in our next report

The Street Scene Team aim to be as proactive as they can and attend fly tipped sites to look for any evidence. During June - August to date, we have attended 74 of the tips to look for evidence. Some of our proactive work is included below:

- **A male has pleaded guilty at Peterborough Magistrates Court** in July for fly tipping in West Street car park Wisbech. A member of the public called to report that the man was emptying his property of items and leaving them piled up by the verge. A Street Scene Officer attended straight away and was able to speak the man there and then. A Fixed Penalty Notice was issued but was unpaid, so the matter was referred to Court. The man was fined £400 with costs awarded of £450 and VSC £160. **Total fine £1010.**
- As a result of our investigations, we have issued **2 Fixed Penalty Notices of £400** to individuals who we believe are responsible for dumping waste.
- 1 male was issued a littering **Fixed Penalty Notice of £150** for leaving a bin bag of rubbish in York Terrace.
- A further **3** residents received have been issued with a **£400 Fixed Penalty Notice** for failing to ensure those they employed to take their waste away for disposal was fit and proper. Sadly, by paying a cheap price and not verifying that the waste collector was an authorised waste carrier they failed in their duty of care and their rubbish was found dumped.
- **2** business owners have been issued with a **Fixed Penalty Notice of £300** each for not disposing of their electrical waste properly. Instead, we found their trade waste dumped in Wisbech and Whittlesey.
- A further **2 individuals have received a formal written warning** for fly tipping offences where we did not have sufficient evidence for a prosecution but where we suspected their involvement.

Some additional proactive work has seen us speaking with residents in areas where there are refuse issues, including carrying out visits to properties with bulky items outside offering advice on disposal and checking provisions and resolving waste matters on the ground.

Illegal Parking and Abandoned vehicles

Additional enforcement work is taking place on March Marketplace to raise awareness of the parking order following the recent improvement works. We have had to issue **3 parking fines** to cars who were

found to be parking illegally.

During this time, a total of **64 vehicles** have been reported as abandoned. All were investigated and only 1 was deemed abandoned and later removed by our contractor.

Dog Control

Our Public Space Protection Order will expire on the 1st December 2023. During June, the public were invited to have their say on how the Council propose to tackle this important community issue once it ends. The recent consultation asked for community feedback on whether the Council's application for a new Public Space Protection Order would be supported. Those consulted were asked to complete a survey through our website and social media pages.

226 replies were received with an overwhelming show of support for the Councils proposals. The results of which and the full report will be presented to Cabinet in October.

Maintaining open spaces through grounds maintenance contractor and Street Pride, In Bloom, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of groups (Cllr Murphy)

A total of 23 events were held in June and 18 in both July and August by community groups to improve the environment. This included regular work parties as well as equipment being lent to both March Brownies and Wisbech Police Cadets to undertake litter picking around the respective towns.

A few key events to highlight are:

- The Friends of Wisbech General Cemetery held a summer evening walk on Wednesday 7th June. Funds raised at the event will go towards further enhancements to the cemetery.
- Six volunteers from four street pride groups attended a refresher risk assessment training course, delivered by the Council's Senior Environmental Health Officer.
- Fenland District Council, Natural Cambridgeshire, PECT (Peterborough Environment City Trust) and Cambridgeshire ACRE joined forces to host a Nature Recovery event on Thursday 13 July where groups and residents attended to gain advice and information on developing nature restoration projects.
- Both Chatteris & Benwick were judged by Anglia in Bloom judges on 14th July. They now eagerly await the results due 20th September.
- Eight Street Pride groups were formally presented with trollies funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Communities Fund, to aid in their litter picking efforts.

Parks & Open Spaces Maintenance Jun – Aug 2023

A quarter of unseasonable weather between June and August has posed a number of issues in the management of the open spaces but our contractor, Tivoli, have performed well under the circumstances. With few exceptions, all fortnightly cuts have been managed within the allocated timescales, any missed areas have been rectified promptly, and not a single default has been issued in the year to date. Closer on-site scrutiny by the team supervisor has helped ensure standards remain acceptable and the number of complaints from public continues to decrease. Sickness absence has greatly reduced as a result of better recruitment selection and improved management practices.

All cemeteries, open and closed, have been kept in good order and the recent appointment of a designated Cemeteries Officer ensures that the procedures, standards and presentation of the areas get the attention that they deserve and prevent potential issues developing. The number of burials including cremated remains at the end of July is identical to the previous year (177). The rose gardens in both

Mount Pleasant, Wisbech and the Garden of Remembrance in Whittlesey have benefitted from winter attention and look better than ever before.

The renovation of the play area in Wisbech park was completed in early August to much public acclaim and numbers visiting on a daily basis remain high with an excellent display of play equipment on offer. The splash pad has been regularly used, despite the unpredictable weather and the trees planted in the area are flourishing. The pavilion progresses well and is due for completion by the end of the year. Our 56 Play area inspections have reduced in frequency to fortnightly, rather than weekly, to no adverse effect and have saved approximately £17k p.a. in doing so.

Tree inspections are currently taking place with over 3,000 specimens logged on our new database to date and remedial action, where required, has either taken place or been scheduled in for action in the coming months. This is a major piece of work but offers a greater degree of security that will bridge a known shortfall in the Council's green spaces operation. The total number of trees inspected on completion will exceed 5,000.

The new pavilion construction in Wisbech Park continues at a pace. It is anticipated that the roof will be fitted before the end of September, with the first fix works then taking place inside the pavilion. Discussions continue with the Town Council with regard to management of the new facility.

Working with town councils and the community to provide local markets and market town events (including Four Seasons events) (Cllr Murphy)

Chatteris festival was a great success with an income increase this year from £3,000 to £5,000, which will help to cover rising costs. Plans for 2024 are already underway.

Whittlesey Festival will return this year with lots of very exciting headline acts including Romford Drum and Trumpet and the Black Eagles Acrobatics Dance Team. The committee have been very successful raising a significant amount of sponsorship this year. Local organisations and businesses have been very generous, and the majority of rides and inflatables will be free of charge to the public. One local business had also printed the programme in kind. Families with children in the local schools can see artwork exhibited for the annual art competition in Whittlesey Library, which has been entered into by both primary and senior level.

March Christmas Market will take place this year on Sunday 3rd December 2023.

Wisbech Christmas Fayre will have new attractions this year and will take place on Sunday 10th December. Sponsorship has been gained from Wisbech Horse Fair, Wisbech Town Council and Etec Group. Wisbech Town Council also continue to deliver the road closure in kind. New attractions this year will include bell ringing and Outspoken cycles.

St George's Fayre – We continue to work with Creative People and Places Market Place and have made a bid for £5,000 to deliver arts events at next year's festival.

Review the current arrangements for parking enforcement in Fenland (Cllr French)

The County Council have commissioned Milestone to work up the remedial work designs and estimates for the TRO work packages following an additional £150k having been secured from CCC, CPCA and GCP. The sign and line work packages are required to determine the estimated cost of Milestone undertaking all of the corrective sign and line works, and these are being prepared in four tranches, one

for each of Fenlands Market Towns.

FDC have been advised that the estimated costs for all four tranches will be known at the end of September. The estimates received so far for some of the tranches would suggest that the cost of undertaking all of the corrective works is likely to be substantially over budget and in the region of £550k. The County Council have advised that the delivery of the remedial works are also likely to fall behind programmed target dates in 2024 due to FDC having not procured the works for each tranche as these became available.

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 which is now estimated to be in the region of £900k.

A service level agreement and agency agreement between both authorities would be required to 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. Both documents have been initially drafted with officers having highlighted a number of potential red flags which could impact heavily on Fenlands CPE running costs and resources.

The main areas of concern are centred around the County Council requiring FDC to be 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 employ. 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' ability to carry out enforcement where defective signs and lines have been reported and not corrected within an agreed timeframe.

A member steer shall be required for the CPE project following the receipt of the collative sign and line corrective works costs from the County Council at the end of September.

Street Lighting (Cllr French)

The amount of streetlight fault reports over the last 3 months has been relatively low as expected during the summer months with the majority of faults being associated with Parish streetlights. The absence of FDC undertaking programmed night scouts under the current contract could also mean that some streetlight faults are not being picked up.

The current repairs and maintenance works contract with Cable Test Ltd (CTL) has been extended until 31st January 2024 with a new repairs and maintenance contract expected to be tendered in September/October.

FDC Capital streetlight replacement works has been slow over the recent months with the focus now on completing any replacements works already commissioned with CTL. Following the end of the current R&M contract in January 2024 with CTL, FDC officers will appraise any outstanding replacement works and route of procurement.

An assessment of streetlight asset condition will be made in 2024 following the completion of electrical

testing works and where required structural testing in accordance with testing guidance.

FDC Car Park Maintenance (Cllr French)

Car Park asset inspections have recently been undertaken and various defects quantified. Some repair works have already been undertaken with some further works quotations awaited.

The surface repair works to Somers Road Car Park in Wisbech caused by a fire at the BT exchange building has now been completed following building stabilisation works. The FDC recycling centre within the car park has also been relocated away from the BT building to mitigate future fire risk.

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

Community Safety Partnership updates (Cllr Wallwork)

- Gates at Norfolk Street have now been erected – shops in the vicinity have provided gratitude and positive feedback. FDC will cleanse once a month for any litter that gets thrown into the passage.
- Alcohol Public Space Protection Order consultation work completed – this will help with reducing alcohol related ASB, offering intervention to persons who may have alcohol problems and reducing alcohol related litter in public places
- Community engagement sessions where members of the CSP, primarily FDC and police neighbourhood teams with other partners supporting occasionally, make themselves available for face to face engagement within numerous locations across Fenland including:
 - Eastrea Centre – FDC, Police and local Cllrs.
 - Coates Roadside – FDC & Police
 - Whittlesey – FDC (Community Safety & Streetscene), Police, Cyber Crime Officers, NHW, Cambs Fire & Rescue and the bobby scheme.
 - March Library – FDC, Police, Cyber Crime Officers, Domestic Abuse Support Service Outreach (DASS), Bobby Scheme, NHW, Cambs Fire & Rescue, & the Community Navigators.
 - Oasis Centre Wisbech – FDC, Police, Cyber Crime Officer.
 - Leverington Village Hall – FDC, Police, Cyber Crime Officer.
 - Newton Village Hall - FDC, Police, Cyber Crime Officer.
 - Wisbech Library - FDC, Cyber Crime Officers.
- Work Force Development: Frontline staff from statutory and the voluntary sectors who work across Fenland are invited to attend these free training sessions organised by Fenland CSP in partnership with subject matter experts. The intention is to keep those attending updated with latest information, trends and response options for the topics covered, to help them to support, signpost, and where necessary refer potential victims/vulnerable people to the correct service.
 - HourGlass - Elder Abuse awareness
 - Stop Suicide Awareness (Linked to a Domestic Homicide Review Recommendation).
 - Serious Organised Crime Training
 - Drug & Alcohol Abuse
 - County Lines Training for those who work in looked after children's settings

Fenland Diverse Communities Forum updates on delivering the Community Cohesion Action Plan (Cllr Wallwork)

As part of addressing cohesion and integration members of the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum (DCF) look to support people's integration into the district in a variety of ways. Apart from bringing people together to celebrate the diversity of the district, they also look to try and help people reach their maximum potential and feel valued.

