

**CABINET - MONDAY, 24 MARCH 2025**  
**NOTICE OF DECISIONS PUBLISHED ON 25 MARCH 2025**

| <b>Item</b>   | <b>Pages</b> |
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| <b>Item</b>   |              |
| <b>Investment Board Update &amp; review of the Commercial &amp; Investment Strategy</b>   |              |
| <b>Purpose</b>  |              |
| <b>To provide Cabinet with an update of the work of the Investment Board from April 2024 to February 2025,</b>  |              |
| <b>Decision</b>   |              |
| <b>AGREED to note the report of the Investment Board and that the ongoing review of the current Commercial and Investment Strategy as determined by the constitution and delegated to the S151 officer is currently deferred.</b> |              |
| <b>Reason for Decision</b>  |              |
| <b>Ensures compliance with the Council's best value duty and is also compliant with the delegations to Cabinet in which it provided that it will be reviewed every 2 years.</b>   |              |
| <b>Alternative Options Considered</b>   |              |
| <b>Not applicable</b>   |              |
| <b>Interests</b>  |              |
| <b>None</b>   |              |
| <b>Background Documents</b>   |              |
| <b>Previous Investment Board minutes and Commercial Investment Strategy</b>   |              |

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| <b>Item</b>   |  |
| <b>Update of the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy (3C's) and associated procedures</b>   |  |
| <b>Purpose</b>  |  |
| <b>The Ombudsman for Local Government and Social Care (LGSCO) revised the Complaint Handling Code in 2024. This has resulted in the Council's 3C's policy being reviewed and updated to reflect guidance within the Code.</b> |  |
| <b>Decision</b>   |  |
| <b>AGREED to approve the proposed changes to the policy in line with the complaint handling Code published by the LGSCO.</b>  |  |

### Reason for Decision

The Code has been issued as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a council decides not to follow the Code, the LGSCO would expect it to have a good reason for this.

The recommendation is to approve the proposed changes to the policy in line with revised Complaint Handling Code published by the Local Government Ombudsman. This will mean that we adopt the code on 1 April 2025 allowing 12 months to embed the changes, prior to adoption by the LGSCO. This will also mean that the Council’s 3C’s policy reflects the updated published code.

The Code covers complaints about services where there are not already statutory complaints processes in place. For example, public health and adult social care. This is because there is already legislation in place which sets out how these complaints should be handled. Councils are encouraged to adopt the code as soon as they are able to do so. The LGSCO intend to start considering the Code as part of their processes from April 2026 at the earliest, allowing local councils time to adopt the Code into working practices successfully.

The Council’s 3C’s policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect revised definition of a complaint and service request.

The key amendment for Fenland District Council will be changing from our current three stage process to two stages. The rationale for this change is to improve customer service by ensuring that the complaints process is not a protracted one. We will continue to collect data and information about complaints and use this to drive service improvement. We will also continue to publish data about our 3Cs process in our Annual Report in line with any corporate governance arrangements.

The two-stage process is designed to provide a full response at stage one of the process providing a prompt explanation, apology or resolution within 10 working days. Stage two of the process is our final opportunity to respond directly to an individual. A stage two response will capture the Council’s overall position on the matter raised and will be responded to in 20 working days.

In both instances the Code encourages a proportionate response to the complaint raised and recognises that a full investigation may not be necessary in all cases. This allows the Council to consider whether there are any actions that can be taken quickly to resolve the complaint.

### Alternative Options Considered

In arriving at the recommendation in this report we have considered maintaining a three-stage process and not updating our current policy. However, this had been discounted as the LGSCO advises the following:

**“A process with more than two stages will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the relevant Ombudsman. A process with a single stage means the organisation may lack the ability to check its responses before an individual comes to the Ombudsman”.**

**The revised policy therefore provides more in-depth detail for our customers about how and when to make a complaint and simplifies the process. It also provides clarity about allowing a service the opportunity to put things right in the first instance, prior to progressing a formal complaint.**

