

AGENDA

CABINET

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2025

2.00 PM

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

Committee Officer: Linda Albon
Tel: 01354 622424
e-mail: memberservices@fenland.gov.uk

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

To confirm and sign the minutes of 27 January 2025.
- 3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified
- 4 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting
- 5 Business Plan 2025/26 (Pages 9 - 28)

For Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the approval of the Final Business Plan for 2025-2026.

- 6 Budget & Mid Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 (Pages 29 - 96)

To consider and approve the revised General Fund Budget and Capital Programme for 2024/25.

To consider and recommend to Council the General Fund Budget Estimates 2025/26, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30, the Council Tax levels for 2025/26, the Capital Programme for 2025/26 -2027/28, and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Capital Strategy and Annual Treasury Investment Strategy for 2025/26.

7 Leisure Facility Strategy - Initial Assessment Phase (Pages 97 - 126)

Cabinet has instructed officers, working with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, to assess Fenland's leisure centres and develop a planned investment programme to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose for the future in line with the Council's Inspire programme. The report highlights costs of potential projects covering all four leisure facilities in Chatteris, Wisbech, March and Whittlesey and offers Cabinet suggested options to move work forwards.

8 Fenland Waste Strategy (Pages 127 - 162)

For Cabinet to agree and recommend an updated waste collection system to Council for domestic waste collection in Fenland that provides for the legislative changes resulting from the Environment Act 2021 as they commence from 30 March 2026.

9 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan (Pages 163 - 262)

To consider approval of a Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan 2024-2029

10 24 High Street, Wisbech (Pages 263 - 268)

To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech. To highlight additional costs incurred for the construction of 24 High Street, as detailed in the January 2025 Cabinet report, and to seek formal approval from Cabinet for this additional funding.

(Work regarding 11-12 High Street, Wisbech will now be covered in other reports)

11 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 269 - 270)

For information purposes.

12 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

13 Transfer Station Tender (with confidential appendix) (Pages 271 - 278)

To approve the procurement of a replacement provider for the bulking and transfer of Fenland's domestic and commercial mixed dry recycling.

Appendix 1 to this report comprises exempt information - to exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: "that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as

amended) as indicated.”

14 Article 4 Direction - HMO's in Wisbech (with confidential appendix) (Pages 279 - 322)

Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the making of Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions in Wisbech which will give the Local Planning Authority (LPA) the ability to properly consider the implications of all new HMOs that are created, avoid excessive concentrations of HMOs in particular areas and continue to monitor their distribution and effects on the wider area.

15 Considerations of initial options for the future redevelopment of 11 & 12 High Street, Wisbech (with Confidential Appendices) (Pages 323 - 372)

This report is presented to allow members to consider and review the options available for the future of the property located at 11 & 12 High Street, Wisbech and to provide officers with instructions on the preferred course of action.

The Report and Schedules 3 and 5 to this report comprises exempt information - to exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: “that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated.”

Friday, 14 February 2025

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

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CABINET

MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2025 - 4.00 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Wallwork

Councillor Boden advised that Councillor Wallwork was not present as he had requested she attend a public meeting in Manea in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety. The meeting was being held in response to the serious public order offence that occurred in the district on 25th January and was also being attended by the Chief Constable, MP, and Police and Crime Commissioner.

CAB42/24 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2024 were approved and signed.

CAB43/24 FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

Members considered the Fees and Charges 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden advised that it has not been possible to confirm the fees for the ports of Wisbech and Sutton Bridge. He requested that these items be exempted from the decision at this meeting to allow officers more time to work on those and that they be brought to the next Cabinet meeting on 24th February for a decision. Members agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Benney and Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and AGREED to approve the Fees and Charges for 2025/26, with the exception of the statutory harbour dues.

CAB44/24 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

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

- Councillor Tierney said he is pleased to see this project still moving on; eight years is a long time, but the Council had encountered many complications during that time. He expressed concern that whilst these buildings are gradually being brought back into decent repair, other buildings in Wisbech are now falling into disrepair and said it is time to act on these to prevent the same situation occurring. Whilst it is not the direct responsibility of this authority, the residents of Wisbech are asking the Council to do something so he has asked officers to look at this and consider what can be done.
- Councillor Seaton said he appreciated Councillor Tierney's view and is waiting for officer reports as to how the Council can proceed on these.
- Councillor Miscandlon agreed with Councillor Tierney that older buildings are deteriorating over time, saying owners need to be encouraged to bring them up to a better standard. He added it is deplorable that they do not until it is too late but then expect the Council to bail them out.
- Councillor Boden said it is important and appropriate to do something now given that this

authority will cease to exist after March 2028. Because of this, he is keen to see a tight timeline for improvement and the requisite finance in place virtually immediately to be able to provide a far better outlook for Wisbech High Street and this will form part of a project to be announced called Fenland Inspire.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to note:

- **the current anticipated overspend on 24 High Street and that Cabinet is to anticipate a further report in February.**
- **that until the building is completed there may be other additional costs, albeit these are anticipated to be more minor in nature, as the complex part of the building works are completed. It is anticipated that further costs will be addressed by way of a Portfolio or Officer Decision Notice**
- **that officers are seeking further information with regards the funding mechanism for the building and a further report regarding this will be submitted to Cabinet in February.**

CAB45/24 LEISURE CENTRE CONDITIONS SURVEY UPDATE

Members considered the Leisure Centre Conditions Survey Update report presented by Councillor Miscandlon.

- Councillor Mrs French said that she has received repeated complaints about the state and cold temperature of the showers at the George Campbell and asked Councillor Miscandlon if he could provide an update next month when he brings a further report back to Cabinet. Councillor Miscandlon agreed but added that he is aware of various deficiencies at this and other centres and is in talks with Freedom Leisure to get these fixed.
- Councillor Hoy highlighted some deficiencies both dry and wet side at the Hudson but said her fundamental concern is a lack of care by staff there. It is a busy centre but people are not being signed in so there is no log of who is in the building or how many are using it, and it is missing even basic levels of hygiene and cleanliness. There is no point spending money renovating the centre if staff are not going to clean it. Councillor Miscandlon responded that Councillor Hoy is not the first to highlight issues at this and other centres. He said the directors have been spoken to about the lack of internal maintenance at the centres and the negligence of not booking people in and out.
- Councillor Boden said it is important that the broader leisure facility strategy works are moved forward as quickly as possible. He would like to hear in February more specifics about the timescales involved and prospective costs so the Council will be able to put these into the capital programme within the timescale left available so when the centres are handed over to the new unitary authority, they are in a good and updated condition. However, in respect of financing Councillor Nawaz has pointed out that the plan to partially finance the works at the Manor, by looking to sell the Station Road recreation ground, may not be appropriate. Legal restrictions exist and the Charity Commissioners need to agree to utilise funds from the sale of the ground to provide capital for the rebuilding of the centre where necessary, so it looks like that is not a feasible way of moving forward with the financing, hence the importance of more detailed financial information in February.
- Councillor Mrs Laws said she noted within the report the refurbishment of the tennis court at Whittlesey and asked for a complete breakdown of what has been done for the next meeting as she does not think the floodlighting has been completed and is getting reports that the surface may not be entirely up to standard. The investment money is excellent, but she understands the tennis court is not being fully used due to some disagreement with the management of the tennis club who do not seem to have welcomed the netball club who wish to use it and for whose benefit the floodlighting was installed.
- Councillor Miscandlon thanked Councillor Mrs Laws for highlighting this conflict, which he had been unaware of, and he will look into this. He is aware of some cracks in the resurfaced court, but they are being addressed. The floodlights are in place, so he is unaware of why it is not

being used. Friends of the Manor are due to meet soon, both he and the Head of Leisure will attend and hopefully help to get any conflict resolved.

- Councillor Mrs Laws added that there had been a lot of lobbying by both town and district councils to get the money for the refurbishment to create an all-weather court that can be used both day and evenings. The investment is of great benefit to the netball club in their aim to rise through their league and it is a very poor show if the court is not being used.
- Councillor Miscandlon agreed that it is a waste of money if the court is not being used but with the potential of a PlayZone coming, this will be of great benefit to the netballers because it will be the size of a pitch that can be used for competition. He invited them to visit the PlayZone pitch at the Rugby Club in Peterborough to see how amazing it is. Councillor Mrs Laws requested that Councillor Miscandlon highlight the PlayZone at the Friends meeting and give them that opportunity to go.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws and AGREED to:

- **note the report, recognising the progress that the Council has made on unavoidable condition survey work in the past year and note the works still in the pipeline for delivery in the coming months, and**
- **note that progress is being made with the Leisure Facility Strategy – Initial Assessment Phase project with a report expected at Cabinet in February with detailed information regarding a significant project at one site, smaller projects at two other sites and an expected timeframe for a package of works for the final site.**

CAB46/24 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Noted for information.

CAB47/24 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT - PROCUREMENT OPTION DECISION AND REVISED SPECIFICATION (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES)

Members considered the Grounds Maintenance Contract Procurement report presented by Councillor Murphy.

- Councillor Mrs French advised she is happy to support this, the feedback she gets is that the contractors are doing an exceptional job so well done to them.
- Councillor Mrs Laws concurred, saying that she will be sending a personal message to Tivoli regarding the positive comments she has received, particularly about how well kept the cemetery in Whittlesey is. Where there have been problems, FDC officers have been quick to respond and in turn contact the contractors quickly to get things rectified, often within 24 hours so praise should be given, and she would support going with them again for 12 months.

Councillor Boden asked how members should proceed with the Grounds Maintenance contract. Councillor Murphy proposed an extension of the current Tivoli contract by one year, Councillor Mrs Laws seconded the proposal and Members agreed to accept the proposal on the understanding, as stated by Councillor Boden, that that is the final extension which will be possible and members will need to look for a long-term contract in a year's time, coming into force in November 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to:

1. **Note the report and the likely significant financial impact that a new GM contract or contract extension, at the current specification, will have on the FDC revenue budget.**
2. **Note and approve the recommendations for a reduction in contract specification to keep the Council's future costs as low as possible.**
3. **Approve the procurement of up to three arboriculture contractors, to put in place call-off contracts to ensure best value for ongoing tree works.**

4. Note the two best value options for delivery of the Grounds Maintenance service from November 2025 of either:
 - Extending the Tivoli contract by 1 year, or
 - Procuring a contractor on a 5 + 5-year basis
5. Select the option to extend the Tivoli contract by 1 year, on the understanding that is the final extension that is possible with a need to look for a long-term, maybe 5 + 5-year basis contract in a year's time coming into force in November 2026.
6. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to mobilise and implement such proposals as selected, with the authority to undertake all reasonable ancillary actions to ensure implementation.
7. Authorise the Monitoring Office to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above in 6.

CAB48/24 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2024 were approved and signed.

4.37 pm

Chairman

Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	CABINET	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	FINAL BUSINESS PLAN 2025-26	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 For Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the approval of the Final Business Plan 2025-2026.