The DCF identified that a number of people either wanted or needed to develop their skills and get work. Having identified this need, partners were able to identify and bid to secure funding to enable this, and with the support of the DWP and other partners identify people who would accept this help.

Building Better Opportunities (BBO) was a project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and European Social Fund. There were different programmes running in the district, via different partners, with one organisation running more than one, and all projects worked well and enabled the majority of the participants to gain meaningful employment. These projects were open to individuals that were unemployed and required support returning to work.

Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services were asked to manage one of these programmes - Employ-ABILITY – focusing on Peterborough, Fenland and Kings Lynn, and delivered by local partners. It offered an innovative programme design based on a personalised approach with a tailored package of barrier-busting and support interventions which were designed and commissioned with participants. The general aims of all the programmes, were to work together with those furthest from the labour market and recognise participants individual needs. These would be met with a tailored package of barrier-busting and support interventions – taking them on a journey into work, training or actively seeking work, to deliver the best support and outcomes for our participants. Interventions move at the individual's pace and with their goals and abilities/ capabilities in mind. This particular project including an extension was delivered locally by the Ferry Project. As an example of this work:

- The Ferry Project ran three employment programmes.
- All three programmes closed 31st March 2023 when all funding ended. The figures for these projects have now been collated.
- During this time frame they engaged with 568 people in total. Out of these, 327 were on the BBO programmes.
- Most of the participants had significant barriers to employment but 127 were supported to gain employment and 195 leaving with some kind of qualification to enhance their chances of finding work. They also supported their own (homeless) clients as well as those in the community referred to them from the local job centre.

A case study:

XX was referred to the Ferry Project via email by the local job centre. Her work coach had concerns for XXs mental health and felt that she needed extra support. The work coach met with XX for the first time on 20th April at March Library.

XX was very open and recognised her own barriers to employment. She was fighting drug addiction, had a criminal record for firearms offences and was battling with her mental health along with housing issues. Upon offering her immediate counselling she burst into tears and was so grateful. She stressed that she truly valued the services being offered to her as it was simply giving her hope that her situation could change.

- XX later reported that her sessions with her work coach were beneficial and felt that they truly

knew and understood her.

- At times XX felt that her housing situation was unbearable but she was aware of the Ferry Projects services if it became untenable.
- XX was supported with job searching and was enrolled onto courses particularly surrounding support work and mental health awareness.
- XX was eventually offered work with accommodation at a restaurant in Norfolk and went into employment.

Community Safety Grant Agreement updates (Cllr Wallwork)

- Op Luscombe continues to be supported by FDC linked with the [rough sleeper](#) update above
- Successful OPCC Community Fund bids update:
 - Graffiti removal at Ghost Passage
 - New Drove site was cleared (crime, rough sleeper, community nuisance)
- Gates at Norfolk Street have been erected (safer streets 4 funded due to being an ASB hotspot)
- UKSPF: Two ASB prevention/diversion projects in Wisbech have commenced planning.
- Safer Wisbech – youth diversion related projects
- Wisbech ASB – Youth Outreach & Diversion

Deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council (Cllr Wallwork)

The CCTV shared service has maintained its 100% service function across a 24/7 period – the CCTV service is delivered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

By the end of July 2023, the CCTV service has been able to respond to 443 incidents across our four market towns including incidents relating to anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, violent crime, illegal drug use, possession of weapons and theft.

CCTV interventions have led to 47 arrests being made by Cambridgeshire Police. This highlights the work CCTV services do to support the council and partners in responding to crime and disorder and helping to make our communities safer and reduce the fear of crime.

The CCTV service also continues to be pro-active in delivering services that helps reduce crime & disorder and anti-social behaviour by delivering regular camera patrols of our four market towns and other key locations. Since April, the CCTV team have delivered 1,486 patrols. All patrols all conducted across the 24/7 period ensuring that no matter what time of day and night our local communities are being protected and that any issues or concerns are being identified as early as possible.

The CCTV service also provides the councils 'out of hours' telephone contact services for example, homelessness, stray and lost dogs, cleansing incidents, dangerous buildings and structures, environmental complaints, to name but a few areas. From April to August, the CCTV service has responded to over 109 calls for services from our telephone contact service.

As per our previous update, Peterborough City Council (PCC), as part of its property asset review decided that the Eco innovation centre, where the control room is located, should be placed on the market for sale. As such the CCTV control room has been relocated to Sand Martin House within dedicated ground floor space. The new premises at Sand Martin House will provide improvements to the CCTV service including being located next to the main server room and providing back up power feed to the

control room.

There was no disruption to services during the move with continuity being maintained throughout with no costs being passed to FDC for the move. Funding partners will be invited to see the new facility.

Street Drinking Update (Cllr Wallwork)

- Community reports of street drinking continue to be low.
- Whilst carrying out partnership Op Luscombe (OL) walks with police there have been approaches by members of the public who have said the problem has reduced. It is felt that OL is having a positive effect. There have been issues with 2 prolific drinkers in the past and on recent walks officers have seen those individuals but they are no longer drinking/causing ASB.
- Partnership Op Luscombe walks will reduce as we leave the perceived peak period, however they will still be supported by FDC.
- Alcohol related PSPOs for Wisbech are subject of required legislative review and to be extended for a further 3 years.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 22/23	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP8	Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	96%	90%	96%	
CELP9	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	98%	93%	99%	
CELP10	% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling (1 month in arrears)	27%	28%	26%	
CELP11	Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services	95.8%	90%	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP12	Customer satisfaction with our garden waste service	89.1%	85%	N/A (Dec 2023)	N/A
CELP13	Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	236	204	103)	
CELP14	% of those asked who are satisfied with events	97%	95%	97%	
CELP18	% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	100%	95%	100%	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
A range of issues, including the cost-of-living increases, are changing the nature of the waste collected, reducing the overall percentage of recyclable materials presented by our customers.

Economy

Projects from Business Plan:

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

Attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities (Cllr Benney)

The Economic Growth (EG) team are working with 3 foreign direct investment companies considering investment into Fenland. Two companies are in the AgriFood sector, 1 from India and 1 from Peru. The 3rd company is a US energy company. An All Member Seminar is arranged for 11th September when senior US representative will present the proposed plans to Councillors.

The team continue to work with Growth Works Inward Investment, the Department of Business and Trade and in country representative in the British Embassies to promote Fenland as an investment location.

We are also working with an Agritech company currently in London and planning to open a small office in Fenland

AgriMech has established a manufacturing operation Fenland and we have worked with the company to embed them into the district, including inviting the CEO to present to local businesses regarding the support available via Fenland for Business and research funding opportunities with UK Innovate Edge.

Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)

The Economic Growth Team continue to work with a number of companies with expansion plans. Below are examples of businesses with newly identified expansion plans:

- Chatteris based advanced manufacturing company with their expansion project, including providing assistance with production issues due to erratic power supply
- March based precision engineering company expansion, including assistance with funding for research and development.
- Wisbech based advanced manufacturing company which supplies Cambridge biotech companies
- Chatteris based precision manufacturing company which supplies parts to the Mercedes F1 team
- Wisbech based advanced engineering company which is part of a group of 3 companies with the owner looking to consolidate 2 businesses onto a new site in Fenland
- Wisbech based engineering company planning onsite expansion which will result in 6 additional employees
- An Anaerobic Digestion plant where the company is considering adding a new process to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions



In June the Economic Growth Team co-hosted a Funding & Specialist Support Services to Catapult your Innovation Growth event with Innovate UK Edge to explain to companies the support and funding available to enable them to develop their research and development activities.

Just a quick line to thank you for the event you held on Wednesday, I found it to be very informative as we had no idea of the help and support that was out there to help support our journey. - David Hampton, Manufacturing and Operations Director, Stocks AG

In July the Fenland Chapter of the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce held a joint relaunch event with the Economic Growth Team at Elgood's Brewery in Wisbech. Cllr Benney joined the Chamber in welcoming around 30 companies to the event.



The Economic Growth Team attended the Anglian Water Working Groups kick off meeting regarding the proposed Fenland reservoir. The EG Team will attend future meetings in the working group which covers Economic Growth opportunities.

Promote business premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Units (Cllr Benney)

The Estates team continue to work with tenants of all sites. Industrial units are fully occupied whilst the Boathouse has decreased since the previous report to 92% occupancy. This is the result of two units being vacant however one of those is now under offer but, as the legal documents are not yet complete, this occupancy is not reflected in the 92% quoted.

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre has remained at 65%. However, an agreement has been reached with Cambridgeshire Police to take space and this will result in an occupancy increase to 74% when complete in November. Investigations with the marketing agents and outgoing tenants to understand this decrease are ongoing with a view to amending the offer on site to attract tenants once again remains ongoing.

The process of reviewing the occupancies of the industrial units continues with officers taking action to renew expired leases across all sites before moving onto rent reviews which have not been actioned. To date the work has resulted in rent increases to the benefit of FDC of approaching 30% on the estates actioned, as well as the management benefit to ensure the properties remain occupied and profitable.

Skills Update (Cllr Benney)

The Economic Growth Team arranged a series of meetings with representatives of the No10 Workforce Participation Deep Dive team held at Fenland Hall. Along with FDC colleagues the team met with JCP, TCHC Group, Citizen's Advice, CambsACRE, Rosmini-Wisbech and CPCA.

Fenland is one of 30 locations in England where the No10 team are collating information on how towns and districts are

1. Supporting people back into work
2. Existing support outside of national provision and how it's targeted

3. How local organisations work around the national support offer (and the difficulties that causes)
4. Capacity and capability to design, procure and contract manage provision
5. Pathways through various support offers
6. Local join up
7. Any work with employers to prevent people with health conditions dropping out of work initially.