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| <b>Interests</b> |
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| <b>None</b> |
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| <b>Background Documents</b> |
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| <b>Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code</b> |
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| <b>Item</b> |
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| <b>County-wide Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy</b> |
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| <b>Purpose</b> |
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| <b>To consider revisions to the existing County-wide Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Repairs Policy as an outcome of the 2024 review of Disabled Facilities Grants which help support wider health and social care outcomes.</b> |
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| <b>Decision</b> |
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| <b>AGREED to approve the County-wide Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy.</b> |
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| <b>Reason for Decision</b> |
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| <b>In 2019, FDC approved a Cambridgeshire-wide Housing Adaptations Policy to ensure the BCF allocation could be utilised in accordance with the review outcomes, BCF guidance and best practice guidance from Foundations (The National Body for Home Improvement Agencies [HIAs], Handyperson Services and the Disabled Facilities Grant in England).</b> |
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| <b>From this a new county-wide policy plan was implemented to embed a consistent approach to delivery across Cambridgeshire.</b> |
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| <b>In 2024/25 the BCF allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants funding in Fenland was £1,325,000.</b> |
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| <b>Appendix B of the report has a useful summary of the policy and the types of assistance available.</b> |
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| <b>It has now been five years since the policy was introduced and a new year-long review has now been undertaken consisting of a project team in which Fenland has had officer representation and been working on developing a revised county-wide policy, set out in Appendix A of the report.</b> |
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**There are two substantive changes from the 2019 policy.**

**Change 1 is raising the amount to discretionary “Top up” loans above the mandatory maximum for DFG’s to £30,000, meaning £60,000 is now available for larger scale projects. Reasons:**

- The maximum Disabled Facility Grant award is currently £30k. This limit has not changed since 2005.
- Inflation in building cost since then now means that the £30k maximum grant is no longer sufficient to fund major works, predominantly as extensions for disabled children.
- This was recognised in the 2019 policy, so councils introduced discretionary DFG “top up” funding above the £30k, subject to funds being available.
- The 2019 policy allowed Fenland to introduce a £15k max “top up” funding to help grant applicants fund larger schemes.
- Since Covid, building costs have risen dramatically and the £30k DFG and £15k “top up” is in many cases no longer sufficient to fund major works.
- The new 2024 policy is proposing to raise the “top up” funding to £30k which, with the maximum DFG, will mean £60k of potential funding available, subject to the funds being available.

**Raising the maximum amount of discretionary grant from £10k to £25k and introducing a part loan repayment charge secured against the property, where high value works are funded. Grant will be given to fund works up to £15k with any balance over this figure being given as a repayable loan. Reasons:**

- Since the 2019 policy was introduced, Fenland has funded some major high-cost improvement and repairs work through its discretionary grant scheme.
- There have been many cases where the £10k grant limit has been breached due to the complexities of the householder’s circumstances through a discretionary grant.
- Under the 2019 policy all additional works have been funded via a discretionary grant, so no grant monies have been repayable upon sale of the property.
- Under the proposed 2024 policy, where costs exceed £10k this amount will be funded via a discretionary loan which will be repayable upon the sale of the property.
- For instance, where the estimated cost of works is £15k, £10k will be funded via grant and £5k funded via discretionary loan.
- A similar arrangement is presently in place for DFGs.
- The loan will be registered on the Local Land Charges Register and will not attract any interest or fees.
- Officers expect the vast majority of cases still to be funded under the £10k limit, so there will be no material change for the majority of grant applicants.
- Only the exceptional, high-cost cases will be affected by this proposed change.

#### **Alternative Options Considered**

**It is felt not making the changes restricts the policy’s impact in terms of balancing meeting the needs of vulnerable households with utilising public funds in a proportionate way to support Better Care Fund outcomes.**

#### **Interests**

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| None                        |
| <b>Background Documents</b> |
| None                        |