2 Key Issues

- Our Business Plan 2025-26 identifies the key challenges and opportunities for Fenland. Its structure outlines our key Corporate Priorities, Communities, Environment and Economy. A fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside everything we do. It aims to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently and sustainably.
- Each corporate priority is underpinned by a series of performance indicators, which are used to track progress, measure success, and identify areas for improvement. All performance indicators are reported to all elected Members at our Council meetings
- The next 12 months presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly as we navigate the anticipated Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reforms outlined in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024.
- We recognise that these changes bring an element of uncertainty. However, we are committed to maintaining stability and continuity in service delivery while positioning Fenland to benefit from the opportunities that LGR presents.
- Against this backdrop of reform, we have a strong ambition to deliver a series of exciting capital investment projects across Fenland over the next three years. Under the banner of Fenland Inspire!, these projects will focus on enhancing our much-loved sport, leisure, and open space facilities, as well as preserving and celebrating the district's rich heritage and built environment.
- These investments reflect our commitment to improving quality of life for our residents and ensuring that Fenland remains an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, and visit.
- Despite all the challenges, we continue to maintain our record for keeping council tax as low as possible for our residents. Thanks to financial

prudence and good governance, our Draft Budget for 2025/26 proposes no increase in Fenland's portion of the council tax bill for the seventh year running (in 2023/24, we even cut our element by 2%). We're proud that no other principal council in the country has a better record for keeping council tax down for its residents than Fenland.

- The Draft Business Plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 20 January 2025.
- We ran a public consultation about our Draft Business Plan 2025-26 between 2 January and 2 February 2025.
- Since the conclusion of the consultation period and due to continuing advances in relation to the proposals relating to Local Government Reform, we have included some amendments to the business plan to reflect our proposals in relation to Fenland Inspire! . These are:
 - Changes to the contents page to include Fenland Inspire!
 - Changes to the introduction to include reference to LGR and the Inspire projects
 - Addition of Fenland Inspire page and potential projects
 - Amendments to the transformation page. Changing the reference of the project being a priority focus, to continuing with the project.
 - All other text in the other priorities has remained the same.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 For Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the approval of the Final Business Plan 2025-2026.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Chris Boden, Leader of the Council Cabinet Members
Report Originator(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications

Background Papers	Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy Draft Business Plan 2025-26

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Business Plan 2025-26 sets out the priorities we aim to deliver over the next 12 months. These priorities have been developed to address the most important needs of our communities and set a framework for how we will work towards our ambitions for the area and achieve our goal of creating a thriving place to live and visit.
- 1.2 Our core priorities focus on three areas: Communities, Environment and Economy. These priorities primarily focus on the statutory and wide variety of services that we provide day-to-day. In a typical year we empty more than 2.9 million bins, clean 210 square miles of town centres and open spaces, and answer over 50,000 telephone enquiries – and more! A fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside everything we do. It aims to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently and sustainably. We invest in and support our workforce to ensure they have the skills and resources they need to work to the best of their ability.
- 1.3 Each priority is underpinned by a series of performance indicators, which are used to track progress, measure success, and identify areas for improvement. All performance indicators are reported to all elected Members at our Council meetings. These public reports are summarised to provide end of year performance updates against our priorities in our Annual Report, which is available to download on our website.
- 1.4 With the anticipated Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reforms outlined in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, we have a strong ambition to deliver a series of exciting capital investment projects across Fenland over the next three years. Under the banner of Fenland Inspire!, these projects will focus on enhancing our much-loved sport, leisure, and open space facilities, as well as preserving and celebrating the district's rich heritage and built environment.
- 1.5 These investments reflect our commitment to improving quality of life for our residents and ensuring that Fenland remains an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is being asked to approve the Business Plan 2025-6 because it will provide a structure of proposed aspirations and outcomes which will guide delivery of the council's core priorities. It will also aim to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently, and sustainably.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 We ran an online public consultation about our Draft Business Plan and Budget 2025-26 between 2 January and 2 February 2025. It was publicised on the front page of our website, our news web page and FDC social media accounts, via press releases and circulated to our news distribution list.
- 3.2 It was also circulated to our business contacts, community groups and hard to reach groups. It was also available in paper format at the South Fens Business Centre, Chatteris, the Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech, and Fenland Hall, March.
- 3.3 83 people responded to our survey. 74% supported our community ambitions (7% didn't and 19 not sure), 71% supported our environment ambitions (16% didn't and 13% not sure), 63% supported our economy ambitions (16% didn't and 21% not sure), 66% supported our quality organisation ambitions (12% didn't and 22% not sure), and 57% supported our transformation agenda ambitions (16% didn't and 27% not sure). All responses were from Fenland residents.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered as the Council has made an ongoing commitment to produce an annual Business Plan.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

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

5.3 Financial Implications

- 5.4 The Business Plan 2025-26 sets out our corporate priorities we aim to deliver over the next 12 months. These are reflected in the Council budget.

5.5 Equality Implications

- 5.6 There are no specific equality implications connected with the recommendations comprised in this report.

Fenland District Council

Business Plan 2025/26



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■	Our priorities: Quality Organisation
■	Performance



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Business Plan for 2025/26

As Chief Executive and Leader of Fenland District Council, we are pleased to present our Business Plan for 2025/26. This plan outlines our vision and priorities for the year ahead, focusing on delivering high-quality services to our communities while preparing for the significant changes that lie ahead.

The next 12 months presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly as we navigate the anticipated Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reforms outlined in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024. The proposed reforms are expected to reshape the structure and responsibilities of local councils, requiring us to adapt swiftly and strategically to ensure a seamless transition.

We recognise that these changes bring an element of uncertainty. However, we are committed to maintaining stability and continuity in service delivery while positioning Fenland to benefit from the opportunities that LGR presents. Our planning and decision-making processes will be underpinned by flexibility and resilience, ensuring that we can respond effectively to evolving governance frameworks.

Against this backdrop of reform, our elected Members have

expressed a strong ambition to deliver a series of exciting capital investment projects across Fenland over the next three years. Under the banner of Fenland Inspire!, these projects will focus on enhancing our much-loved sport, leisure, and open space facilities, as well as preserving and celebrating the district's rich heritage and built environment.

These investments reflect our commitment to improving quality of life for our residents and ensuring that Fenland remains an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, and visit. From revitalising local leisure centres to restoring historic landmarks, we are determined to create lasting benefits for our communities while strengthening our local economy.

Another reflection of Members' commitment to supporting residents – particularly those who need it most – is keeping council tax as low as possible.

With ongoing financial pressures on public services, it's not an easy task. But thanks to financial prudence and good governance, our Draft Budget for 2025/26 proposes no increase in Fenland's portion of the council tax bill (in 2023/24, we even cut our element by 2%). We're proud that no other principal council in the country has a better record for keeping council

tax down for its residents than Fenland.

Other key projects for year ahead include the implementation of our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and the continued development of our Early Help Hub, which has already demonstrated success in providing timely and effective support to vulnerable residents. These initiatives highlight our dedication to proactive, preventative approaches that make a real difference in people's lives.

Of course, none of our priorities would be possible without our valued partners and dedicated staff, and as we move into 2025/26, we thank them for their ongoing contributions and support.

Together with residents and businesses, we will embrace the changes ahead, deliver on our commitments, and inspire a bright future for Fenland.



Paul Medd
Chief Executive



Chris Boden
Leader of the
Council



ABOUT FENLAND



Fenland is renowned for its vibrant community spirit, rich heritage and picturesque land and skies. Located in North Cambridgeshire, the Fenland District spans 211 square miles and is home to 102,462 residents (ONS: 2021). Over 70% of the population resides in the four market towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey, and Wisbech, while the picturesque rural areas encompass 29 villages.

- Population of 102,462 (ONS: 2021).
- Average house price of £225,000 (UK HPI June 2024), 22% less than the national average.
- Close proximity to large urban centres like Cambridge and Peterborough.
- Population growth projected to reach 118,826 by 2043, a 16% increase (ONS: 2021).

- 23% of residents (23,400 people) are aged over 64, higher than both the county and national averages (ONS: 2021).
- 135 hectares of open green spaces.
- 80th most deprived area out of 317 in the country (IMD: 2019).



OUR PRIORITIES

Our core priorities focus on three areas: Communities, Environment and Economy. A fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside everything we do. It aims to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently and sustainably.



Communities



Environment



Economy



Quality Organisation



FENLAND INSPIRE!



Fenland Inspire!

In addition to our four core priorities, our Cabinet Members have selected a number of capital investment projects they are aiming to deliver across Fenland in the next three years.

The Fenland Inspire! projects focus on enhancing our much-loved sport, leisure, and open space facilities, as well as preserving and celebrating the district's rich heritage and built environment.

These initiatives will improve access to high-quality recreational opportunities, encouraging active and healthy lifestyles within our communities. At the same time, investment in heritage assets and the local built environment will help protect Fenland's unique character, ensuring that its historical significance is maintained for future generations.

Members' chosen capital projects are:

- New Wisbech Park bowls green
- Wisbech Park Splash Pad improvements
- Wisbech 11/12 High Street development
- Wisbech Chapel building improvements

- Wisbech floodlighting for Clarkson Memorial & War Memorial
- Wisbech Park pathway improvements
- Leisure centre refurbishments
- New Chatteris swimming pool
- District-wide assessment of new play equipment
- New March Rugby Club HQ & pitches
- New March country park
- Whittlesey Monastery acquisition
- Whittlesey Manor field sustainable surface path

- New Village Green for Wimblington

- Civil Parking Enforcement

These projects are subject to scoping work and the development of outline business cases to determine their feasibility and affordability, ensuring that investment is targeted effectively and delivers the greatest benefit to local communities.



TRANSFORMATION



Transformation programme and outcomes

In 2025/26 we will be continuing our ongoing transformation work to improve efficiency, customer experience, and drive positive change.

Spanning across all services within the council, the Transformation programme ties together all major 'change' initiatives that are looking to improve how the council works and delivers services.

- An improved customer experience where customers will be able to interact with the council via a channel and time that is convenient to them.
- The ability for customers to self-serve via a suite of online processes or gain the personal support they need on more complex issues.

- Be flexible and forward thinking reflecting the diversity of our workforce and services we provide and enabling us to continue to be resilient and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Interdependencies between services will be maximised to improve outcomes for local people.
- Our building layout, usage and ways of working will encourage closer working with partners to further enhance service delivery for local residents.
- We will continue to attract, recruit and retain skilled staff enabling us to continue to deliver excellent services to our local residents
- We will have a motivated, committed, productive workforce ensuring colleagues have the necessary tools, equipment,

training, and ongoing support to fulfil their role.

- Services will be aligned, bringing together teams with similar processes and outcomes therefore building capacity whilst maximising efficient working practices.
- We will continue to have a commercial focus to service delivery, considering future opportunities and sustainable income streams

Transformation Programme

Cllr Chris Boden Finance Audit & Risk Accommodation Project	Cllr Sam Hoy Housing Options Private Sector Housing Licensing	Cllr Peter Murphy Environmental Services Park & Open Spaces
Cllr Ian Benney Property & Estates Marine Services Economic Growth	Cllr Dee Laws Planning Local Plan	Cllr Chris Seaton Transport Heritage
Cllr Jan French Benefits & Council Tax (ARP) Car Parking	Cllr Alex Miscandlon Leisure Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	Cllr Steve Tierney ICT My Fenland Policy & Communications
		Cllr Susan Wallwork Environmental Health Communities

COMMUNITIES



Support vulnerable members of our community

- Enable residents to claim the Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit they are entitled to.
- Use our housing powers to improve the condition of private rented homes.
- Use our housing powers to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping.
- Reduce emergency accommodation use to provide better quality and more cost-effective short-term accommodation and supported homes for homeless clients.
- Use our housing powers to meet housing needs, including bringing empty homes back into use.
- Support residents to manage the effects of the cost of living.
- Encourage partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme and support older people.

Promote health and wellbeing for all

- Create healthier communities through activities developed and delivered by Active Fenland and Freedom Leisure.
- Work with partners to deliver the Early Help Hub, providing a 'one stop shop' of support and advice to individuals and families in their times of need.