I just wanted to say a huge thank you for all your help with setting up our visit to Fenland on Monday. I know I speak on behalf of the whole team who attended the day when I say that we found it incredibly useful. We've taken away many valuable insights which will support ongoing policy and delivery work. You suggested a good mix of organisations which allowed us to get a good sense of the challenges you face, along with the great work you're able to achieve.

Pippa Fernandes | No10 Delivery Unit | Educations, Jobs and Skills | 10 Downing Street, London, SW1A 2AA

The Economic Growth Team continue to work with Growth Works with Skills before their contract with CPCA ends in December. Meetings with CPCA have highlighted that CPCA plan to bring skills support to businesses inhouse in the New Year. The team are impressing on CPCA the skills requirements of employers and to ensure new schemes meet the needs of local businesses.

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)

Food Safety

Our main activities include carrying out programmed inspections at food premises and updating data for the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, investigating complaints about the food that has been produced and/or sold in Fenland or about the standards of hygiene in food businesses. We also provide advice and information on food safety issues.

In June, July and August (up to 29/8/2023) we carried out 73 food safety inspections:

Month / Food Hygiene Rating	0	1	2	3	4	5
June				1	1	26
July	1			2	5	15
August		1		2	2	17
TOTALS	1	1		5	8	58

It is a busy year for the food safety team in relation to our plan of programmed food inspections that need to take place in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice – we are currently on track with our targets and will be working hard to keep the momentum for the rest of the year.

We also dealt with 23 service requests:

Type of service requests	Count
Food complaint - cleanliness	2
Food complaint – foreign body	1
Food complaint - general	7
Food complaint - microbiological	3
Food enquiry – food hygiene	5
Food enquiry - general	2
Food enquiry – new business	3

As part of our Food and food environment microbiological sampling activity, we will be participating in the UK Health and Security Agency's reactive studies next month (Study 77: Ready to eat salads and salad components from Retail and Catering; Study 78: Hygiene in Catering Premises).

Please see [Food Safety](#) Inspections elsewhere in this report.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

Planning updates (including progress on the Local Plan) (Cllr Laws)

The new draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how we will consult on planning applications, emerging planning policy and neighbourhood planning. That includes the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, which help to guide where different types of development such as housing, retail or industrial estates should be.

The consultation closed on the 1st October. The draft SCI will then be updated and go back before Fenland's Cabinet for approval.

Delivery of new homes (including affordable homes) (Cllr Laws & Cllr Hoy)

Sage is progressing with their development at Wisbech Road, March that will deliver 118 new affordable homes, 42 shared ownership and 76 affordable rented. These will be the first completed homes coming on stream this financial year. This has received over £5,248,700 of grant funding from the Combined Authority.

External funding bid updates (Cllr Boden)

Shared Prosperity Fund

All four Fenland Shared Prosperity Fund projects have Grant Funding Agreements in place with CPCA and have commenced delivery.

The Economic Growth Team welcomed Dawn Caplin to the team who will be responsible for the delivery of the Investment in Business programme. The post is fully funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Investment in Business programme applications have been assessed by the Economic Growth Team from eight shortlisted businesses for 2023-24 and will now be considered via the grant decision-making process.

Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund

Approval has been received from DEFRA via the CPCA for the commencement of the Rural England programme in Fenland. In 2023-24 the programme will consist of business grants targeting sectors including farming and tourism.

March Future High Street Fund (Cllr French)

See update [below](#).

Wisbech High Street (Cllr Hoy, Cllr Tierney & Cllr Seaton)

Work continues on the building of 24 High Street. Groundwork is the current focus, with the building not expected to come above ground until January 2024. Work remains on target and on budget.

In order that the High Street retains a public footpath at the 24 High Street site, FDC is moving the 11-12 High Street scaffolding back to the building line w/c 11 September 2023. This will aid pedestrians and cyclists throughout the build period for 24 High Street (due to end in November 2024).

The Council has commissioned a third party options appraisal for 11-12 High Street, as required by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This report will be delivered in early November and will inform a discussion with NLHF about future grants for the site.

Capital Projects Update – Cllr Boden

Wisbech Pavilion

Work to build the pavilion continues on time & on budget. The groundworks are completed, the steel frame is completed and brickwork is approaching the roofline. It is anticipated that the roof will be fitted in the coming few weeks and the first fix internal work will then commence.

Positive discussions are underway with Wisbech Town Council regarding the Town Council taking on the management of the pavilion.

The Elms Chatteris

Fenland Future Limited have commissioned Lovell Homes to become a development management partner for the site at The Elms and the Reserved Matters Planning Application is being progressed.

Nene Waterfront Development

FFL have signed heads of terms with Fenland Extra Care Consortium for plot 5 of the Nene Waterfront. Reserved Matters planning application being prepared. This will be an all-affordable home scheme for older people with care needs (circa 70 homes).

March Future High Street Fund (Cllr Seaton & Cllr French)

Broad Street/Riverside:

- Octavius have now taken control of the site in Broad Street and the Barclays bank to begin works. Phase one of the delivery programme is now underway with initial planning of the road surface, removal of kerbs, street furniture and trees now completed. Vac-ex of old subsurface material has also been completed where required.
- Members will be aware of the delay to the initial removal of the fountain, caused by a nesting dove. Following an independent ecological survey undertaken by Green Willows Associates, it was deemed that the bird has now fledged and works to remove the fountain can continue.
- The fountain has now been removed to storage with the new kerb line being laid week commencing 28th August.
- The team have begun implementation of the wider communications plan with a summary of initial communications below:
 - o Publication of introductory letter detailing works and programme
 - o Ongoing weekly and monthly operational updates (to be distributed to residents and businesses fronting the site and shared with CCC/CPCA/FDC for uploading to websites)
 - o Publications on site and in Barclays Bank windows
 - o Engagement with businesses and residents in properties fronting the site.
 - o Weekly drop-in surgery/coffee morning on site (Thursday 11-1pm for 6 weeks, now every other Thursday from 4pm - 7pm)
- There are currently no further changes to the road layout planned until the MATS work begins installing the roundabout following removal of the fountain.

Marketplace:

- March marketplace is now completed. A significant underspend has been identified that will be considered by the Member Steering Group for use in other project areas originally identified on FDC's bid to DLUHC as part of the FHSF bid.

Development Site Creation:

- Members will be aware that FDC successfully purchased the old Barclays building – No2 Broad Street in January 2023. This site has been earmarked for demolition and conversion into a development site with planning permission for development by a third party.
- At present this site is being used as a site office for Octavius Infrastructure and will continue to be used for this purpose until such time as the works in the town centre are completed.
- An initial demolition survey has been undertaken to inform a quote for demolition, however further investigation is required until a quote can be sought.
- No demolition works will take place until the town centre works are completed.

Vacant Unit and Residential Unit Grants:

- To date, 2 Vacant unit activation scheme grants have been successfully awarded.
- To date, 2 Living above the shop's grants have been successfully awarded.
- The total amount of grant support provided to owners at time of writing is £100,000. This has resulted in the successful delivery of two new retail units in the town (with tenants) and 2 residential conversions to floors above shops.
- This is in line with the aims and objectives of the grant as set out by the Department for Levelling Up.
- With a relatively low number of vacant units in the town centre, to ensure full use of the DLUHC grant is made by the Council, the Member Steering Group will consider if a more flexible approach to the grant should be put in place to allow more shop owners to apply.

Upcoming Works:

- Broad Street is currently transitioning between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of delivery. This includes the initial removal of all kerbs, islands, the historic fountain, and general clearing of the site in preparation for Phase 2. This second phase will focus on the highway area and involves reinstatement of a new carriageway and all associated infrastructure.

Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)

Chatteris Projects

The Chatteris Town Council managed Chatteris Museum project has now moved the museum into its new premises (the old Barclay's bank building in the High Street) as scheduled and volunteers are busy unpacking and arranging the new space. A private business has moved into the offices above the museum and this rental income will help with the costs of running the building.

Quotations for the conversion works at 14 Church Lane, Chatteris (the previous location of the Museum) have been obtained and it is hoped that the works will begin during October.

Whittlesey Projects

Funding from the CPCA, following the suspension of the Whittlesey Heritage Centre project, has been secured for work to;

- Develop an SOBC regarding a Whittlesey relief road. Consultants will be appointed to progress this work.
- Add additional solar PV to the Manor swimming pool; Business case developed. Application to UKPN underway & funding application to Swimming Pool Support Fund, managed by Sport England, to be developed and submitted in September. Works to commence once the outcome of the further funding bid has been announced (date of which TBC by Sport England).
- Improvements to the netball / tennis court area & options appraisal at the Manor Centre. Fencing replacement commencing shortly, followed by lighting unit replacement and playing surface refurbishment.
- Whittlesey Library display re Must Farm. Whittlesey Library is being refurbished by CCC in 2024. Delivering this project prior the refurbishment is not possible and would mean that it was pulled down for refurbishment work. Discussion to take place with

CPCA asking permission to slip project back to 2025 once library refurbishment is completed.

- Whittlesey Buttercross – remove trip hazard works. Project yet to commence.

Wisbech Projects

There is no further progress with the Shop Watch Radio Scheme due to issues around access to the aerials at Exchange Tower.

Continue to review council land and property assets to ensure they are fit for purpose and optimised to deliver better public services, improve efficiency and release surplus land for residential and commercial development as outlined in our Commercial Investment Strategy (Cllr Benney)

The Estates team continue to play a full and active role in the ongoing accommodation review as reported to members.

Work is also ongoing in connection with the management of the Health & Safety requirements placed upon us owners and landlords. A comprehensive review of building operational safety and compliance has concluded and this saw the Facilities Management Team work closely with the Council Health & Safety advisor to review the findings and agree actions to remedy defects all of which are now in place or orders for replacement assets placed.

Work is shortly to conclude in relation to identifying potential sites for a further tranche of disposals, and these will be put before members for approval prior to disposal work commencing.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

Promotion of sustainable road, rail and concessionary travel initiatives (Cllr Seaton)

Manea Railway Station

The car park at the station opened in August 2023 with a soft launch. An official opening is in the process of being organised.

March Railway Station

The platform 1 building project and the refurbished and extended station car park was officially opened in May 2022.

Whittlesea Railway Station

Following the completion of the second strategic outline business case and options appraisal work in late 2022, we are continuing to try and secure funding for the Outline Business Case (OBC) Project. Discussions with CPCA are ongoing.