| Item   |
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| <b>Food Waste Container Procurement</b>  |
| Purpose  |
| <b>To approve the cost effective and timely procurement for the containers required for the range of Fenland municipal properties to commence weekly food waste collection in line with legislation.</b>   |
| Decision   |
| <b>AGREED to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delegated power for the Corporate Director with responsibility for Environmental Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to purchase the required containers through the most cost-effective and timely means.</li> <li>the capital expenditure from the monies supplied by Defra for this purpose, and that should the total exceed the monies supplied that this further capital be sought from appropriate reserves by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder.</li> <li>delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Refuse and Recycling, Parks and Open Spaces to inform Defra of any change to implementation deadlines should this be required if there are delays to the delivery of these containers, or other essential equipment such as vehicles.</li> </ul>                              |
| Reason for Decision  |
| <p><b>Council and Cabinet approved the commencement of weekly food waste collections from the end of March 2026. As a result, the Council needs to quickly move to purchase the required food waste caddies and containers through the most appropriate means.</b></p> <p><b>Given the increases in the price of equipment since Defra set the capital allowances for each authority from the total £295million provided, there is a real risk that the monies provided will not be sufficient. Given the statutory nature of the requirement, the Council will need to find the remaining capital funding.</b></p> <p><b>Without confirmed delivery dates and the number of authorities all purchasing similar equipment at the same time, there is the real risk that delivery delays will result in implementation delays. This is recognised within the project plan and within government guidance.</b></p> |
| Alternative Options Considered   |
| None   |
| Interests  |
| None   |

| Background Documents   |
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| <a href="#">New burdens doctrine: guidance for government departments - GOV.UK</a><br><a href="#">Cabinet Report 15 July 2024 - DEFRA Funded Food Waste Vehicle Purchase</a> |

| Item  |
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| Review of 2 Air Quality management areas for Wisbech  |
| Purpose   |
| To request Cabinet approval of the revocation of 2 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) for Wisbech as required by the Environment Act 1995. To set out the reasons for this recommendation and to update Cabinet on recent correspondence from the Department of Food and Rural Affairs in relation to Fenland's air quality and future air quality monitoring in Wisbech.            |
| Decision  |
| AGREED by Order under the Environment Act 1995 Part IV to the revocation of Air Quality Management Areas Wisbech 1 and Wisbech 2 as identified in Schedule 1 to the report, following removal of the original pollution source, and therefore securing compliance with the national statutory particulate and sulphur dioxide air quality objectives.                                   |
| Reason for Decision   |
| The Council has demonstrated compliance with the national air quality objective standard for Particulates and Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) in AQMA's 1 and 2 for more than five years. In line with the statutory guidance, these AQMA's should now be revoked by 'Order' under Part IV of the Environment Act.  |
| Alternative Options Considered  |
| <p>There are no alternatives that would comply with the statutory policy guidance PG22 (Aug22) which states: 'There should not be any declared AQMAs for which compliance with the relevant objective has been achieved for a consecutive five-year period.</p> <p>If Cabinet chose not to support the recommendation, Defra would likely instruct the Council to revoke the AQMAs.</p> |
| Interests   |
| None  |
| Background Documents  |
| Annual Screening Reviews of the Districts Air Quality are available on our website at <a href="#">Air quality - Fenland District Council</a>  |

| Item   |
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| Fenland Inspire! Enhancements to the Wisbech Park Splash Pad |
| Purpose  |

**To provide information on the proposed enhancements to Wisbech Park Splash Pad.**

**This is the first project in Wisbech to be brought forward for delivery as part of the £30m+ Fenland Inspire! Programme which seeks to enhance the leisure and cultural legacy to be left by Fenland District Council after Local Government Reorganisation.**

### **Decision**

#### **AGREED:**

- To note the contents of the report and approve further work to be carried out to deliver enhancements to the Wisbech Park Splash Pad, and to authorise the Section 151 Officer to add £60,000 to the Capital Programme to fund the enhancements and delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Open Spaces and the Corporate Director to enter into all necessary arrangements to deliver the project.
- This is a staged plan. This year the project will include canopy, picnic benches and landscaping added to existing infrastructure. Next year a larger scheme will be implemented. A further paper on next year's scheme with rough costs will return to Cabinet in 3 months' time.

### **Reason for Decision**

**It is envisaged that improvements to the Wisbech Park Splash Pad will result in the following community outcomes:**

#### **1. Increased Usage and Visitor Engagement**

Variety of water features: **Adding new interactive elements (e.g. water tunnels, misting walls, water cannons, or splash zones) can attract a broader range of age groups and make the space more fun and engaging.**

#### **2. Better accessibility**

**Inclusive Design:** Adding features like sensory water elements and water play areas for children with disabilities could make the space more inclusive for everyone in the community.