- Work with the Integrated Care System to tackle local health and wellbeing priorities and provide information to help people make healthier choices.

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

- Manage the Fenland Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion Action Plan.
- Deliver the Community Safety Grant Agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioner.



Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

- Work with local stakeholders to support the aims of the Fenland Culture Partnership.
- Provide proportionate support and advice for community groups to hold safe and successful public events.

ENVIRONMENT

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- Work with partners, businesses, the community and volunteers to maximise the quality and quantity of recycling collected.
- Deliver an effective, self-funding Garden Waste collection service.
- Deliver clean streets and public spaces as set out in the national code of practice.
- Work with key stakeholders to deliver an effective waste partnership and update the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Strategy
- In cooperation with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, to plan and deliver the Environment Act 2021 changes to domestic and commercial waste collection through an updated Waste Strategy.

Work with partners and the community on projects to improve the environment and streetscene

- Use education, guidance and Council powers to fairly enforce environmental standards and tackle issues such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, littering and antisocial behaviour.



- Ensure well maintained parks and open spaces by working with our grounds maintenance contractor.
- Supporting volunteer Street Pride groups and other environmental volunteers, organisations and partners.
- Work with Town Councils and the community to provide local markets and thriving market town community events.
- Deliver the council's carbon reduction and climate adaptation plan including meeting all climate change targets which are legally required by the UK Government.



ECONOMY

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

- Provide responsive business support to encourage business growth, job diversity, skills development and increased access to grants.

- Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification.

- Work with external stakeholders, local businesses and the Combined Authority to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

- Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective Planning service.

- Work with the Combined Authority on the development of its new ten-year Local Growth Plan, to link the potential for growth in Fenland to Government priorities and the development of a national industrial strategy and unlock the potential of its key industrial sectors to power the local economy.

- Drive forward the development and delivery of new homes and commercial space by using our surplus property and land assets to



deliver sustainable economic and residential growth.

- Work with our partners to enable new affordable housing to meet housing needs.
- Identify and bid for external funding that aligns with and supports our housing, economic and growth objectives.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

- Promote sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services.

- Engage with the Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of road and rail infrastructure projects.

- Work with the Combined Authority to influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth and improve connectivity in the district.



QUALITY ORGANISATION



Performance Management (Performance Indicators)

- Set relevant and robust performance targets to ensure the effective delivery of Business Plan priorities.
- Report regularly on service performance to the Corporate Management Team, Councillors and the public.

Excellent Customer Service

- Maintain our Customer Service Excellence accreditation to ensure we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities.
- Help residents to self-serve and access our services digitally to allow us to provide greater support for vulnerable customers and complex queries.

Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management

- Maintain robust and effective financial standards, internal controls and organisational management.
- Comply with data protection and General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Consultation and Engagement

- Appropriately consult with residents about our service and proposals as outlined in our Consultation Strategy.



Asset Management and Commercialisation

- Ensure our asset base is sustainable, suitable and fully utilised to maximise income opportunities and financial efficiencies.
- Deliver our adopted Capital Programme to maintain the integrity and safety of our assets.
- Work jointly with public, private and third sector partners to improve access to our services, including from co-located facilities.
- Continue with our Commercial Investment Strategy to make informed decisions about the purchase and management of property assets through Fenland Future Limited.

Equalities

- Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by complying with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 through our core service delivery and publication of a statutory Annual Equality Report.



Workforce Development

- Equip our workforce with the right skills to effectively deliver our priorities.
- Support and empower our staff to make effective decisions.

Enforcement and Compliance

- Use a fair and proportionate approach to improve living, working and environmental standards as set out in our Enforcement Policies.
- Support businesses to ensure compliance with a wide range of regulatory requirements.

Health and Safety

- Maintain effective Health and Safety systems to comply with relevant legislation and local requirements.
- Deliver all aspects of the Council's Health and Safety action plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workforce, partners and wider community.

Performance

Each priority is underpinned by performance indicators, which are used to track progress, measure success and identify areas for improvement. All performance indicators are reported to our elected Members at our Council meetings.

Communities	Performance Measures
Enable residents to claim the Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit they are entitled to.	Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax Support. Days taken to process new claims and changes for Housing Benefit.
Use our housing powers to improve the condition of private rented homes.	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues.
Use our housing powers to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping.	The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through housing options work.
Reduce emergency accommodation use to provide better quality and more cost-effective short-term accommodation and supported homes for homeless clients.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports
Use our housing powers to meet housing needs, including bringing empty homes back into use.	Number of empty properties brought back into use.
Support residents to manage the effects of the cost of living.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Encourage a range of partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme and support older people.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Create healthier communities through activities developed and delivered by Active Fenland and Freedom Leisure.	Number of Active Fenland sessions delivered and total attendance per year. Customer satisfaction: Net promoter score for Freedom Leisure Centres
Work with partners to deliver the Early Help Hub, providing a 'one stop shop' of support and advice to individuals and families in their times of need.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Work with the Integrated Care System to tackle local health and well-being priorities and provide information to help people make healthier choices.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Work with local stakeholders to deliver an action plan to support the aims of the Creativity and Culture Strategy.	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland.
Provide proportionate support and advice for community groups to hold safe and successful public events.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Manage the Fenland Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion Action Plan.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Deliver the Community Safety Grant Agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioner.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Environment	Performance Measures
Work with partners, businesses, the community and volunteers to maximise the quality and quantity of recycling collected.	% of household waste recycled through the blue bin service.
Deliver an effective, self-funding Garden Waste collection service.	Customer satisfaction with our Garden Waste service.
Deliver clean streets and public spaces as set out in the national code of practice.	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards.
Work with key stakeholders to deliver an effective waste partnership and update the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Strategy.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance



In cooperation with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, to plan and deliver the Environment Act 2021 changes to domestic and commercial waste collection through an updated Waste Strategy.

Use education, guidance and Council powers to fairly enforce environmental standards and tackle issues such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, littering and antisocial behaviour.

Ensure well maintained parks and open spaces by working with our ground maintenance contractor.

Supporting volunteer Street Pride groups and other environmental volunteers, organisations and partners.

Work with Town Councils and the community to provide local markets and thriving market town community events.

Deliver the council's carbon reduction and climate adaptation plan including meeting all climate change targets which are legally required by the UK Government.

Economy

Provide responsive business support to encourage business growth, job diversity, skills development and increased access to grants.

Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification.

Work with external stakeholders, local businesses and the Combined Authority to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities.

Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective Planning service.

Work with the Combined Authority on the development of its new ten-year Local Growth Plan, to link the potential for growth in Fenland to Government priorities and the development of a national industrial strategy and unlock the potential of its key industrial sectors to power the local economy.

Drive forward the development and delivery of new homes and commercial space by using our surplus property and land assets to deliver sustainable economic and residential growth.

Work with our partners to enable new affordable housing to meet housing needs.

Identify and bid for external funding that aligns with and supports our housing, economic and growth objectives.

Promote sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services.

Engage with the Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects.

Work with the Combined Authority to influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth in the district.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

% of Rapid or Village response requests (to action issues such as fly-tipping, dog fouling and littering) actioned the same day.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Number of Street Pride, In Bloom, Friends of Groups and Green Dog Walkers community environmental events supported.

% of those asked satisfied with community events.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance Measures

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

% occupancy of Business Premises estates.
% occupancy of our Wisbech Yacht Harbour.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Annual Monitoring Report.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks.
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks.
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance



Quality Organisation

Set relevant and robust performance targets to ensure the effective delivery of Business Plan priorities.

Report regularly on service performance to the Corporate Management Team, Councillors and the public.

Maintain our Customer Service Excellence accreditation to ensure we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities.

Help residents to self-serve and access our services digitally to allow us to provide greater support for vulnerable customers and complex queries.

Maintain robust and effective financial standards, internal controls and organisational management.

Comply with data protection and General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Appropriately consult with residents about our service and proposals as outlined in our Consultation Strategy.

Ensure our asset base is sustainable, suitable and fully utilised to maximise income opportunities and financial efficiencies.

Deliver our adopted Capital Programme in line with our Corporate Asset Management Plan to maintain the integrity and safety of our assets.

Work jointly with public, private and third sector partners to improve access to our services, including from co-located facilities.

Continue with our Commercial Investment Strategy to make informed decisions about the purchase and management of property assets through Fenland Future Limited.

Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by delivering the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act through our core service delivery and publication of a statutory Annual Equality Report.

Equip our workforce with the right skills to effectively deliver our priorities.

Support and empower our staff to make effective decisions.

Use a fair and proportionate approach to improve living, working and environmental standards as set out in our Enforcement Policies.

Support businesses to ensure compliance with a wide range of regulatory requirements.

Maintain effective Health and Safety systems to comply with relevant legislation and local requirements.

Deliver all aspects of the Council's Health and Safety action plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workforce, partners and wider community.

Corporate performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

% of Council Tax collected.
Council Tax net collection fund receipts.
% national non-domestic rates (NNDR) (Business Rates) collected.
National non-domestic rates (NNDR) (Business Rates) net collection fund receipts.

Customer Service Excellence Report.

% of customer queries responded at first point of contact.
% of customers satisfied by our service.
Contact Centre calls handled.

Annual External Audit Report.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Consultation Strategy and Consultations reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Commercial Investment Strategy updates via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Annual Equality Report.

Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.

Bi-annual Staff survey.

% of local businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly.
Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

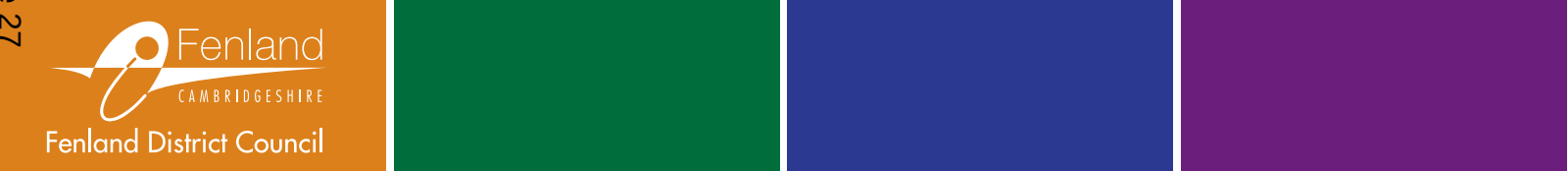
Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Annual Health and Safety Report.
Annual Audit and Risk Report.

Annual Health and Safety Report.
Annual Audit and Risk Report.

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Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	Revised General Fund Budget and Capital Programme 2024/25; General Fund Budget Estimates 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 to 2029/30; Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2027/28	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

To consider and approve:

- the revised General Fund Budget and Capital Programme for 2024/25 and;

To consider and recommend to Council:

- the General Fund Budget Estimates 2025/26 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30;
- the Council Tax levels for 2025/26;
- the Capital Programme 2025/26-2027/28;
- the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Capital Strategy and Annual Treasury Investment Strategy for 2025/26.