Hereward Community Rail Partnership

Funding applications have been successful to secure money for a Manea Walking and Cycling

map, route audits and route promotion and a summer 2023 drone video. These projects will be delivered between now and the end of March 2024.

Engagement with CPCA and CCC on delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects (Cllr Seaton)

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

The LTCP sets out the forward transport strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is an essential document to help secure funding for local transport improvements,

The CPCA are currently updating this document. In May 2023 the latest version of the LTCP went to the CPCA Board for further discussion and comment. This version of the document includes the full draft LTCP with the district chapters, the main report and all the appendices. It can be viewed from the following link:

[CMIS > Meetings](#)

Additional versions of the LTCP are expected to be considered as part of future Transport and Infrastructure Committee and CPCA Board Meetings later in 2023.

Wisbech Access Strategy

There is no specific update for this project.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It contains a range of transport projects in Wisbech that aim to address transport issues within the town and to help support the delivery of the scale of growth in the Fenland Local Plan. The latest information about the project can be found on the County Council website from the following link:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/wisbech-access-strategy>

A Wisbech Access Strategy report was presented to CPCA Business Board in July 2021 and CPCA Board in September 2021. The report required a strategic decision on the way forward linked to timescales and budgets. It was agreed that funding would be made available to complete the detailed design and the land acquisition for the 3 schemes – A47 Broad End Road, A47 Elm High Road and A1101 Ramnoth Road/Weasenham Lane. A copy of the main accompanying paper for the meetings mentioned above can be found from the following link: https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1529/Committee/62/Default.aspx

There has been delays relating to land acquisition and ongoing discussions around related issues such as probate. This work is now expected to complete before the end of 2023. The next step for these 3 projects is to secure funding for their construction.

March Area Transport Study – Main schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It includes a range of transport projects across March to address transport issues and to facilitate new

housing and employment growth.

In January 2023, A paper went to CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. The paper asked the Committee to:

- note the completion of the Full Business Case stage 1 (FBC1);
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £4,149,825 for the construction of MATS Broad Street;
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £300,000 for the completion of the FBC 2;

Here is a link to the Committee Paper and relevant reports for further details: [CMIS > Meetings](#)

The schemes forming part of this project are:

- A141 / Peas Hill Roundabout Upgrade (52m ICD), including the creation of an allmovement signalised junction at the A141 / Hostmoor Avenue Junction.
- A141 / Twenty Foot Road Signals.
- Broad Street / Dartford Road / Station Road Mini Roundabout, with one lane in each direction on Broad Street
- High Street / St Peter's Road Traffic Signal Improvements.
- Development of a Northern Industrial Link Road (NILR) – As a larger more complex project this scheme is expected to be taken to FBC2 in 2024.

March Area Transport Study – Walking & Cycling Schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

The MATS project also includes a Walking and Cycling Strategy. £562,800 was approved at the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting. This funding allows for schemes in the Walking and Cycling Strategy to be progressed in 3 phases. The phase one schemes which are primarily lining and signing will be constructed and completed in full. Phase 2a schemes require further investigation and design work to determine the solution to be built. Phase 2b schemes require option development work as well as further investigation and design work. This funding will enable 28 projects to be progressed as set out above. Phases 2A and 2B will require further funding in the future for their construction.

A copy of the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting paper setting out more details and information including for the 28 schemes can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2117/Committee/63/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

The full technical details and feasibility study work associated with the March Area Transport Strategy can be found on the County Council website from the link below

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/march-transport-study>

March to Wisbech Railway Line

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project with study work being taken forward by CPCA.

In November 2022, CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee and the Board approved work to Undertake an Options Assessment Report to provide the economic analysis on mode options, including existing information on heavy rail. This will be based on a service operating between Wisbech and March which removes the current dependency on Ely Area Capacity Enhancements whilst still being mindful of the future strategy to link into Cambridge. £80,000 has been drawn down from CPCA Medium Term Financial Plan to undertake this options assessment work. This study work is currently ongoing.

A link to the papers and information from the November 2022 CPCA meeting with the the relevant reports and papers can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2139/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

A47

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

In May 2023 National Highways released a series of documents and a consultation to support the Roads Investment Strategy 3 process covering the period 2025 – 2030. The consultation is live until 13 July 2023. It includes a Strategic Road Network Initial report, regional reports, and interactive maps. There are several references to A47 within the East of England regional report. The outcome of the consultation will feed into the RIS3 decision making by Government. The documents can be viewed from the following link:

<https://routestrategies.nationalhighways.co.uk/>

As part of RIS2 National Highways are working on a series of Pipeline scheme undertaking feasibility and other technical work to support decisions for RIS3. One of these projects is A47 Elm High Road roundabout. They are also considering this roundabout alongside Weasenham Lane/Ramnoth Road. Officers are providing extensive technical input into the project. The outcome of the work will go forward to Government as part of their decision making for RIS3. Any such decisions are expected to be in 2024.

Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project is being procured and managed by Fenland District Council with funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) market towns programme.

The project commenced in March 2023 with a paper approved by FDC Cabinet for the Governance arrangements and procurement of a contractor to deliver the project. Please see the link to the Cabinet paper for further details.

[Cabinet Paper March 2023 - Whittlesey Relief Rd V2 6.2.2023 updated 02.03.23.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

A procurement exercise has since been completed and a contractor appointed in August 2023. Project Board meetings will commence in September 2023. The project has an agreed programme to complete in late autumn 2024.

Work with CPCA to influence housing and infrastructure funding to stimulate housing development and economic growth (Cllr Boden)

See affordable homes updates above ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 21/22	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	74%	70%	86%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	62%	70%	64%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	81%	80%	80%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	93.9%	90%	93.25%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	94.0%	100%	95%	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
<p>Performance on minor applications continues to fall below the KPI but is up slightly on the previous month's performance. More widely, the key area is the longer-term performance relating to non-major applications (essentially minor and other applications combined). Over the rolling 24-month monitoring period we are reporting a performance of 71.4% being determined on time (against a target of 70%). An action plan has been in place for the last 2 months and which this has delivered some improvement in monthly performance, it has not been enough to see an improvement in our 24-month rolling performance. A less restrictive scheme of delegation would assist in helping meet our performance goals. As part of the action plan, authority has been given to securing additional short-term resource. A bid to Govt has been made to assist in covering part of the additional cost associated with the additional resources. The likelihood of winning funding would be improved if the Council was engaged with the Planning Advisory Service as part of its improvement journey. Currently 50% of the development officers are agency staff.</p>

Quality Organisation

Projects from Business Plan:

Governance, Financial Control & Risk Management

Internal audit updates (Cllr Boden)

Since the last meeting of Full Council, the Audit and Risk Management Committee held its first meeting on 24th July 2023 when members discussed and approved the Internal Audit Outturn and Quality Assurance Review 2022/23, the Annual Report, the Internal Audit Charter and the Internal Audit Progress Report. Ahead of that meeting members attended an introductory training session facilitated by Ian Fifield of Fifield Training. Agenda items for the next meeting on 26th September 2023, include consideration of the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23, an updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Internal Audit Plan. Following Kathy Woodward, the former Head of Audit accepting a career progression opportunity at another Council, the team is being supported on an interim basis by David Thacker who brings with him a wealth of experience from the public and private sector. Temporary arrangements will also be put in place to resource the other vacancy within the team in order to ensure that the Council is able to successfully deliver the internal audit plan and pending permanent arrangements being put in place for both roles. Through these arrangements and with the support of the rest of the team, Internal Audit are delivering on their objectives for the year and have been assessed as compliant in all required areas.

Data protection updates (Cllr Boden)

There have been no reportable breaches of the UK GDPR during the period to which this briefing relates. Information governance training has been organised for all members and is due to take place in September and the Council has overall received 2 data subject access requests.

Transformation and Efficiency

Transformation Project updates (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

The Corporate Transformation programme (TA2), under the Council for the Future priority, continues to focus on modernising the way we deliver all aspects of services to our customers. The project aim of “**improving customer experience and making it even easier for people to interact with the council**” continues to be at the heart of service design as well as ensuring we exploit the use of technology to increase customer choice regarding accessing services at the same time as working efficiently and effectively, building resilience whilst driving down costs.

Current projects include:

Planning Service – Following the audit of our current system, work is now underway to implement these recommendations with our supplier, Idox. The team are currently testing the new connector which will link the Planning Portal to the back-office system (Uniform),

removing the need for officer's to manually key applications in. This will release capacity to focus on other tasks. A detailed project plan has been devised, with the Implementation team meeting on a regular basis to discuss progress and recognise benefits as a result of the changes. Phase 2 continues to look at tasks carried out by Planning officers to identify further efficiencies for the team.

Housing Options – CMT have now approved the purchase of DocuSign to be launched within the Housing Options team. The software will enable the electronic signing of documents for our customers without the need to meet face to face with officers. This will improve both the customer's journey by speeding up the process and save officer's time processing applications. This ultimately will allow officers to focus on preventative work and providing greater assistance to our customers.

Corporate booking system – The Transformation team have worked with colleagues in Sports Development and Events to consider options for a corporate booking system. Current processes are manual and therefore labour-intensive for officers, and it is felt that the process can be improved for customers accessing these services. There may be further opportunities to use this in other parts of the organisation and this will be considered as part of future service reviews. Options are currently being considered and a report will be considered by CMT in the coming weeks.

Identify and deliver projects that support us to become a 'Council For the Future' (CFF) (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

Individual project updates are as detailed elsewhere in this report. A full review of 2022-23 was published in the Annual Report as approved by Cabinet on 17th July 2023. The report is available on our website.

Communication, Consultation and Engagement

News update:

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in June = 11.

Highlights include:

- Chatteris Festival comes roaring back with a 1920s theme.
- Major Fenland employers urges other businesses to grab benefits of free service.
- Work to start on March's Broad Street regeneration.
- Back to nature: Advice and information event for community groups.
- Fenland businesses unite to develop, succeed and be inspired.
- Wisbech Park breaks ground on the pavilion.
- Have your say on Fenland's dog control order.
- All welcome at March rail station public coffee morning.

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in July = 9

Highlights include:

- Builders arrive at Wisbech High Street 'gap site'.
- Fenland rail partnership launches art competition as part of anniversary celebrations.
- Event highlights free help available to innovative Fenland businesses.
- Net tightening on Council Tax fraudsters.
- Enjoy free summer activities in Wisbech Park.
- Council Maintains gold standard in customer services.
- Grants up to £25,000 available to help bring empty shops back into use.
- Come along to free tea dances in Fenland towns.