Shaded Areas: **Adding pergolas or awnings can offer much needed shade for families and help keep the environment comfortable during hotter months.**

#### **3. Improved Aesthetic Appeal**

Themed Design: **A new landscaping design (e.g. natural elements like rocks, greenery, or a jungle theme) could enhance the visual appeal and make the area feel more community focussed.**

Colourful Features: **Adding vibrant tiles, murals, could make the splash pad more visually attractive.**

#### **4. Increased Social Interaction**

Gathering Spaces: **With benches, picnic tables, or seating areas, the space could foster**

more social interactions among families and individuals.

The enhancements will also result in a direct investment in the existing park assets.

**5. Costs and delivery timescales for the proposed enhancements to Wisbech Park Splashpad**

Designs for the enhancement of Wisbech Park Splashpad will be shared with lead members when available.

The capital cost of the enhancements is expected to be £60,000.

It is expected that the business case, procurement and construction of the enhancements will all be completed in the year 2025/26 (pending manufacture time).

It should be noted that a planning application will be required for a shaded canopy.

**Alternative Options Considered**

Not applicable

**Interests**

None

**Background Documents**

Fenland District Council Business Plan 2025-26

[Report and Plan.pdf](#)

**Item**

Fenland Inspire! Whittlesey - Manor Field Community Pathway

**Purpose**

To provide information on the proposed all-weather permeable surface community pathway making the Manor Field accessible to all.

This is the first project in Whittlesey to be brought forward for delivery as part of the Fenland Inspire! Programme which seeks to enhance the leisure and cultural legacy to be left by Fenland District Council after Local Government Reorganisation.

**Decision**

AGREED to note the contents of the report and approve a budget of up to £300,000 to deliver a robust pathway around the perimeter of the Manor Field suitable for all members of the community and authorise officers to formally procure and then enter a contract with the successful tenderer to deliver the necessary construction work.



| Reason for Decision  |
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| <p>It is expected that development of a perimeter pathway for the Manor Field will result in the following community benefits:</p> <p><b>1. Increased visitor numbers leading to better physical and mental health</b></p> <p>With increased access to the field, more people will visit, enjoying a walk or a jog, with friends or family. The pathway will be smooth, will drain well and will be robust and wide enough for two disabled scooters to pass one another. Improving access to all members of the community will further increase the number of people enjoying the Manor Field. This will improve community health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Additionally, the improved conditions are also likely to increase the popularity of the local Parkrun.</p> <p>The current access to the netball and tennis courts is poor. This pathway will be improved as part of the perimeter pathway works.</p> <p><b>2. Increased social interaction</b></p> <p>More people visiting the open space will lead to increased community interaction – leading to stronger communities, better understanding between people, less anti-social behaviour in the park.</p> <p>Part of this project is expected to include additional robust benches and picnic tables around the pathway to help foster social interaction.</p> <p>Reducing loneliness and increasing interactions that people have supports community mental health.</p> |
| Alternative Options Considered   |
| <p>Differing materials for the pathway have been considered by engineers and the consensus is that a robust approach is required due to the underlying ground conditions and a tarmac pathway, bounded by concrete edging would be the most suitable solution in this location.</p>  |
| Interests  |
| None   |
| Background Documents   |
| None   |

| Item                                |
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| Accommodation Review (Confidential) |
| Purpose                             |

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| <b>For Cabinet to consider the Full Business Case in respect of the corporate accommodation review and agree on the proposed solution to the accommodation needs for FDC going forward.</b> |
| <b>Decision</b>   |
| <b>AGREED to note the content of the FBC and to instruct officers to pause the proposed relocation on the terms outlined within it, pending the outcome of the ongoing LGR process.</b>     |
| <b>Reason for Decision</b>  |
| <b>Local Government Reorganisation</b>  |
| <b>Alternative Options Considered</b>   |
| <b>None</b>   |
| <b>Interests</b>  |
| <b>None</b>   |
| <b>Background Documents</b>   |
| <b>Confidential Cabinet reports and confidential Full Business Case</b>   |

Additional information regarding these decisions is available from  
Amy Brown – Tel: 01354 622452

The Decisions/Edit Decisions/Call in Deadline at 1700 hours is the expiry date for call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel of any of the above decisions. These decisions will come into force and may then be implemented on 2 April 2025, with the exception of any that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel calls in.