2 Key issues

- The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 3 February 2025. This provided £328,907 less resources (excluding business rates income) compared with what was included in the draft budget report in December 2024.
- Other announcements outside the Finance Settlement have provided £1,410,440 of additional resources, including £958,000 as the Council's allocation from the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme.
- As a result of the de-coupling of the Business Rates multiplier and the decision to freeze the Small Business Rates multiplier while increasing the Standard Business Rates multiplier by inflation, the Business Rates Baseline and Tariff Payments have been amended in 2025/26 (see Table 1).
- The proposal in this report is to freeze Council Tax levels in 2025/26 and this has been extended across the MTFS.
- Council Tax Referendum limits for 2025/26 have been set at an increase of 3% or £5 whichever is the higher.
- Latest projections for 2024/25 are showing a shortfall of £350k (Section 8 of the report).
- Current forecasts for 2025/26 show a shortfall of £1.432m based on the assumptions detailed in Appendix C. It is proposed that a contribution of £1.432 from the Budget Equalisation Reserve be made to achieve a balanced budget. The MTFS projects shortfall increases year on year, reaching £3.396m in 2027/28 and £4.554m in 2029/30. Projected shortfalls in the MTFS are usual, both in FDC and in

Local Government generally. They represent the challenge to be faced in future years in reaching a balanced budget position each year. As a result of the additional financing costs relating to the inclusion of £30m additional capital contingency over the next three years, the projected shortfalls are significantly higher than previous years forecasts and represent significant challenges for the Council. Any decision this year to not increase the level of Council Tax and fund shortfalls from reserves, necessarily increases the scale of that challenge.

- Although there are currently many uncertainties regarding the budget for 2025/26 and the MTFS, there remains a significant structural deficit which the Council will need to address. The ongoing Transformation 2 programme (of re-basing the establishment and underlying operation environments of the Council) will be crucial in helping to address that long-standing structural deficit.
- An updated Capital Programme for 2024/25 and for the medium term 2025/26 - 2027/28 is proposed.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that:
 - (i) the revised estimates for 2024/25 as set out in Section 8 and Appendix A showing an estimated shortfall of £350k (to be funded from the Budget Equalisation Reserve if required), be approved;
- It is recommended to Council that:
 - (ii) the General Fund revenue budget for 2025/26 as set out in Section 9 and Appendix A be approved;
 - (iii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy as outlined in this report and Appendix B be adopted;
 - (iv) the Capital Programme and funding statement as set out in Appendix D be approved;
 - (v) the adoption of the additional Business Rates Relief measures as detailed in Section 7 using Discretionary Relief Powers be approved;
 - (vi) the expenses detailed in Section 12 be approved to be treated as general expenses for 2025/26;
 - (vii) the Port Health levy for 2025/26 be set as shown in Section 13;
 - (viii) the current working age Council Tax Support Scheme be adopted with effect from 1 April 2025 as set out in Section 15, with appropriate changes to the prescribed pensioner scheme as determined by regulations;
 - (ix) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement (including amending the MRP calculation to be based on the 'Annuity method' from 2024/25 onwards), Treasury Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025/26 and Capital Strategy 2025/26 as set out in Section 16 and Appendix E be approved;
 - (x) the Band D Council Tax level for Fenland District Council Services for 2025/26 be set at £254.79, no change on the current year.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio Holder, Finance
Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer) Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer) Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	Final Finance settlement – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Autumn Statement and Budget 2024 (HM Treasury) Medium Term Financial Strategy working papers. Government announcements since February 2024.

This report contains the following Appendices:

Appendices

- A. (i) General Fund Revenue Estimates - Summary
(ii) General Fund Revenue Estimates – Individual Services
- B. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- C. Assumptions built into Budget and Medium Term Strategy
- D. Capital Programme
- E. Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy, Annual Treasury Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators
- E. Annex A Capital Strategy
- F. Parish Precepts
- G. Earmarked Reserves

Report:

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the financial implications of the council's priorities described in the Business Plan 2025/26. The Revenue budget estimates and the Capital Programme are final at this stage for approval. The draft Business Plan 2025/26 and draft Budget Estimates 2025/26 considered by Cabinet on 16th December 2027 together were subject to a public and stakeholder consultation from 2nd January to 4th February 2025, prior to final budget and council tax setting for 2025/26 on 24th February 2025. The results from the consultation are published on the Council's website. There were a small number of comments in favour of increasing Council Tax.
- 1.2 Much of the financial information is necessarily based on a number of assumptions which are wholly or partly influenced by external factors. However, where final actual costs and revenue is known then they are included, for example the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 was announced on 3 February 2025. In addition, the Business Rates income estimates have been finalised following completion of the 2025/26 NNDR1 return at the end of January 2025. Equally, some additional costs and income discussed later in this report have been updated since the Draft Budget Estimates were prepared.

2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2025/26

- 2.1 The Final Finance Settlement for 2025/26 was announced on 3 February 2025. This confirmed an overall increase in Core Spending Power (CSP) for 2025/26 for local government of 6.8%. FDC's overall increase in CSP (as defined by the government) is 2.4%.
- 2.2 As detailed in the Overview & Scrutiny Panel report on 20 January 2025, the main implications of the finance settlement on FDC as compared with the draft budget report, are as follows:
- **Core Spending Power (CSP)** for local government as whole has increased by 6.8%. Shire Districts have once again received the lowest average increases in CSP. Our increase in CSP is 2.4%. CSP is a measure of the revenue funding available for local authority services. This includes council tax; business rates; Revenue Support Grant; New Homes Bonus; Recovery Grant, adult social care grants and other grants (including the Funding Guarantee Grant).

These government forecasts assume that every local authority will raise their council tax by the maximum permitted without a referendum.

Assumed Council Tax increases make up 55% of the increase in CSP and Council Tax is now around 56% of the total CSP. The increased reliance on increasing council tax has been a feature of the finance settlements and CSP over the past few years.
 - **Council Tax Referendum limits** have been confirmed as 2.99% or £5 (on a Band D property), whichever is higher, for shire districts, but no additional flexibility. Social care authorities will be able to levy an additional 2% adult social care precept. Police & Crime Commissioners can increase their Band D by up to £14. Fire and Rescue authorities can increase their Band D by up to £5. There will be no referendum principles for Mayoral Combined Authorities or Town and Parish Councils.
 - **Business Rates** adjustments are more complicated. In technical terms, the continuing impact of de-coupling the multiplier makes the settlement more difficult to understand.

Business Rates Baseline Funding Levels (BFL) will be uplifted to account for the increase in the standard multiplier. The small business multiplier will be frozen and

the standard multiplier will increase by September's CPI (1.67%). There will also be continuing reliefs available in 2025/26 for eligible retail, hospitality, and leisure properties. Local authorities will be compensated for the under-indexing of the small business multiplier (the cap compensation) and for the new reliefs by S31 grant.

Following the completion of the NNDR1 return for 2025/26, it is now estimated that this Council could receive around **£22,679 less income** than detailed in the draft budget report.

- **Revenue Support Grant (RSG)** allocations have increased by September's CPI (1.67%) and the rolling in of two small 'New Burdens' grants relating to the Transparency Code and Electoral Integrity. The overall impact of this is **£15,684 higher** grant than included in the draft budget report.
- **New Homes Bonus (NHB)** payment for 2025/26 will be £592,628 for this Council, exactly the same as included in the draft budget report. The government have said yet again that 2025/26 will be the final year of the NHB although the design of a replacement is no clearer than it was when the government issued its' consultation over three years ago. Consequently, the future of the NHB and its' replacement is a considerable risk to the Medium Term Strategy from 2026/27 onwards.
- The **Services Grant** has been abolished in 2025/26 and the **Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant** (now known as the **Funding Floor**) allocations have been amended to ensure that no authority has a CSP of less than 0% in 2025/26 (2024/25 minimum increase was 4%). As our CSP is 2.4%, we have received no Funding Floor grant resulting in **£814,404 less** grant than included in the draft budget report.
- However, the **new Recovery Grant** (£600m nationally), allocated on the basis of 'Need' as determined by deprivation and population and 'Resource' as determined by the council tax base, has resulted in a grant allocation of **£435,149 higher** than included in the draft budget.
- There is one other allocation within the Provisional Settlement relating to **Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant**, resulting in an allocation of **£34,664 higher** than included in the draft budget.
- In summary and based on the analysis above, **the allocations within the provisional settlement** has provided **£351,586 less** resources compared with what was included in the draft budget report.
- In addition to the allocations within the Finance Settlement, there have been other announcements which fall outside the settlement as follows:
 - **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Grant** – an **additional £328,628** has been allocated to FDC.
 - **Extended Producer Responsibility payments (pEPR)** – the Council has been notified that its pEPR payment for 2025/26 is **£958,000**. The payment for 2025/26 is guaranteed but future years payments will be more volatile as they will be based on actual figures rather than calculated estimates.
 - **Employers National Insurance Contributions** – the government will be providing £502m of funding to local authorities to off-set the changes to these contributions in 2025/26. FDC's allocation is **£123,812**. This is considerably less than the £280,000 additional cost to FDC of these changes.
- Taking into account the announcements both inside and outside the Finance Settlement, results in an estimated **£1,058,854 of additional funding** compared with the draft budget. Without the pEPR payment of £958,000, there would only be an increase in funding of £100,854.

- 2.3 Consequently, the Council's Settlement Funding Assessment for 2025/26 is detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Settlement Funding Assessment (Core Funding within Settlement)

	Actual 2024/25 £000	Actual 2025/26 £000	2025/26 % Increase
Settlement Funding Assessment			
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	184	204	8.3%
Business Rates income	11,559	11,581	
Tariff Payment to government	-7,554	-7,637	
Business Rates Baseline Funding	4,005	3,944	-1.5%
Minimum Guarantee/Services Grant and Recovery Grant	814	435	-46.6%

- 2.4 **Internal Drainage Board (IDB)** grant funding of £3m nationally was provided in 2024/25 to the 15 councils most affected by increases in IDB levies. FDC's allocation was £213,000. The national total has been increased to £5m for 2025/26 although no allocations have yet been made. An estimate of £313,000 has been included in the final budget figures detailed in this report. Although this is an estimated £100,000 additional grant, the total budget for the IDB levies has increased by £104,690 when compared with the draft budget following indications of at least a 10% increase in the levies for 2025/26. The total budget for IDB levies for 2025/26 is £217,230 higher than the actuals for 2024/25.
- 2.5 Although the settlement was for 2025/26 only, the Medium Term forecasts detailed in Appendix B have assumed a continuation of the current policy of increasing business rates baselines by inflation based on current Treasury forecasts over the medium term. In addition, the forecasts assume a continuation of the funding currently allocated as Recovery Grant.

3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING REFORM

- 3.1 The Autumn Budget 2024 and the Finance Settlement 2025/26 confirmed that the government is planning to implement funding reforms, commencing in 2025/26. There is very much a focus on directing funding towards authorities with higher needs and also taking local revenues (business rates and council tax) into account. A broader redistribution of funding through a multi-year settlement will take place from 2026/27 onwards. This will include a re-set of the Business Rates Retention system which could have significant implications for this Council.
- 3.2 The government is also looking to simplify the wider local funding landscape, reducing the number of grants and consolidating them into the Local Government Finance Settlement, as well as moving towards a multi-year settlement so local authorities can plan more effectively.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

- 4.1 This government is broadly continuing the previous government's policy around devolution, with a focus on increasing the powers and funding available to combined authorities. The Budget 2024 and Finance Settlement 2025/26 confirmed that the first integrated finance settlements for Greater Manchester and the West Midlands will be in place in 2025/26 and for other combined authorities from 2026/27.
- 4.2 Members will be aware of the Government's white paper on English Devolution (published in December 2024) and their proposals for local government reorganisation and the creation of unitary authorities in two-tier areas ('to move to simpler structures that make sense for their local areas, with efficiency savings from council reorganisation helping to meet the needs of local people').
- 4.3 It is envisaged that new unitary authorities will come into force by 1st April 2028 which means that Fenland District Council will cease to exist by 31st March 2028. Members will receive separate reports and updates as this process develops over the coming months and years.
- 4.4 Taken together with the funding reforms above, this is a huge agenda which will have profound implications for local government funding, both in terms of how funding is distributed and how the system operates.