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in August = 14

Highlights include:

- Wisbech welcomes exciting new play area.
- One of March's oldest buildings gets a facelift with Council support.
- No complaints against FDC upheld.
- Assurances over derelict Wisbech building destroyed by fire.
- Free mental health webinars for businesses.
- New parkrun launches in Wisbech.
- Rail passengers invited to enjoy benefits of new free Manea station car park.

Monthly update on FDC social media sites:

The number of social media updates added to the FDC twitter and Facebook accounts in June:

- Twitter = 92
- Facebook = 88

The number of social media updates added to the FDC twitter and Facebook accounts in July:

- Twitter = 84
- Facebook = 81

The number of social media updates added to the FDC twitter and Facebook accounts in August:

- Twitter = 98
- Facebook = 92

We currently have 6,957 followers on Facebook and 8,873 followers on twitter.

Consultation Summary:

In June:

- Dog Control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)
- Wisbech Park Summer Activities
- Alcohol PSPO renewal

In July:

- Alcohol PSPO renewal

In August:

- Statement of Community Involvement

3cs Information – the table below shows the quarterly collation of stats for Customer Complaints

April 2023 – June 2023	Total Received	On Time	% on Time
Correspondence	35	34	97%
Stage 1			
CELP	26	23	88%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	20	19	95%
Stage 2			
CELP	3	2	67%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	2	2	100%
Stage 3			
CELP	1	1	100%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	0	0	N/A

It should be noted that we have received some very complimentary feedback about our teams, but particularly about our My Fenland colleagues,

“a gem who not only took the time to LISTEN to my (unusual and quite complicated) problem but also returned calls when she said she would, respected my inability to receive those calls before 1100 and took the time and trouble to fully investigate my issue, culminating in your being able to have someone from PECT come to my house to help. I cannot praise her efforts enough and hope she gets the recognition she deserves for being so very helpful and clearly going beyond the requirements of her job by following my query through to conclusion.”

“I just wanted to say thank you so much for your help you gave me this morning. You were very thoughtful, understanding, kind and your customer service was outstanding. Mrs X was my grandmother, so now knowing she is buried there as well is a bonus, so thank you. You are a credit to your department, and it was a pleasure to talk to you.”

Following an event at the Boathouse, the MVV/the Planning Inspectorate and the security company were “extremely grateful for everything and were really impressed with the way the event ran. They reported how helpful and professional staff had been and that they had received a warm welcome.”

Asset Management and Commercialisation

Using assets to maximise income opportunities and financial opportunities (Cllr Benney)

Work continues on the phased disposal of assets declared surplus by members, a programme which to date has resulted in capital receipts of approximately £475K.

The estates team are now close to concluding work to identify further opportunities for the disposal of potentially surplus land and a report identifying these will be brought to members for approval in due course.

Commercial & Investment Strategy (Cllr Boden)

As part of the Commercial and Investment Strategy, a facility of £25m was granted to the Investment Board to finance capital expenditure to be undertaken in accordance with the aims and objectives of the agreed strategy. At the end of March 2023, £4m of this facility has been utilised to fund the acquisition of a commercial investment in Wisbech and a house in March. These acquisitions were approved at Investment Board meetings held on 16th March 2021 and 3rd December 2021 respectively. Further utilisation will be needed when the funding position of Fenland Future Ltd is finalised and the draft Business Plan for 2023/24 has now been agreed.

The Commercial Investment in Wisbech has delivered a rental income of £230k for the year to March 2023. Rental income continues to be on track for 2023/24. As we used our own funds to acquire this asset there is no external cost of capital and the loss of interest foregone on our funds is minimal at present. This acquisition has enhanced the Councils revenue position and has had a positive impact on the MTFS.

Updates on the work of the Investment Board were presented to Cabinet at its meetings on 30 January 2023, 16th March 2023 and 11th September 2023. The annual report on Investment Board activity was presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 19th September 2023

Fenland Future Limited (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney & Cllr Tierney)

Fenland Future Ltd has been granted Outline Planning permission on the two Council owned sites identified for development in their Business Plan. Work now progresses on options for the delivery methodology to be utilised in delivering the developments. Full updates can be found in the reports referenced above.

Financing, SLA and Indemnity agreements were approved by the Investment Board in July 2022.

Workforce Development

Workforce skills and training (Cllr Boden)

We have a strong commitment to learning and development. We believe that if we are to continue to deliver excellent services to our customers, our staff must be well trained.

We have an extensive learning and development offer for our workforce, which involves opportunities for formal and informal training; we have a range of learning resources available to all staff, e-learning, coaching, shadowing, secondments, in house training workshops delivered by our own in-house experts; as well as more formal courses and training and apprenticeships.

Staff value the learning and development opportunities that are offered at FDC and are able to indicate the difference that training makes to them and their team. However, it is important that we continually review our learning and development offer to ensure it is fit for purpose and as accessible as possible.

We believe that talent exists in all our staff and that it needs to be encouraged and nurtured. Every manager with staff responsibility manages talent through the following activities:

- Performance management
- Coaching and development
- Springboard discussions, 121's and
- Recruitment

Talent management and succession planning ensures ongoing organisational capacity and capability for the future and enables transformation; and at a time when more is demanded of less, it becomes increasingly important.

Supporting and empowering staff (Cllr Boden)

We are committed to supporting and empowering our workforce, and we have a range of support that our staff can access, from an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP is free and confidential for staff to use, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessible by phone, email and online.

The EAP is designed to help with a wide range of work, family, and personal issues. It provides practical information, fact sheets and packs, resource information on support services in the local area and even short-term face to face or telephonic counselling if required. It is supported by a comprehensive EAP website offering extensive resources including articles, interactive tools, regular online seminars, confidential 24/7 support, self-help workbooks, Podcasts, blogs, videos, and articles on a range of topics, Debt advice, Debt Management, Domestic Abuse support, Wellbeing portal & App, Trauma programme and Exercise and Fitness advice.

Alongside this we provide additional support via our team of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA), our Occupational Health Advisor, a range of family friendly policies and procedures, a comprehensive (cost neutral) employee benefits platform. We also provide individual support via our HR team, service managers, our Management and Trade Union and Staff Partnership (MTSP) reps.

We carry out our Staff Survey every two years to get a better understanding of employee morale, satisfaction, and engagement at Fenland District Council. This was undertaken in 2022, with 87% of respondents stating they were proud to work for Fenland District Council.

Enforcement

All enforcement policies update (Cllr French (CPE), Cllr Laws (Planning), Cllr Murphy (Streetscene) & Cllr Wallwork Environmental Health))

Please see other enforcement updates in this report:

- [Housing Enforcement Policy & Empty Homes](#)
- [Illegal Parking and Abandoned vehicles](#)
- [Review the current arrangements for parking enforcement in Fenland](#)

Health & Safety

Maintaining Health & Safety Systems to comply with legislation (Cllr Boden)

The Council has a comprehensive suite of Health and Safety Policies and procedures, which all managers are aware of and trained on. We have a Health and Safety Panel, with membership drawn from all areas of the Council. This Panel meets every quarter to ensure ongoing compliance in all areas; to track all health and safety related issues, accidents and near misses. An ongoing Action Plan to monitor the corporate health and safety goals is in place and well established.

Work continues to drive forward improvements in health and safety management where required. In 2023/24 the emphasis will be to support managers and staff to continue good standards of health and safety, whilst operating a shared service with East Cambridgeshire District Council, (three days per week at Fenland and two days per week at East Cambridgeshire).

A summary of some of the work planned for 2023/24 is provided below:

- Conduct review of the Council's Codes of Practice as required under the three yearly revision programme.
- Delivery of a corporate health and safety training programme.
- Conduct accident investigations as applicable.
- Coordinate delivery of a health surveillance programme across the Council.
- Development of further e-learning training courses for the Council's e-learning platform.
- Undertake audits/inspections of individual services/teams/buildings as per the audit

- programme.
- Update intranet-based health and safety information for staff use.

Health & Safety Action Plan updates (Cllr Boden)

Good progress has been made over the last 12 months to deliver our objectives as set out in the health and safety action plan for 2022/23. Some of the actions are highlighted below:

- The role out of internal health and safety e-learning courses developed for staff training via the Intranet.
- An analysis of all accidents and their consequent actions has been undertaken.
- The Accident Incident Rate (based on 100 per employees) was 6.31, which was the same as for the previous year.
- Health and Safety training was delivered to a total of 91 staff.
- A programme of audits and inspections undertaken

Other Updates:

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) update (Cllr Chris Boden)

Information relating to the CPCA can be found on their website:

[Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](http://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Mayoral decisions can be found [here](#).

Office decisions can be found [here](#).

The papers for recent meetings can be found by clicking on the links below:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Combined Authority Board	20.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Audit & Governance Committee	08.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Skills & Employment Committee	04.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Housing & Communities Committee	13.03.23	CMIS > Meetings
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	18.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Employment & Skills Board	11.07.23	CMIS > Meetings
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	13.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Human Resources Committee	26.07.23	CMIS > Meetings
Business Board	04.09.23	CMIS > Meetings
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	11.09.23	CMIS > Meetings

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Combined Authority Board	29.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Audit & Governance Committee	17.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Skills & Employment Committee	06.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	15.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Human Resources Committee	04.10.23	CMIS > Meetings
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	13.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Business Board	13.11.23	CMIS > Meetings

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Target 21/22	Cumulative Target	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
PRC1	% of customer queries processed at the first point of contact	99%	90%	99%	
PRC2	% of customers satisfied with our service (measured annually in February)	86%	90%	N/A (Feb 2024)	
PRC3	% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	47.49%	25.5%	22.98%	
PRC4	% of contact centre calls handled	87.96%	80%	75.37%	
ARP3	In year % of Council Tax collected	96.76%	39.96%	39.56%	
ARP4	Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£65,262,181	£26,080,324	£25,819,912	
ARP5	In year % of NNDR collected	97.10%	34.94%0%	37.33%	
ARP6	NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,120,990	£8,754,017	£10,030,134	
PRC5	Number of online forms submitted via FDC website	21,504	21,000	11,133	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments

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Motion submitted by Councillor Dr Haq Nawaz

THE COUNTY COUNCIL AND COMBINED AUTHORITY WAR ON MOTORISTS

Council notes the many policy initiatives proposed by or supported by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and/or the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) which are deliberately designed to force people out of their cars.

This Council further notes that the rural nature of much of Fenland, together with wholly inadequate public transport alternatives, means that for many people in Fenland, their ability to use a car is essential in accessing work, leisure, education and shops and other services.