5 NEW HOMES BONUS

- 5.1 The Finance Settlement detailed in paragraph 2.2 above confirmed that there would be one more year of NHB in 2025/26 but would be abolished from 2026/27.
- 5.2 Actual NHB received in 2024/25 was £442k and will be £593k for 2025/26 (calculation based on the increase in dwelling numbers between October 2023 – October 2024).
- 5.3 The New Homes Bonus will be abolished from 2026/27. The current national total of £291m per annum allocated by way of NHB is likely to be repurposed in future spending reviews. The impact on this Council's funding could be significant. We have included £593k of funding in the MTFS from 2026/27 onwards although any new allocation methodology could result in a lower allocation. The government will be consulting on proposals for 2026/27 onwards in the first half of 2025.
- 5.4 **The lack of clarity around the future allocations of the NHB total funding is a significant risk to the MTFS.**

6 BUSINESS RATES

- 6.1 Members will be aware that the Business Rates Retention system was introduced in April 2013. Under this system, authorities would benefit if their actual Business Rates income collected in a year was higher than the baseline funding determined by government.
- 6.2 There has been real business rates growth in Fenland over the last six years, however how this impacts on the resources available to this Council is complex, due to the rules and the operation of the current 50% Business Rates Retention system. The complexity of the system has been exacerbated by the number of business rates relief schemes and multiplier caps and freezes implemented by the government over the last few years.

Business Rates Pooling Arrangement – 2024/25 and 2025/26

- 6.3 The Council joined with the County Council, Peterborough City Council, Fire Authority, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire to become part of a pooling arrangement for business rates from 2020/21 up to and including 2023/24. Unlike the Business Rates Pilot schemes, this is not a bidding process against other pools but is part of the existing system whereby authorities can choose to apply to become a pool with the agreement of the constituent authorities.

- 6.4 The benefit of being in a pool is that authorities will not be liable to levy payments on their business rates growth, which is then shared amongst the pooled authorities by a mutually agreed method. This will be based on where the growth has originated from with an appropriate share allocated to the County Council and Fire Authority.
- 6.1 As a result of further detailed analysis of forecast business rates income, the pool members decided that the most financially beneficial arrangement for 2024/25 would be a pool without Fenland. As recompense for not being in the pool, agreement was reached with the other pool members that Fenland would be no worse off as a result of the revised pooling arrangement for 2024/25.
- 6.2 Consequently, an amount of £350k per annum has been included for the projected outturn for 2024/25. Following completion of the NNDR1 forms for 2025/26, £350k has again been included as a 'pooling' benefit.
- 6.3 There will be no further major changes to the rates retention system until 2026/27 at least. Consequently, assuming the proposed pooling and 'no detriment' arrangements to this Council continue, an amount of £350k per annum has been included in the MTFS as a pooling benefit to this Council.

Business Rates Reform – 2026/27 onwards

- 6.4 As stated earlier, no major changes will take place until 2026/27 at least. At that time, the government is proposing (as part of their Local Government Funding Reforms) that the Baseline Funding Level of all Councils will be reset with all 'growth' income being taken into account nationally and redistributed in the new system. In the estimate for 2025/26 and the medium term forecasts, around £1.4m of business rates above the Council's Baseline Funding Level is being retained. Under a baseline reset, this would mean that initially the additional £1.4m business rates income would be removed and redistributed. What remains unclear, is how much of this £1.4m will be returned to the Council as part of its recalculated Baseline Funding Level.
- 6.5 In theory therefore, the Council could lose all of this additional £1.4m in the absolute worst case scenario. However, this is unlikely and would create significant volatility within future funding allocations nationally, which the government does not wish to see. There will also undoubtedly be some kind of transitional arrangements which would also limit the extent of any gains and losses in funding arising from the new system.
- 6.6 Although it is extremely difficult to exemplify the impact of this redistribution, in broad terms, if the Council were to lose 50% of its growth income then this would add a further £700k per annum from 2026/27 to the current forecast MTFS shortfalls. A 20% loss of growth income would add a further £280k per annum to the current shortfalls.
- 6.7 In addition, the current system of retaining 100% of business rates from businesses generating Renewable Energy (estimated £1.578m in 2025/26) and the benefits from current pooling arrangements (estimated £350k in 2025/26) could also be reviewed and amended.
- 6.8 **At the time of writing, local government funding reforms, the implementation of Business Rates Reform and the changes to the New Homes Bonus are all major risk areas for this Council over the medium term.**

7 ADDITIONAL BUSINESS RATES RELIEF MEASURES 2025/26

2025/26 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme

- 7.1 At the Autumn Statement on 30 October 2024, the Chancellor announced that the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) Business Rates Relief scheme will be extended for a fifth year into 2025/26 to continue to provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality and leisure properties (but reducing the level of relief) with a 40% relief, up to a cash limit of £110,000 per business.

- 7.2 Guidance about the operation and delivery of this relief has been provided by government. Billing authorities and major precepting authorities will be fully reimbursed for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme as a result of awarding relief in accordance with the guidance, using a S31 grant.
- 7.3 The reliefs will be granted using discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and is available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of rates due in 2025/26.

8 FORECAST OUTTURN 2024/25

- 8.1 The approved budget set by Council in February 2024, showed a balanced budget without any funding required from either the Budget Equalisation Reserve or the General Fund Balance.
- 8.2 An updated projection for 2024/25, taking into account the latest estimate of spending and income pressures, was included in the draft budget report presented to Cabinet on 16 December 2024. At that time, a shortfall of £536k was being projected for 2024/25. The reasons for the increase in the projected shortfall were detailed in the draft budget report.
- 8.3 The latest projected outturn for 2024/25 is set out at Appendix A and show the likelihood of a shortfall in the region of £350k by the end of this financial year.
- 8.4 The main reasons for the changes since the draft budget report are a reduction in Employee Costs (-£45k), reduced Premises costs (-£54k), additional investment income (-£50k), additional RTB/VAT sharing income (-£40k), additional income from Freedom Leisure Management Contract (-£90k), reduced interest payable and MRP charge from reprofiling of capital programme (-£35k), allocation from the national business rates levy account surplus (-£31k) and additional Rough Sleeping grant (-£34k).
- 8.5 To off-set these additional income variances, there have been a number of additional cost pressures, mainly additional recycling gate fees (£97k) and lower Planning Fees (£92k).
- 8.6 There are still many uncertainties around the potential shortfall for 2024/25 and there is no requirement at this time to formally approve an amount to be funded from reserves. At the present time, Corporate Management Team, Senior Managers and the Accountancy Team are managing and monitoring the position carefully and will continue to review spending levels to ensure where possible, the amount to be funded from reserves at the year-end is minimised.
- 8.7 Use of reserves to fund any potential shortfall in 2024/25 will have a consequential impact on the Council's ability to fund any shortfall in 2025/26 from reserves. Details of the Council's reserves are at Section 17 and Appendix G.

9 BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025/26 AND MTFS

- 9.1 The Council's MTFS has to ensure that the commitments made in the Business Plan are funded not only in the year for which formal approval of the budget is required (2025/26) but for forecast years as well, within a reasonable level of tolerance.
- 9.2 The impact of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement has been incorporated into the figures in this report.
- 9.3 Although current government policy regarding Local Government reorganisation would result in this Council being abolished on 31 March 2028, the MTFS has exemplified the financial position over the 5-year period to March 2030.
- 9.4 The Council's medium term forecasts are shown at Appendix B and summarised in Table 2 below. The table includes for a 0% increase in the Band D Council Tax from 2025/26 onwards.

Table 2 - MTFS – 0% Council Tax increases from 2025/26 onwards

	Estimate	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure					
Net Service Expenditure	17,653	16,981	17,265	17,590	18,039
Corporate Items	1,311	2,099	3,245	3,998	4,141
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-1,035	-26	-26	-26	-26
Net Expenditure (before use of balances)	17,929	19,054	20,484	21,562	22,154
Funding					
Revenue Support Grant	-204	-209	-214	-220	-225
Business Rates Funding <i>(detailed in Appendix B)</i>	-8,127	-8,288	-8,404	-8,516	-8,638
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit (+)	45	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus(-)	-18	-20	-20	-20	-20
Council Tax <i>(0% increase from 25/26 onwards)</i>	-8,193	-8,320	-8,450	-8,582	-8,717
Total Funding	-16,497	-16,837	-17,088	-17,338	-17,600
Surplus(-)/Shortfall(+) before use of balances	+1,432	+2,217	+3,396	+4,224	+4,554
Contribution from Budget Equalisation Reserve	-1,432	0	0	0	0
Shortfall(+) after use of balances	0	+2,217	+3,396	+4,224	+4,554

- 9.5 Government support for 2025/26 was confirmed as part of the final finance settlement as detailed earlier in this report. The projections for 2026/27 onwards are based on the best estimates and information available. However, subject to further clarity on the detailed implementation of the Local Government Funding Reforms, there remains significant uncertainty in these projections.
- 9.6 The net budget requirement for 2025/26 is currently estimated at **£17.929m** after all identified savings, contingencies and reserve transfers are included. This includes the assumptions detailed at Appendix C. With the final funding assumptions and a 0% increase in the Band D Council Tax level, **a shortfall of £1.432m** is currently forecast for 2025/26.
- 9.7 **It is proposed that a contribution of £1.432m from the Budget Equalisation Reserve be made at this time to achieve a balanced budget for 2025/26.**
- 9.8 The estimates for 2024/25 benefited from a significant estimated surplus on the Business Rates Collection Fund account at the end of 2023/24. This surplus of £1.292m was a result of a significant decrease in the appeals provision required in 2023/24. There will always be an estimated surplus or deficit relating to the Business Rates Collection Fund in a particular year which is then included in the following years estimates. A deficit of £45k has been included in the estimates for 2025/26, a significant change from the surplus in 2024/25.
- 9.9 The development of the Commercial and Investment Strategy has the potential to generate additional significant returns over the MTFS. Currently, recharges to Fenland Future Ltd (FFL) for officer time and loan interest receipts have been included in the forecasts at Appendix A and B. These are based on the current business plan of FFL over the next three years. Additional returns may also be realised depending on the type and timing of investment opportunities. These are however limited at the current time due to high interest rates and the current policy of the PWLB not to lend for purely investment for yield projects. Consequently, no allowance for these further potential returns (over and above the recharges and loan interest to FFL) have been included in the MTFS at the current time.

- 9.10 Officers are currently progressing a number of initiatives to increase the amount of Housing Benefit subsidy reclaimed and together with the anticipated reduction in temporary accommodation costs (partly resulting from the additional houses purchased with assistance from the Local Authority Housing Fund), **a significant increase in subsidy reclaimed and lower temporary accommodation costs of £600k has been included in the estimates for 2025/26.** As the timings of these initiatives are uncertain, this reduction remains a significant risk in the 2025/26 estimates.
- 9.11 Members will be aware that the Transformation Agenda 2 (TA2) programme is now underway and together with the forthcoming Service Review programme, is critical in achieving the necessary savings over the course of the MTFS. An amount of £550k has currently been included in the 2025/26 estimates as savings from the TA2 and Service Review programme, increasing to £616k per annum by 2029/30. **Significant savings over and above these will be required from this programme over the MTFS period.**

Extended Producer Responsibility

- 9.12 This Council received its provisional notice of assessment of the pEPR payment due in 2025/26 on 28 November 2024. This amounted to £958,000. Whilst this payment resulting from the collection of producer fees may still change, to provide certainty to authorities, the government is guaranteeing that in 2025/26 we will receive at least this amount. For 2026/27 onwards, this amount will be adjusted to reflect actual figures.
- 9.13 Officers are still assessing any costs associated with our obligations to maximise the collection and recycling of packaging material and any other conditions attached to the above payment.
- 9.14 Taking into account the proposals in Table 2 above, the estimated net budget requirement in 2025/26 is detailed in Appendix A. The level of forecast resources available to the Council and the estimated levels of expenditure over the medium term are set out in detail in Appendix B. **These show a funding gap of £2.217m in 2026/27 rising to £3.396m by the end of 2027/28 and £4.554m by the end of 2029/30.**
- 9.15 There is still considerable uncertainty around the estimates for 2025/26 and the forecasts for the medium term. Currently there are a number of 'unknowns' which could both positively and negatively impact on the forecasts including:

Risks associated with the MTFS forecasts:

- The ongoing impact of the Finance Settlements on 2025/26 and the medium term;
- Impact of potential changes to the New Home Bonus national total distribution and allocations from April 2026;
- Impact of the longer-term changes to the Business Rates Retention system from April 2026;
- Impact of pay awards higher or lower than currently allowed for in the MTFS (2% increase included for 2025/26 onwards);
- Impact of potential additional costs and income in 2025/26 from the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for managing packaging waste;
- Impact of potential net costs of the governments' Food Waste strategy;
- Impact on income streams being greater than anticipated due to external factors such as Port Income;
- Impact of the current review of Port operations and the future liability of the quay at Wisbech Port;
- Continuing impact of homelessness temporary accommodation costs in 2025/26 and the medium term and the impact on recovery of housing benefit subsidy;

- Impact of increases in Fees and Charges (where feasible) on the 2025/26 estimates and MTFS;
- Impact of service developments eg. Car Parking Enforcement (CPE);
- Revenue impact of funding new capital schemes not currently included in the capital programme. There are currently a number of significant unfunded capital schemes which will need to be considered over the MTFS;
- Potential impact of the Council's future transformation programme with associated savings. Further detailed work is required to quantify the extent of these savings;
- Review of the recharge of staff time to the LATCO (Fenland Future Ltd) to quantify potential revenue savings. Currently recharges of £125k in 2025/26 onwards have been assumed in the MTFS;
- Potential net benefits from FFL of loan interest and dividends from future developments over and above already included in the MTFS generating revenue income;
- Commercial and Investment Strategy and future potential positive returns to the Council;
- Review of the General Fund Balance and Earmarked Reserves to ensure they align with the future requirements of the Council.

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

9.17 The forecasts for the years 2026/27 – 2029/30 are provisional at this stage and should be considered with extreme caution. Future announcements and consultation outcomes will also determine government policy and therefore the funding in the future years. In addition, the forecasts are dependent on permanently maintaining the savings identified through the My Fenland transformation initiative, the current TA2 programme and future Service Review programme.

9.18 As detailed earlier in this report, Business Rates Retention Reform, Local Government Funding reform and changes to the New Homes Bonus could have a significant impact on the Council's forecast resources over the term of the MTFS. Further to the risks associated with these externally determined funding streams the Council should also ensure that income budgets are achieved and new income streams considered and implemented for medium to long term sustainability in combination with any operational and transformational benefits that the Council realises. The use of general reserves to support revenue expenditure adds to the overall risks to the Council as such reserves can only be used once but the cumulative impact of such use will continue to be felt into the future.

Other Risks

Capital Programme – Future Funding

- 9.19 The Council is increasingly relying on borrowing (Internal and Prudential) to fund its future programme as the amount of capital receipts and the level of reserves available to fund the capital programme are reducing considerably over the next two years. Consequently, any new capital schemes (which do not generate a return to repay borrowing costs) will have to be funded through borrowing which will result in revenue costs and therefore will impact on the MTFS and future shortfalls.
- 9.20 For example, a £1m scheme with a 20 year life, funded by prudential borrowing, would result in around an additional £100,000 per annum in interest (5%) and repayment costs.
- 9.21 Consequently, a review of the current capital programme together with potential new schemes (as detailed in Section 18) and the ongoing revenue cost impact will be

undertaken to ensure the programme is sustainable within the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 9.22 To exemplify the effect on the MTFS of potential additional costs arising from the above risks, Table 3 below details a scenario whereby the Council loses 50% of its business rates growth income following potential reforms in 2026/27, NHB reduces from 2026/27 and the impact of an additional £1m per year borrowing associated with new capital schemes.

Table 3: MTFS Potential Impact of Major Risks – for illustrative purposes only

	Estimate	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
MTFS Shortfall - Appendix B	1,432	2,217	3,396	4,224	4,554
<i>(0% Council Tax increases from 25/26 onwards and before use of reserves)</i>					
50% loss of NNDR growth income		700	700	700	700
50% loss of NHB funding		296	296	296	296
Additional £1m per year borrowing	25	125	225	325	425
Revised Shortfall	1,457	3,338	4,617	5,545	5,975

- 9.23 As stated earlier, it is important to note that the figures detailed in the above table are purely illustrative as no decisions have yet been made regarding changes to these funding streams or new capital schemes and the potential impact on this Council.

10 PARISH PRECEPTS

- 10.1 The levels of parish precepts set throughout Fenland are provided for information at Appendix F. These will be reported to Council as part of the Council Tax setting process.

11 FEES AND CHARGES

- 11.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewed fees and charges for 2025/26 at its meeting on 20 January 2025 and these were subsequently considered by Cabinet on 27 January 2025. All of the recommendations from these meetings have been included in the financial forecasts.

12 SPECIAL AND GENERAL EXPENSES

- 12.1 For the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council needs to pass appropriate resolutions for each financial year to determine how expenses which could legally be regarded as special should be treated.
- 12.2 If expenses are treated as special expenses, then they must be charged against the parts of the Council's area to which they relate.
- 12.3 Parish precepts are special expenses and cannot be treated as general expenses.
- 12.4 Drainage Board and Port Health levies which affect only part of the Council's area are treated as general expenses unless the Council resolves otherwise. These are currently treated as general expenses and it is recommended that this position continues for 2025/26.
- 12.5 Expenses incurred by the Council in performing, in part of its area, a function performed elsewhere by a parish council are special expenses unless the Council determines otherwise. Currently, these are treated as general expenses. To maintain this position, it is recommended that the Council determines that such expenses should not be treated as special expenses for the financial year 2025/26.

13 PORT HEALTH

- 13.1 The Port Health levy for 2025/26, based on expected expenditure, is recommended as shown in Table 4 below for Council to approve.

Table 4: Port Health Levy 2025/26

Description	£
a) Port Health anticipated expenditure	19,052
b) Port Levy	
Fenland District Council	16,861
South Holland District Council	1,334
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	857
Total	19,052

14 COUNCIL TAX 2025/26

- 14.1 The government has set the referendum limit for 2025/26 at 3% or £5, whichever is higher for District Councils (the same as 2024/25). A 3% increase on the Band D Council Tax equates to £7.56 per annum.
- 14.2 Social care authorities, such as Cambridgeshire County Council can also increase their element of council tax by a further 2% (5% in total).
- 14.3 Council at its meeting on 17 July 2023, agreed to re-position the MTFS by keeping the cash level 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.
- 14.4 Members of the Council need to act responsibly each year when setting the precept to balance the ambition of keeping Council Tax income at its' current level with the legal need to balance the budget. It was agreed that raising Council Tax in any of the next four years will be a last resort in order to minimise the financial effects of Council Tax on all of Fenland's households.
- 14.5 The proposal in this report is to keep the headline Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 at the same level as 2024/25, ie. a 0% increase.
- 14.6 For information, an additional 1% increase in Council Tax in 2025/26 would generate in the region of £81,000 of revenue per annum to the Council. Even with this additional revenue included, the estimates for future years show a significant shortfall (see Table 5 below).

Council Taxbase

- 14.7 The amount of Council Tax income recognised in the estimates is determined by the Council Taxbase (Band D equivalents) and the level of Band D Council Tax. For 2025/26, the Council Taxbase has been calculated using the number of dwellings (as notified by the Valuation Office Agency), the impact of exemptions and discounts (eg. Single Person discount) and the amount of Council Tax Support awarded.
- 14.8 In addition, an allowance for growth and for non-collection is included to produce the estimated taxbase. For 2025/26, the taxbase has been calculated as 32,154 (Band D equivalents), an increase of 583 (1.85%) on 2024/25.
- 14.9 After the estimates of expenditure and income have been prepared, and the Final Settlement has been received, the next step is to set the council tax for 2025/26 for Fenland District Council.
- 14.10 Council Tax income for 2025/26 has been set at a 0% increase in the Band D level and over the period of the MTFS.

- 14.11 At this level of Council Tax, there will be a significant deficit to fund in 2025/26 and over the period of the MTFS. Consequently, the Council will need to continually consider its strategy to meet the estimated shortfalls shown at Table 2 and in Appendix B, particularly if there are additional impacts from the funding reforms from 2026/27 onwards together with the impact of new capital schemes.
- 14.12 The implications of not increasing Council Tax over the remainder of the MTFS is that the Council will be reducing its financial base permanently as it would not be able to recover potential revenue foregone due to the cumulative year on year impact. The consequences of continually setting 0% Council Tax levels and not achieving the necessary savings/additional income have been clearly demonstrated by the events at other Councils. The ability to achieve significant year on year savings (without increasing existing and/or introducing new revenue streams together with transformational change) to balance the budget becomes progressively difficult without significant use of reserves and eventually impacting on front-line services and delivery.
- 14.13 Council can of course agree to a higher increase (up to the referendum limit of 3%) and a 1% increase in Council Tax raises around £81k revenue per annum. Table 5 shows the implications of increasing the Council Tax in 2025/26 by 3% per annum and thereafter compared to freezing the Council Tax in 2025/26 and throughout the MTFS period.

Table 5: MTFS Net Position at Differing Council Tax increases in 2025/26 onwards

Deficits based on different levels of Council Tax	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000
Deficits at CT at 0% increases (as shown in Table 2/Appendix B)	+1,432	+2,217	+3,396	+4,224	+4,554
Additional CT with 3% increase p.a. from 2025/26	-243	-503	-776	-1,067	-1,376
Deficits at 3% increase	+1,189	+1,714	+2,620	+3,157	+3,178

- 14.14 Table 6 shows the Band D Council Tax for spending at the level proposed, together with Council Tax levels from the major preceptors and Parishes.

Table 6: Band D Council Tax Levels 2025/26

COUNCIL TAX BASE	2025/26 32,154		2024/25 31,571	
	£	Band D £	£	Band D £
Fenland District Council Precept (Appendix A)	<u>8,192,513</u>		<u>8,043,971</u>	
Fenland District Band D Council Tax	0.00%	254.79	-0.18%	254.79
MAJOR PRECEPTORS				
County Council	(4.99%)	1,700.64	(4.99%)	1,619.82
Police & Crime Commissioner	(4.89%)	299.43	(4.76%)	285.48
Fire Authority	(6.02%)	87.21	(2.93%)	82.26
Combined Authority	(0.00%)	36.00	(200.00%)	36.00
Sub Total BAND D TAX		2,378.07		2,278.35
Parish Councils-average Band D (Appendix F)	(3.77%)	54.74	(3.09%)	52.75
Total average Band D Tax		2,432.81		2,331.10
Total average Band D increase over 2024/25	£101.71 (4.36%)			

14.15 The County Council increase for 2025/26 includes 2% for the Adult Social Care precept and 2.99% on the general council tax, giving a total increase of 4.99% (£80.82). For 2025/26, the Police and Crime Commissioner is allowed to increase council tax by up to £14.00 on a Band D property. The actual increase is £13.95 (4.89%). The Fire Authority is allowed to increase council tax by up to £5 on a Band D property. The actual increase is £4.95 (6.02%). Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has agreed a Band D council tax of £36.00 for 2025/26, the same level as 2024/25.