Support given at CCC and/or CPCA to the following policy initiatives is therefore inimical to the economic and social well-being of residents in Fenland:

- road-space reallocation
- modal filters to reduce traffic volumes
- road capacity reduction schemes
- 20 minute cities
- physical and pricing interventions designed to create 'traffic disappearance'
- 'trip budgets' for new residential development as part of 'traffic demand management'
- fiscal measures such as road charging and congestion charging.

The geography and economy of Fenland is such that our area depends more on private vehicle transport than many other areas, and is likely to do so for many years to come.

Council therefore rejects all proposals to introduce any of the following in or near to Fenland:

- road-space reallocation
- modal filters to reduce traffic volumes
- road capacity reduction schemes
- 20 minute cities
- physical and pricing interventions designed to create 'traffic disappearance'
- 'trip budgets' for new residential development as part of 'traffic demand management'
- fiscal measures such as road charging and congestion charging.

Council therefore requires its Members whom the Council has appointed as our representatives on the CPCA Board and its committees, and Officers who interact with the CPCA and CCC, to reflect the sentiment within this motion when interacting with CCC, or when representing this Council at meetings of the CPCA or its committees.

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Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor

WEEDS

In April 2023, with neither consultation nor (so far as we are aware) notice, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) decided to cease all cyclical spraying to suppress weeds on our pavements, roads and in our gullies.

On September 8th a letter was sent by Frank Jordan (Executive Director for Place & Sustainability at CCC) to all Councils in the county, recognising "that the County Council should have engaged with its partners in district and parish councils more effectively at the time when this policy change was being considered, and then when it was implemented, and that is something we wish to improve upon" and advising that CCC is "reviewing the impact of the change in both rural and urban areas" and that CCC "will be considering changes to [their] approach when [they] have the assessment results and presenting this to members" of CCC.

Many residents have complained that our roads and footpaths have already become unsightly as a result of this new policy to cease cyclical spraying on our highways. If the policy isn't reversed by CCC, this will only become worse with time.

Council notes with concern the reports in September after periods of intense rain in Manea, March and Whittlesey that road surface water did not drain as quickly as would otherwise have been possible because drains and gullies were blocked or impeded by weed and grass growth which was a direct result of the change of policy stopping cyclical spraying, creating a safety hazard for road users and increasing flood risk in adjacent properties.

Council further notes the spurious justification for the policy to cease cyclical spraying that glyphosate, the most commonly used chemical for this purpose, is unsafe. We note that the use of glyphosate as a weed suppressant is approved in the UK and by the European Union, and that a recent study showed that glyphosate is less toxic to humans than vinegar or table salt.

In failing to take preventative action to suppress weeds, a significant increase in roadside Ragwort has been noticed. Ragwort is poisonous to ruminants generally and to horses in particular. The County Council as Highways Authority is under a statutory duty to remove and prevent Ragwort, and should do so in accordance with DEFRA's best practice guidance. The resumption of cyclical spraying should be an important preventative element as part of the County's control strategy in respect of Ragwort.

Council therefore agrees to respond to CCC advising them of the contents of this motion and our desire to see cyclical spraying recommenced to suppress weeds on our roads, pavements and in our gullies.

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Motion submitted by Councillor Gary Christy

LOCAL TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY PLAN (LTCP)

Council notes that, at its Board Meeting on 20th September, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) rejected the proposed LTCP put before it for consideration.

Despite much of the proposed LTCP containing very valuable proposals, Council believes that that rejection was appropriate but the CPCA Board because of two fundamental flaws: a lack of financing for the Plan and a "one size fits all" contained within the LTCP Strategic Document.

The proposed LTCP stated that much of the funding to effect the Plan would come from the Greater Cambridge Partnership's "making connections project" - effectively from their proposed Cambridge Congestion Charge. It appears that that Congestion Charge is now effectively dead in the water, leaving the proposed LTCP effectively wholly unfinanced.

As a positive way forwards, Council believes that the good elements contained within the rejected LTCP can be retained if a revised version of the LTCP were to be produced, with the following fundamental changes to the LTCP Strategic Document:

- recognising that the LTCP is now wholly unfunded, prioritising the measures within the LTCP so that, as any funding becomes available, the functional and geographic order in which the LTCP will be implemented will be clearly designated in advance, and
- In any such prioritisation, specific account should be taken of the opposition in some specific Districts to implementing, in the short and medium term, 20-minute cities, road space reallocation, modal filters to reduce traffic volumes, physical and pricing interventions to create "traffic disappearance" and fiscal measures such as road charging and congestion charging.

Council asks the Combined Authority Mayor to show some flexibility on this issue so that all of the Constituent Members of the Combined Authority can support a revised LTCP and work together in effecting its provisions.

Council agrees that this resolution should be sent to all Board Members of the Combined Authority and requires FDC Members whom the Council has appointed as our representatives on the CPCA Board and its committees, and Officers who interact with the CPCA and CCC as Highways Authority, to reflect the sentiment within this motion when interacting with CCC, or when representing this Council at meetings of the CPCA or its committees.

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Agenda Item No:	11	
Committee:	Council	
Date:	2 OCTOBER 2023	
Report Title:	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report reflects what has been undertaken and achieved by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2022/23 and takes a forward look at the programme of work and challenges in 2023/2024.

2 Key issues

- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 sets out the requirements of a modernised democratic structure for local authorities. The Act includes the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel or Committee.
- 2.2 Article 6 of the Council’s Constitution sets out the Overview and Scrutiny Panel’s terms of reference. There is a stated requirement for the work and working methods of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be reported annually to the Council.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That full Council acknowledges the broad scope of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2022/23

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor David Mason – Former Chairman - Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Alex Miscandlon – Former Vice Chairman - Overview and Scrutiny
Report Originator(s)	Amy Brown – Assistant Director Elaine Cooper - Team Leader, Elections, Land Charges and Member Services
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd - Chief Executive 01354 622202 paulmedd@fenland.gov.uk Peter Catchpole – Corporate Director 01354 622201 pcatchpole@fenland.gov.uk Amy Brown – Assistant Director abrown@fenland.gov.uk
Background Paper(s)	Overview and Scrutiny reports, Agendas and Minutes 2022/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

1 CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

In the delivery of my role as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am required to present the Annual Report for 2022/23 albeit that during that time former Councillor Mason was fulfilling that role. Nevertheless, I have had the benefit of being able to review the activities of the last municipal year and am pleased to be able to present this information to you as well as providing a forward look to 2023/24.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important role to play in overseeing the performance and delivery of services within their portfolios. The Committee has and will continue to receive regular performance updates to ensure that services perform well.

The future work programme will be published with the Agenda for each meeting and will continue to focus on issues that are of paramount importance to local residents and businesses.

I am looking forward to undertaking my new role as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and am confident that the Committee which is comprised of both new and ongoing members can maintain the high standards expected of it in performing the most important role of Overview and Scrutiny.

Maureen Davis
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

2. THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 2022-2023

Councillor David Mason - Chairman
Councillor Alex Miscandlon - Vice Chairman
Councillor Gavin Booth
Councillor David Connor
Councillor Mike Cornwell (until August 2022)
Councillor Steve Count (until July 2022)
Councillor Anne Hay
Councillor Michael Humphrey
Councillor Mark Purser
Councillor Robert Skoulding
Councillor David Topgood
Councillor Bob Wicks
Councillor Fred Yeulett

3 INTRODUCTION

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

- 3.1 The Local Government Act 2000 requires Councils to have a committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions or actions affecting the authority's area or residents. Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains effective and accountable. Scrutiny ensures that executives are held accountable for their decisions, that their decision-making process is clear and accessible to the public and that there are opportunities for the public and their representatives to influence and improve Council policies.
- 3.2 The power to scrutinise was further expanded by the Police and Justice Act 2006, which provided powers to scrutinise the work of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, known locally as the Safer Fenland Partnership.
- 3.3 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides more powers to local government to scrutinise other partner organisations. It also brings in other provisions that affect how scrutiny committees work, including powers over the creation of joint committees.
- 3.4 More recently, The Localism Act 2011 consolidated the wide range of scrutiny legislation into a single place, largely unamended from previous legislation. This aims to increase local accountability and transparency of public services as well as enhancing the involvement of local service users.
- 3.5 All Overview and Scrutiny meetings are held in public session and attendance and involvement of the public is actively encouraged either via questions or suggestions for our work programme.