15 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/26

- 15.1 Each year, the Council is required to review and approve its Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS). The only changes relate to the prescribed pensioner scheme for 2025/26 which are determined by the usual annual regulations and which the Council has no discretion over.
- 15.2 The Council can only determine the working age CTSS and there are no proposals to change the current scheme for 2025/26. The current scheme is set out in the following link: [Fenland CTRS Scheme 2024-25](#)
- 15.3 Consequently, it is proposed that the current working age CTSS scheme be continued with effect from 1 April 2025 with the prescribed pensioner scheme being updated by the relevant regulations.

16 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT, ANNUAL TREASURY INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26

- 16.1 Full details of the proposed Treasury Management, Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy for 2025/26 are contained in Appendix E.
- 16.2 The key issues relating to the strategies and their impact on the MTFS are as follows:
- The prudential and treasury indicators detailed in paragraphs 2-13 of Appendix E, include for the impact of the additional contingency sum of £30m for capital spend on new projects over the next three years. This sum is being funded by external borrowing and consequently has a significant impact on the indicators and on the Council's budget for 2025/26 and over the MTFS. Consideration must be given as to the ongoing affordability of the significant additional financing costs associated with this level of external borrowings within the Council's MTFS.
 - The MRP policy sets out how the Council will make prudent provision for the repayment of borrowing needs over the medium-term forecast. It is proposed that the MRP calculation, currently based on the 'Equal Instalment Method' over the Asset Life, be amended from 2024/25 onwards to the 'Annuity Method' over the Asset Life (see 16.3 below).
 - The Treasury Management Strategy has been organised so that the Council will have sufficient cash resources to meet capital expenditure plans and operational cash flows.
 - Total external interest payments are projected to be £515,000 and £1,170,000 for 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively
 - MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited forecast a pattern of Bank Rate cuts quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (May, August and November).
 - The current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes that significant external borrowing will be required over the four-year period to 31 March 2028. Overall, better value can currently be obtained at the shorter end of the borrowing curve.

- The Council will need to consider the budget implications if the statutory override for accounting for investment instruments (pooled property funds) is not extended beyond 31.3.2025. We are still awaiting governments' decision on this.
- The aim of the Council's annual investment strategy is to provide security of investments whilst managing risk appropriately; investment returns are commensurate with the Council's historic low risk appetite although we are in the process of transition as a Council from a low-risk policy to an appropriate managed risk policy. The Council achieves these objectives through differentiating between "specified" and "non-specified" investments and through the application of a creditworthiness policy.
- The council holds £4m in Property Funds which are long term investments. Although the returns from these investments can be higher than short term investments there is an increased risk that capital values will rise and fall.
- Total investment income from temporary investments is estimated at £678,000 for 2024/25 and £530,000 for 2025/2026. Income from pooled property funds is estimated at £130,000 in both years.

- 16.3 The main change from previous years' Strategy is the proposal to amend the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) calculation. As currently stated in the Strategy at Appendix E (Section 6, MRP Policy Statement), it is the Council's principal responsibility to ensure that it can demonstrate that whatever MRP approach is adopted across their asset base is prudent. Previously, the 'Equal Instalment method' over the asset life has been adopted but from 2024/25 onwards, it is proposed that this be changed to the 'Annuity method'. The reason for the change is to ensure prudent appropriate charging of MRP to relevant accounting periods, taking into account the changing value of money over the years and bearing in mind the Council's residual Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is scheduled to be transferred to a new Unitary Authority in April 2028 under the Governments proposals for Local Government Review.
- 16.4 For the years prior to 2024/25, any recalculation of CFR's and associated MRP's resulting from the proposed MRP calculation change will be assessed at the 2024/25 Outturn position and presented to Members later this year.

17 REVIEW OF GENERAL FUND BALANCE AND EARMARKED RESERVES

- 17.1 An important part of any budget strategy is the review and consideration of reserves. Earmarked Reserves are typically held and used in a planned way to deal with issues where it is foreseen that resources need to be set aside to meet a specific need but the exact amount and timing is not known. General Reserves are held to cushion the impact of an event or events that cannot be foreseen whilst maintaining these resources at a consistent and reasonable level over the medium term.
- 17.2 Sufficient levels of reserves are necessary to provide for various contingent and unplanned items that could include:-
- significant increased costs of providing statutory services
 - significant increased contractual costs
 - an unexpected and/or significant event or disaster, e.g. civil emergency
 - an unexpected major liability in law
 - the need to make significant payments in relation to prior year adjustments under the direction of the external auditor

- 17.3 The Council's current uncommitted General Fund Balance is £2m. It is good practice to keep the balance on this reserve under review alongside ensuring that the purposes for which other earmarked reserves were allocated remain consistent with and relevant to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 17.4 Consequently, a review of the level of the General Fund Balance and the number and purpose of the earmarked reserves (Appendix G) will be undertaken and any amendments will be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet and Council.
- 17.5 The Budget Equalisation Reserve was established in 2019/20 to provide a smoothing mechanism between financial years which could provide resources to help achieve balanced budgets in future years whilst not increasing Council tax each year. The current balance on this reserve is £1.654m and is available to meet potential budget shortfalls for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 17.6 In previous reports, the Leader has stated that one of the main purposes of the Budget Equalisation Reserve was to facilitate a form of feedback loop to counter what he described as the Council's systemic historic outturn surpluses. However, the deficit incurred in 2023/24 of £212k was the first for several years and demonstrated the challenging financial environment all Councils are currently experiencing. Table 5 below, details the historic surpluses prior to 2023/24 and the significant shift to a deficit position from 2023/24. This deficit position is projected to worsen in 2024/25 and increase significantly in 2025/26 and over the MTFS. It is, ultimately, a matter of political interpretation whether the pattern of historic repeated outturn surpluses was evidence of taxing residents more than we need to each year, or if it bears a different interpretation. That is entirely a political matter for Cabinet and Full Council to consider. It is though quite clear that the pattern of historic surpluses will not be repeated and there will be significant deficits over the MTFS for the Council to address.
- 17.7 At a time of much personal financial pressure for households across Fenland, the Leader proposed, and Full Council approved at their budget meeting in February 2023, a one-off 2% reduction in Council tax in 2023/24. Subsequently, Council at its meeting on 17 July 2023, agreed to re-position the MTFS by keeping the cash level 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. The decisions by Council in February and July 2023 was considered a more effective and appropriate way to eliminate the Council's pattern of outturn surpluses, and that the fact that the Budget Equalisation Reserve now stands at £1.654m (before any potential use to fund any shortfall in 2024/25) provides a limited facility to smooth any short term revenue account budget pressures in any year(s) over the term of the MTFS. The scale of the forecast deficits in the current year, 2025/26 and over the MTFS are significantly higher than what will be available to fund from the Budget Equalisation Reserve and further significant cost savings and/or income generation (eg. Council Tax increases) will be required to set a legally balanced budget.
- 17.1 Alternatively, the Council could decide to fund future MTFS deficits to the extent that other earmarked reserves are not ringfenced. Consequently, a review of the level of the General Fund Balance and the number and purpose of the earmarked reserves (Appendix G) will be undertaken to determine which of these reserves could be re-purposed for future funding of the MTFS. Any proposals will be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet and Council.

Table 7: Net Deficit/Surplus(-) transferred from/(to) Budget Equalisation Reserve

	Budget £000	Outturn £000		Outturn Transferred to(+)/from(-)		
				Budget	Reserve	
				Equalisation	Balance	
2024/25	-3	350 (projected)		-350	1,304	
2023/24	-4	212		-212	1,654	
2022/23	203	-800		800	1,866	
2021/22	842	-584		584	1,066	
2020/21	0	-167		167	482	
2019/20	151	-115		115	315	
2018/19	73	-200		200		

- 17.2 The analysis of reserves at Appendix G details the projected General Fund and earmarked reserves position at 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026 taking into account the proposals detailed in this report. The proposal to maintain the current level of Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 has no effect on the projected value of the General Fund Balance in 2025/26.

18 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 18.1 Capital Expenditure and Income plans have been prepared through the Council's service and financial planning cycle. The Council's capital resources are dependent on government funding, external grants or through the ongoing disposal of assets.
- 18.2 Since February 2024, Members have continued to receive regular updates on several high-profile schemes including Wisbech High Street. In addition, Cabinet at their meetings of 30 September 2024 and 15 November 2024, have approved the purchase of additional properties to help support the Council's housing duties and these are included in Appendix D(i).
- 18.3 An updated Capital Programme for 2024-28 is presented at Appendix D(i) for approval. The programme has been updated to ensure it adequately reflects the cost and anticipated timing of schemes previously approved.
- 18.4 As a result of the proposed timescale for Local Government reorganisation and the expectation that this Council will be abolished on 31 March 2028, Members are currently considering a number of capital projects to be implemented and funded over the next 3 years 2025/26 – 2027/28, in addition to the current approved programme. These projects are at a very early stage of consideration and no detailed costings have yet been produced.
- 18.5 Consequently, a contingency sum of £30m (£5m in 2025/26, £10m in 2026/27 and £15m in 2027/28) has been included in the programme detailed at Appendix D(i) for these prospective new projects. Further reports will be presented to future Cabinet and Council meetings as and when the individual projects require the necessary approval.
- 18.6 The estimated financing costs (MRP and Loan interest) associated with both the current approved programme and the additional prospective projects have been included in the estimates for 2025/26, detailed at Appendix A(i) and over the MTFS as detailed in Appendix B. Including the costs associated with the prospective new projects has significantly increased the shortfall over the MTFS.
- 18.7 In addition, no allowance has yet been made for the following developments which will also significantly impact the Council's capital programme.

Structural Works – Wisbech Port

- 18.8 Major structural concrete repair works were carried out during 2023/24 to address the deteriorating condition of the suspended quay at Wisbech Port. Extensive further work will be required over the next few years to ensure the quay at the port of Wisbech remains safe and operational. Full details of this work was presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 16 March 2023. A detailed option appraisal regarding the future of Wisbech Port will be required before any further investment in the quay is considered. Ultimately, the long-term replacement of the suspended quay could cost in the region of £50m. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet for consideration of the future of Wisbech Port.

Leisure Centres

- 18.9 At a separate agenda item, the outcome of the Leisure Centre Facility Strategy details the required refurbishment and improvement projects at the Councils Leisure Centres together with high level costings. Depending on the strategy adopted regarding the timing and costs of implementing individual projects, there may be additional capital funding (borrowing) required over and above the £30m contingency detailed in 18.5 above. This will have consequential effects on future financing costs funded from the revenue account.
- 18.10 Should resources from external funding and/or capital receipts not generate the level of receipts forecast, or there is a delay in disposal of assets, then the capital programme will need re-visiting to ensure funding is sufficient to meet proposed expenditure including through borrowing. Reviews of the programme and resources available are carried out regularly during the year.
- 18.11 The Council's Borrowing Strategy which is incorporated into the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement, recognises that some prudential borrowing will be required over the life of the capital programme. The projected additional annual revenue costs for the programme detailed at Appendix D(i) are reflected in the medium term forecasts at Appendix B.