Main responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny

3.6 The role of Overview and Scrutiny has five broad functions:

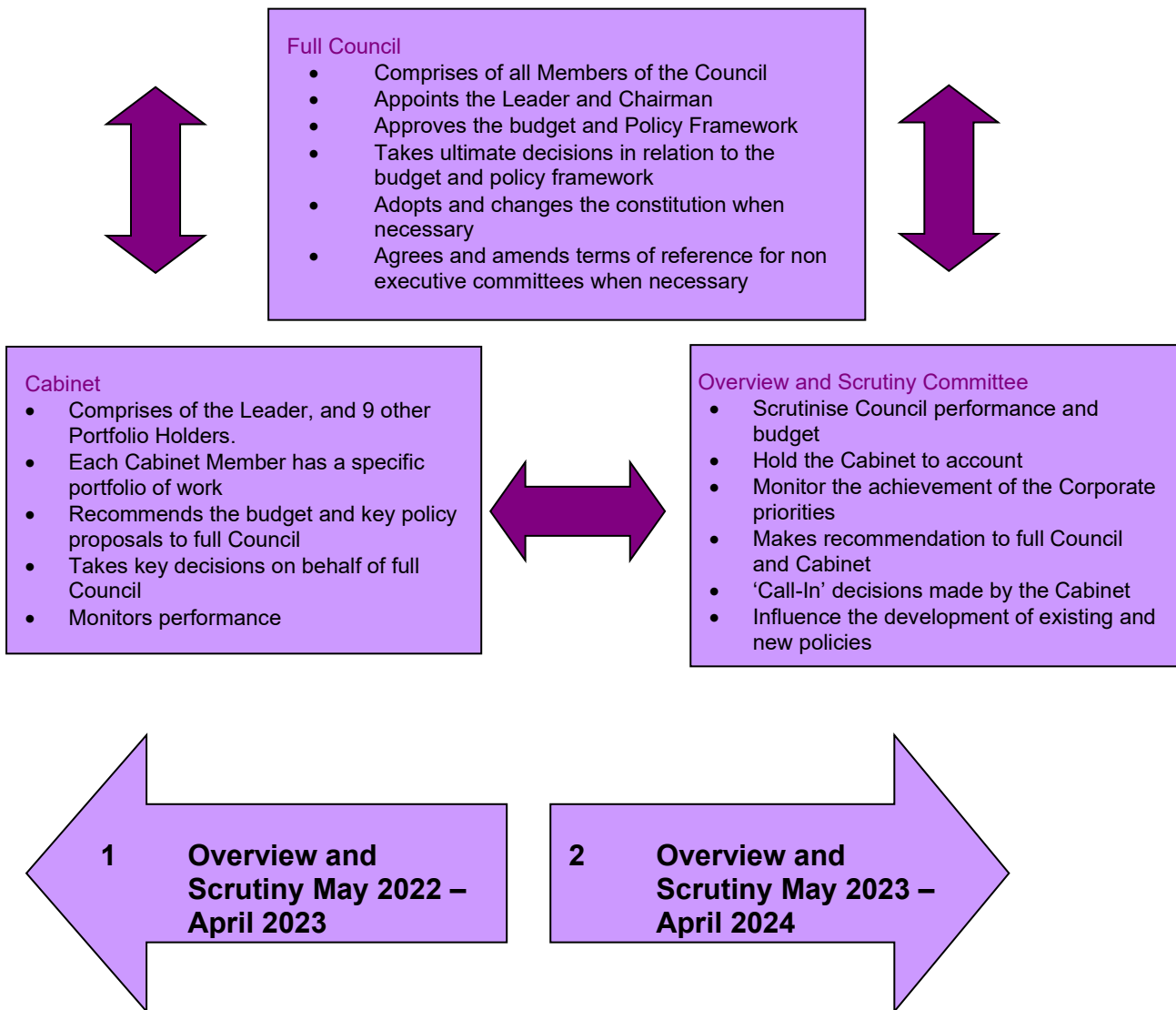
- Holding the Council’s Executive and its statutory partners to account in the public interest. This enables more transparent and effective decision making.
- Supporting the development of effective policies and initiatives which have a beneficial impact on the community through policy overview and development.
- Contributing to continuous improvement in the delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities.
- Having a positive impact on the work and outcomes of external agencies and providers of public services.
- Aiding Councillors in engaging with their communities and undertaking the role of community representatives and leaders.

Overview	Scrutiny
Advising on the development of policies.	Ensuring that the Council’s policies have been effectively implemented by the Cabinet.
Recommending how the Council’s corporate priorities can be delivered.	Helping to monitor and drive improvements within the Council’s corporate priorities.
Bringing a wider perspective to problem solving.	Holding decision makers to account
Examining broader issues affecting local communities.	Ensuring all service providers within a local community are providing ‘value for money’

Appointing Members onto Overview and Scrutiny

3.7 During 2022-2023, following a recommendation by the Leader of the Council, it was the responsibility of the full Council to appoint an Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their annual meeting in May. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel consisted of twelve members drawn from the political groups in the same proportion as they are represented on the Council as a whole.

Relationship between Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council



4 A BACKWARD LOOK TO 2022 - 2023

What the Overview and Scrutiny Panel achieved in 2022/2023

External advisors/partners

- 4.1 The panel looked at an array of different topic areas; most could be dealt with by drawing on the knowledge and expertise of Fenland District Council Councillors and Officers. However, sometimes there is a need to call in external advisors to help the panel with their knowledge and to provide a different vantage point.
- 4.2 As will be explained later, a greater emphasis has been placed on Local Authority scrutiny, of and with partner agencies. Fenland's Overview and Scrutiny Panel is already undertaking this partnership working in a positive spirit, demonstrating its collaborative approach. The table below highlights the external partners the Overview and Scrutiny Panel have already engaged with, when undertaking the scrutiny function during 2022/23:

Agenda item	External Advisor/Partner	Organisation
Public Health	Jyoti Atri Val Thomas	Public Health
Clarion Review	Sally Greetham Yvonne Ogden Dan Read John Ferman	Clarion Housing
Wisbech Rail Update	Tim Bellamy	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
CPCA Growth Service and Impact on Economic Development in Fenland	Fliss Miller Jonathan Finley Rebecca Bekkenutte Richard Cuda Martin Johnson Gareth Preece Steve Clarke Nigel Parkinson Ed Colman	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

- 4.3 As well as working with individual partners, the panel have also scrutinised other elements of partnership working through each of the respective corporate priority areas. The panel will continue with this successful approach during 2023/24.

How the work of Overview and Scrutiny is linked to the Council's corporate priorities

- 4.4 Fenland District Council's Business Plan is the vision for the future of Fenland, clearly setting out a series of priorities that will be the focus of the organisation for the next twelve-month period. To ensure these priorities are correct, deliver on targets and achieve outcomes, the Overview and Scrutiny work programme reflects the Council's priorities to ensure robust scrutiny in meaningful priority areas is achieved.
- 4.5 The table below illustrates how agenda items link in with Fenland's priorities:

C – Communities
 Env – Environment
 E – Economy
 QO – Quality Organisation

Topic/Issue	C	Env	E	QO
Progress against corporate priority: Communities				
Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22				
Public Health Presentation				
Local Government Ombudsman – Annual Review of Complaints				

Topic/Issue	C	Env	E	QO
Annual meeting with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive				
Clarion Review				
Wisbech Rail Update				
Draft Business Plan 2023-2024				
Budget Report				
Fees and Charges 2023/24				
CPCA Growth Service and Impact on Economic Development in Fenland				
Progress against Corporate Priority - Economy				
Progress against Corporate Priority – Transformation and Communication				

5 Specific reviews undertaken in 2022- 2023

- 5.1 A cross-party Task and Finish Group was formed to review the current Corporate Performance Indicators to ensure that they enhance the Council's corporate priorities and are both measurable and achievable in nature.
- 5.2 The Task and Finish Group consisted of Councillors Booth, Connor and Miscandlon, with Councillors Hay and Wicks as substitutes. The Task and Finish Group met on four occasions and has reviewed the priorities of Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation but due to a combination of factors was unable to complete the review.
- 5.3 The Task and Finish Group still needs to review the Communities priority. Once this has been completed, a further meeting will be required to recap and review the previous discussion in relation to the other priorities.
- 5.4 The Task and Finish Group will continue during 2023-2024 with replacement members being appointed for those councillors who are no longer members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 5.5 The Task and Finish Group will report its suggestions to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 16 October 2023 to ensure that any resultant recommendations can be incorporated into the draft Business Plan for 2024/25.

6 Overview and Scrutiny Call – In

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel have the opportunity to scrutinise Executive decisions that have been made, but not implemented through the 'call-in' mechanism.
- 6.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, decisions of the Executive or a Portfolio Holder decision are published within 3 working days. There is then a further 5 working

day period prior to the implementation of the decision in which Members are able to call in the decision. If the necessary number of Members, either the Chairman or Vice Chairman of any panel, or any 3 members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel or any 10 Members of the Council, ask for a decision to be called in for scrutiny, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel has to meet within 15 working days to consider the issue. Whilst this process takes its course, the decision taking process is suspended. If no call-in occurs, the decision is adopted.

- 6.3 If, having considered the decision, the Panel remains concerned about it, then it may refer it back to the decision-making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or, in exceptional circumstances, refer the matter to full Council. If referred back, the decision maker shall then reconsider the matter within a further 10 working days and amend the decision or not, before adopting a final decision. If however the Panel decides not to refer the matter back, no further action is taken and the decision can take effect.
- 6.4 The call-in procedure does not apply where the decision being made by the Executive is deemed to be urgent i.e. where any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. This should be clearly stated in the record of the decision. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel or in his/her absence the Chairman of the Council must agree that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel together with the reasons for the urgency.
- 6.5 Because of the nature of the call-in procedure, it is generally recognised as a mechanism of last resort. Indeed Government guidance states that it would clearly be detrimental to efficient decision making if every individual decision of the Executive were called in for overview and scrutiny as a matter of course.
- 6.6 The call-in procedure is therefore utilised when other means of influencing decision making have failed. Fenland District Council did not utilise the call-in procedure at all during 2022/23. There were also no decisions taken by the Executive where the matter was deemed urgent during 2022/23.

7 A FORWARD LOOK TO 2023/2024

Fenland's Priorities

- 7.2 In Fenland's Business Plan 2023-2024 the Council's corporate priorities remain:
- Communities
 - Economy
 - Environment
 - Quality Organisation
- 7.3 It is important that the work of Overview and Scrutiny complements these priorities to ensure services are being delivered to highest quality and any scrutiny work adds value. In addition the current Business Plan outlines the fact that Cabinet members have selected a number of projects to contribute towards the '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 sustainably to be fit for the future. The Overview and Scrutiny work programme will also be informed by the Council for the Future agenda.

What the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will achieve in 2023-2024

Strategic Priorities

- 7.4 We will aim to raise the profile of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny work by better communicating our successes. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel will continue to articulate recommendations associated with the work plan and monitor how effectively the recommendations have been received and endorsed by the associated decision-making bodies.

Work Programme

- 7.5 The Overview and Scrutiny work programme is a detailed programme that indicates the topics that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will scrutinise. The work programme will be developed early in the new Council year setting out what the key areas of focus will be. Topics already identified for inclusion include:

- Progress on Corporate Priorities
- Road Safety Partnership
- Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board Update
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report
- Anglian Water
- Meeting with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayor

There will also be the continuation of the Task and Finish Group to review the Council's current Performance Indicators.

8 CONTACTS

- 8.1 Work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel is enhanced by the involvement of Fenland residents, service users, our partners and local businesses as they bring an alternative perspective whilst also providing external challenge. If, therefore, you would like further details about any of the work mentioned in this report, or on how residents and partner organisations can contribute to the work of Overview and Scrutiny within Fenland we would very much welcome your input, please contact:

Linda Albon - Member Services Officer

lalbon@fenland.gov.uk

Amy Brown – Assistant Director

amybrown@fenland.gov.uk

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Agenda Item No:	12	
Committee:	COUNCIL	
Date:	2 OCTOBER 2023	
Report Title:	AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT	

1 Purpose / Summary

To report to Full Council the commitment and effectiveness of the Audit and Risk Management Committee's work from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2 Key issues

2.1 A good Corporate Governance framework helps the Council to deliver its Corporate Priorities.

The role of the Audit and Risk Management Committee includes:

- providing independent assurance of the adequacy of the governance, risk management framework and the control environment, plus
- independently scrutinising the Authority's financial and non-financial performance, and overseeing the financial reporting process.

2.2 The Committee has taken action to ensure that its members are adequately informed on key themes of the Governance Framework via regular reports including:

- Governance;
- Internal control;
- Risk management;
- Anti-fraud & corruption;
- Accounts and policies;
- Treasury management;

2.3 There have not been any reports from the External Auditors.

2.4 The Committee has been fundamental in the review and maintenance of the Council's Governance Framework.

2.5 In addition to the report attached the Interim Internal Audit Manager has completed a review of the committee's effectiveness using a checklist compiled by CIPFA. This was a recommendation made by the external quality assessment and endorsed by Corporate Governance Committee in February 2018. The completed checklist is attached as Appendix A

3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Full Council acknowledges the work of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and its compliance with CIPFA's annual checklist for 2022/23.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Ref	Not applicable
Portfolio Holder(s)	
Report Originator(s)	Amy Brown – Assistant Director & Deputy Monitoring Officer David Thacker – Interim Internal Audit Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole – Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer Amy Brown – Assistant Director & Deputy Monitoring Officer David Thacker – Interim Internal Audit Manager Mark Saunders - Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	Audit and Risk Management Committee minutes CIPFA Position Statement on Audit Committees 2022 Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA 2018)

Appendix: Annual report

Report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

April 2022 - March 2023



1 What is corporate governance?

1.1 Corporate Governance in Fenland District Council is an essential part of the Council's standards for transparent and informed management and decision-making. It provides assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance and to oversee the financial reporting process.

2 Responsibilities of the Committee

2.1 The Committee's purpose identified in the terms of reference states:

The purpose of our Audit and Risk Management Committee is to provide independent assurance to the members and other parties of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of Fenland District Council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place. It also ensures the Council is managing the risk of ensuring services have the resources to deliver on the Council's statutory responsibilities and corporate priorities whilst recognising the Council's financial position.

3 Members commitment to corporate governance in 2022-23

3.1 The committee is committed to delivering governance oversight for the Council and meetings included development briefings, and items of topical interest, to maintain knowledge and awareness of the Council's Governance Framework. Examples were:

- the role of Corporate Governance, Officers and the annual work plan;
- interpretation of Annual Financial Statements;
- the role of internal audit in Local Government. Update report on audits completed is provided which includes the number of and theme of recommendations;
- risk management;
- reports on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act; and
- reports from external audit;

3.2 During the course of the year Audit and Risk Management Committee members received training to develop and enhance their understanding of the Statement of Accounts

3.3 Training for Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee routinely discussed when reviewing the committee's Work Plan for the year. All members are invited to submit their ideas and suggestions for relevant topics for training or briefing sessions, that will continue to develop their skills or support identified gaps in knowledge.

4 Work programme and outcomes

4.1 The Committee considered the matters in the table below as part of its work programme for 2022-23

Programme	Outcome
Annual Governance Statement 2021-22	<p>The Authority has a statutory duty to publish a statement as to the level of effectiveness its governance and internal control framework.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk Management Committee was able to consider the sources of assurance and approve the content of the Statement prior to its publication with the Financial Accounts.</p> <p>The statement included an action plan which was reviewed during the year to ensure that governance and control framework weaknesses were addressed.</p> <p>This has helped the Council to proactively identify and manage governance and control risks that could affect Corporate Priorities. Examples include changes in legislation, finance and Government policy.</p>
Internal Audit work programme	<p>The Audit and Risk Management Committee received reports, from the Internal Audit Manager, for review of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk based annual plan and strategy, • Performance Outturn 2021-22, • Internal Audit Manager’s opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s control environment, and • Progress updates on delivery of the annual plan <p>These reports demonstrate that the Council has arrangements in place to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit and system of Internal Control.</p>
Review of effectiveness of Internal Audit	<p>The Committee received assurances from the Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer, following a review of Internal Audit effectiveness for 2022-23</p> <p>This confirmed that the Internal Audit Team “generally conforms” and is effective and follows professional quality standards such as the CIPFA “Local Government Application Note” for “Public Sector Internal Audit Standards” and the CIPFA “Statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit”.</p>

Programme	Outcome
<p>Risk Management Framework</p>	<p>The Committee received regular updates on the Corporate Risk Register, discussed emerging risks, and completed an annual review of the Risk Management Strategy.</p> <p>This provided assurance that significant risks are identified and managed for the Council.</p> <p>In addition, Members requested additional items to be considered which led to some changes to the risk register which have been implemented.</p>
<p>Treasury Management</p>	<p>The Committee received reports throughout the year on the Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, Annual Investment Strategy and financial performance.</p> <p>This provided assurance that the Council's assets are managed in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.</p>

APPENDIX 1

**Fenland District Council
Audit and Risk Management Committee Self-Assessment Exercise**

For the year 2022-23

No	Issue	Y	P	N	Evidence/ Comment	Action Required
AUDIT COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND GOVERNANCE						
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee?	Y			Referred to as the Audit and Risk Committee	
2	Does the audit committee report directly to full council? (applicable to local government only)	Y				
3	Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement?	Y			The Audit and Risk Management Committee has a Terms of reference that follow CIPFA's guidance on Audit Committees	A review will be undertaken in 2023 following the update of CIPFA's Position Statement in June 2022
4	Is the role and purpose of the audit committee understood and accepted across the authority?	Y			The committee's Terms of Reference are documented in the Council's Constitution, which is available on the website, where officers and members can access relevant documentation. The revised Terms of Reference were agreed at Full Council in May 2023.	
5	Does the audit committee provide support to the authority in meeting the requirements of good governance?	Y			The committee supports the authority by following the Nolan Principles adopted by the authority and ensuring to the best of their ability that the corporate plan and strategic goals of the authority are adhered to.	
6	Are the arrangements to hold the committee to account for its performance operating satisfactorily?	Y			The Audit and Risk Management Committee reports to Council and provides an annual report to Council. Throughout the year other members of the Council may request to attend meetings.	
FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE						
7	Do the committee's terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement?	Y			The Committee's Terms of Reference were updated in 2019/20 and now cover all areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement	

	good governance	Y				
	assurance framework, including partnerships and collaboration arrangements	Y				
	internal audit	Y				
	external audit	Y				
	financial reporting	Y				
	risk management	Y				
	value for money or best value	Y				
	counter fraud and corruption	Y				
	supporting the ethical framework	Y				
8	Is an annual evaluation undertaken to assess whether the committee is fulfilling its terms of reference and that adequate consideration has been given to all core areas?	Y			The Audit and Risk Management Committee completes an annual report, which encompasses this review. The committee also considers as part of its annual work the Annual Governance Statement and Corporate Risk Register. The Committee regularly receives reports from Internal Audit, External Audit and reviews the financial statements.	
9	Has the audit committee considered the wider areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement and whether it would be appropriate for the committee to undertake them?	Y			The committee reviews Treasury Management reports and has oversight of the annual report.	
10	Where coverage of core areas has been found to be limited, are plans in place to address this?	Y			A review of the Terms of Reference has been completed.	
11	Has the committee maintained its advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers that are not in line with its core purpose?	Y				
MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT						

12	<p>Has an effective audit committee structure and composition of the committee been selected?</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separation from the executive • an appropriate mix of knowledge and skills among the membership • a size of committee that is not unwieldy • consideration has been given to the inclusion of at least one independent member (where it is not already a mandatory requirement) 	Y			<p>The current Committee is separate from the Executive. The current membership has an appropriate mix of knowledge and skills, and the size is not unwieldy. The mix of members from each political party is in line with current policies.</p> <p>The Committee gave due consideration to appointing and independent member and requested that the item be included on the Committee's action plan to review the need and requirement on an annual basis.</p>	A report was presented to the Committee in July 2022 and remains under ongoing review
13	Have independent members appointed to the committee been recruited in an open and transparent way and approved by the full council or the PCC and chief constable as appropriate for the organisation?				Not applicable	See 12 above
14	Does the chair of the committee have appropriate knowledge and skills?	Y			<p>The current Chair of the Committee has the appropriate subject knowledge for the position. Members of the Committee are given opportunity to freely discuss matters with fellow members of the Committee. Officers attending the meetings are always available for advice to the chair if required.</p> <p>Training is given to all members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to ensure appropriate skills are up to date and relevant.</p>	
15	Are arrangements in place to support the committee with briefings and training?	Y			Training for members of the Committee is given to members on specific subjects (mainly technical areas – AGS, Statement of Accounts etc) prior to the official meetings taking place when requested.	
16	Has the membership of the committee been assessed against the core knowledge and skills framework and found to be satisfactory?	Y			<p>The Committee membership is formed from members with financial backgrounds, historical knowledge of the authority, knowledge from other authorities resulting in a varied mix of experience and knowledge.</p> <p>A formal assessment has not taken place, but could be considered.</p>	An assessment of current members against the core knowledge and skills framework is underway
17	Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal audit and the CFO?	Y			All meetings are attended by a mixture of officers, including the Corporate Director / S151 officer, external audit, Chief Accountant, Head of Governance and Internal Audit Manager	

18	Is adequate secretariat and administrative support to the committee provided?	Y			Relevant officers attend meeting to facilitate secretarial and administrative support to the Committee.	
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EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMITTEE

19	Has the committee obtained feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?	Y			The Chairman of the Audit Committee presents an annual report to the Council and receives feedback from the Executive.	
20	Are meetings effective with a good level of discussion and engagement from all the members?	Y			All members are encouraged to be involved fully at all meetings. Relevant officers are invited to attend meetings to provide greater detail to help discussions and engagement.	
21	Does the committee engage with a wide range of leaders and managers, including discussion of audit findings, risks and action plans with the responsible officers?	Y			The Committee engages with the relevant responsible officers when discussing risks and action plans. Examples of this are the AGS, Corporate Risk Register, Treasury Reports and RIPA policies.	
22	Does the committee make recommendations for the improvement of governance, risk and control and are these acted on?	Y			All reports presented to the Committee for approval are discussed and actions minuted on suggested improvements. These actions are reviewed by the officers to ensure they are followed up on and discussed at the following meeting.	
23	Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?		P		No formal evaluation has taken place, but the annual audit committee effectiveness report considers this to some degree.	Consider whether the committee is adding value using the information provided in CIPFA 2018 guidance.
24	Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?	Y			An action plan for the Committee was introduced this year to monitor actions and is included as part of the workplan	Continue to monitor the action plan and how it adds value to the organisation.
25	Does the committee publish an annual report to account for its performance and explain its work?	Y			Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report.	