19 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 19.1 There is an element of risk inherent in any process that looks into the future to make forecasts, particularly in the current economic climate and other national and international events now or in the future that may impact on the Council either directly or indirectly. The Council has a strong track record in good financial management as recognised in the recent Annual Audit Letter. This risk is further minimised by adopting the following methodology when preparing the estimates:-
- Service managers and the Accountancy Team working together to define likely service income/expenditure patterns matched with service delivery plans;
 - Maintaining “earmarked” reserves for expenditure that it is known will occur but the exact amount and timing of the expenditure is not known;
 - Maintaining an adequate level of general reserves to meet sudden and or unforeseen expenditure;
 - Adopting clear guidelines and control systems (robust revenue and capital budget management and monitoring procedures, Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules etc.) to alert service managers, and members before variances reach tolerance levels;
 - Using professional and expert advice and economic forecasts where these are available, e.g. treasury management, interest rates;
 - Maintaining a rolling review of forecast estimates beyond the current year.

- 19.2 These assumptions are made with all available information but are necessarily calculated based on broad assumptions. In the current economic climate, some of these assumptions are particularly volatile. The MTFS will be prepared annually on a rolling basis so that as information becomes more certain the figures will be updated and early consideration can be given to any action or changes in direction that may be required.

20 REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCE (SECTION 151) OFFICER UNDER SECTION 25 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 2003.

- 20.1 Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 and CIPFA Code of Practice, the Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) is required to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the budget calculations and the adequacy of the proposed reserves.

Cabinet and Council are required under the 2003 Act to consider and give due regard to the Chief Finance Officer's report as part of the budget approval and council tax setting process.

- 20.2 The proposed budget is set against the context of significant economic uncertainty, the current cost of living crisis, together with considerable uncertainty regarding government funding over the MTFS. The Government intends to make fundamental changes to the funding system for Local Government through the introduction of a new needs based fairer funding formula and the introduction of business rates. In addition, the New Homes Bonus is being abolished in 2026/27 and there is still uncertainty around the net impact of the introduction of EPR, Food Waste and the Simpler Recycling reforms. The cumulative impact of these changes and lack of visibility on any transition or damping arrangements means that financial planning for 2026/27 and the medium term is very uncertain.

20.3 The Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) makes the following statement:

The robustness of the 2025/26 Budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves are largely dependent on the levels of risk and uncertainty. There is an element of judgement as budget estimates of spending and income are made at a point in time and may change as circumstances change, particularly given the uncertainty relating to Local Government reform and Local Government reorganisation.

This statement on the robustness of estimates cannot give a 100% guarantee about the budget but should give the Council reasonable assurance that the budget has been based on the best information and assumptions available at the time.

The estimates that support this budget have used all the data and supporting information that the Council has at its disposal at this point in time. The principal financial assumptions made in the Budget are noted in this report and attached at Appendix C. Budget monitoring throughout the year will be an important tool in identifying, at an early stage, potential issues so appropriate action can be taken.

- 20.4 Although there are still many uncertainties around the estimates for 2025/26 and over the medium term to 2029/30 detailed in this report, there are undoubtedly significant challenges facing the Council over the next few years. The report also highlights several major areas of risk which could also adversely affect the estimates over the MTFS. Of particular concern is the additional revenue impact of the new prospective capital schemes.
- 20.5 As detailed in the report, Council Tax over each year of the MTFS has been included at 0% increase. At this level, there are currently estimated shortfalls of £1.432m in 2025/26 (before use of reserves), rising to £3.396m in 2027/28 and £4.554m in 2029/30.

- 20.6 The cumulative shortfalls over the next three years to 2027/28 amount to around £7.045m. These currently exceed the forecast balances on the Council's non-ringfenced earmarked reserves (£6.5m) at 31 March 2026. Of the cumulative shortfall of £7.045m, around £2.367m relates to additional financing costs attributable to the £30m contingency included in the capital programme over the next three years.
- 20.7 These represent a significant challenge for the Council and it is therefore, imperative that a robust savings and use of reserves strategy is in place to meet these challenges. As detailed in the report, significant savings (£550k) are expected from the Transformation Agenda 2 (TA2) and Service Review programme.
- 20.8 Even with these, the scale of the forecast deficits means that significant funding from earmarked reserves is inevitable if the current Council Tax strategy of 0% increases per annum is maintained in future years. Table 5 in Section 14 of this report exemplifies the impact of increasing Council Tax by up to 3% (the current referendum limit) on the shortfalls over the MTFS detailed in Appendix B.
- 20.9 **The continuing use of earmarked reserves to fund future deficits is a high-risk strategy for the Council. Although current government policy would see this Council abolished on 31 March 2028, this cannot be guaranteed and if this did not proceed as expected, the Council would be left in a significantly reduced funding position. Consideration must be given to the longer-term financial sustainability of the Council and the assumption that the Council has no longevity beyond March 2028 is still subjective. Borrowing to deliver the Fenland Inspire projects must be carried out prudently and in line with the Treasury Management Strategy agreed by Full Council. As stated previously the continued use of reserves is not sustainable and an adequate level of reserves must be maintained.**
- 20.10 Given the uncertainties detailed in this report, it is imperative that the Council maintains sufficient resources to cover any in-year unforeseen expenditure. A risk-based approach to the consideration of the level of reserves is a component of the Council's overall risk management framework. Operational risks should be managed within Services' bottom line budgets and thus will not normally result in any further call on the Council's General Balances, as detailed in Section 19 above.
- 20.11 My assessment of the process that has been undertaken is that the calculations used in the preparation of the estimates for the Budget for 2025/26 are fair and robust and that reserves are adequate to reflect known circumstances and to be able to manage the stated uncertainties and risks that could realistically be anticipated at this point. All earmarked reserves are held for the purpose for which they are set up and are considered to be adequate to meet the requirements of those purposes when called upon based on the best information available as at the time of writing.
- 20.12 As stated above careful consideration needs to be given to future years when forecasted deficits are likely to outstrip available reserves.

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of Revenue Estimates

	Council 26.02.24 Original Estimate 2024/25	Cabinet 16.12.24 Revised Estimate 2024/25	Projected Outturn 2024/25	Estimate 2025/26
	£	£		£
Service Summary				
Growth & Infrastructure	1,454,340	1,330,666	1,039,571	1,459,230
Communities, Environment, Leisure & Planning	5,402,610	6,315,700	6,421,833	6,611,090
Resources & Customer Services	10,304,470	10,628,973	10,610,753	10,495,204
ERS NI Contributions - Government Grant	0	0	0	-123,812
Vacancy Factor (1.5%)	-230,000	0	0	-239,000
Transformation & Service Review Programme savings	-225,000	-115,585	-115,585	-550,000
NET COST OF GENERAL FUND SERVICES	16,706,420	18,159,754	17,956,572	17,652,712
Corporate Items				
Internal Drainage Board Levies	2,098,570	2,251,010	2,251,010	2,468,240
Internal Drainage Board Levies Grant	-177,280	-213,000	-213,000	-313,000
Contributions to/ (from) Earmarked Reserves	-652,874	-878,913	-693,183	-1,034,595
RTB/VAT Sharing Income	-20,000	-110,000	-150,000	-20,000
Financing Charges - <i>Interest on External Borrowings</i>	906,325	556,325	514,325	1,169,467
Financing Charges - <i>MRP current Capital Programme</i>	587,700	451,166	451,166	652,000
Investment Income and Property Funds Income	-795,000	-765,000	-808,000	-660,000
New Homes Bonus	-442,392	-442,392	-442,392	-592,628
Services Grant	-25,846	-25,846	-25,846	0
Core Spending Power Guarantee Grant	-788,558	-788,558	-788,558	0
Recovery Grant	0	0	0	-435,149
Extended Producer Responsibility Payment -pEPR	0	0	0	-958,000
Corporate Items	690,645	34,792	95,522	276,335
Net Expenditure	17,397,065	18,194,546	18,052,094	17,929,047
Contribution to/from(-) Budget Equalisation Reserve	2,515	0	0	-1,432,283
NET EXPENDITURE after use of balances	17,399,580	18,194,546	18,052,094	16,496,764
Core Funding				
Revenue Support Grant	-184,901	-184,901	-184,901	-203,673
Business Rates - Income due in Year				
Business Rates Funding	-11,177,561	-11,177,561	-11,177,561	-11,580,863
Tariff Payment to Government	7,554,448	7,554,448	7,554,448	7,636,697
Renewable Energy Rates Retained	-1,476,267	-1,593,684	-1,593,684	-1,578,437
Business Rates Pool - FDC Share of Benefit	-300,000	-350,000	-350,000	-350,000
Business Rates S31 Grants due in year	-3,166,574	-3,066,658	-3,097,731	-2,999,641
Business Rates Levy due in year	744,929	553,388	572,446	775,691
Business Rates Levy Account Surplus allocation	0	0	-31,046	-31,046
	-7,821,025	-8,080,067	-8,123,128	-8,127,599
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit(+)/Surplus(-)	-1,291,784	-1,291,784	-1,291,784	45,154
Council Tax Collection Fund Deficit(+)/Surplus(-)	-57,899	-57,899	-57,899	-18,133
Council Tax	-8,043,971	-8,043,971	-8,043,971	-8,192,513
Business Rates and Council Tax Funding	-17,399,580	-17,658,622	-17,701,683	-16,496,764
Surplus(-)/Shortfall(+)	0	535,924	350,411	0

GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE			
Service	2024/25 Current Approved Estimate £	2024/25 Projected Outturn £	2025/26 Original Estimate £
Direct Services			
Transport Development	161,490	156,390	227,720
Miscellaneous (Clocks, Monuments)	2,300	2,300	2,300
Drainage (District)	3,500	3,500	3,500
Highways (District)	201,280	212,240	200,820
Car Parks	223,200	222,000	228,100
Marine Services	450,026	351,061	289,400
Economic Estates	-334,300	-329,700	-354,600
Sewage Treatment Works	79,240	81,360	82,470
Parish Council Concurrent Functions	55,840	55,840	55,840
Economic Development	199,850	196,910	187,070
Regeneration	-34,110	-231,880	141,410
HLF- High St Wisbech	0	0	0
Total Direct Services	1,008,316	720,021	1,064,030
Support Services			
Asset & Project Services	392,350	389,550	465,200
Net Cost of Services	1,400,666	1,109,571	1,529,230
Less Support Services Recharges to Capital Schemes	-70,000	-70,000	-70,000
TOTAL GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE	1,330,666	1,039,571	1,459,230

General Notes for Appendix A(ii):

1. Within all the Service Estimates detailed in Appendix A(ii), Support Services costs have not been reallocated with the exception of recharges to Capital Schemes.
2. Similarly, Capital Charges have not been reallocated as these 'costs' are reversed out within the Corporate Items section of the estimates, thereby having no impact on the Budget Requirement and Council Tax.
3. Estimates for 2025/26 include the assumptions on pay, expenditure and income detailed at Appendix C. In addition, staff cost allocations to services have been reviewed for 2024/25 and have resulted in costs being re-allocated to better reflect time spent on providing those services.

COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE & PLANNING			
Service	2024/25 Current Approved Estimate £	2024/25 Projected Outturn £	2025/26 Original Estimate £
Direct Services			
Housing Strategy	138,570	142,490	145,850
Private Sector Renewals	91,640	90,250	102,960
Housing Standards	104,230	102,390	123,550
Care & Repair	32,760	32,590	34,190
CCTV	74,000	69,990	65,920
Safer Fenland	114,430	114,450	119,330
Licensing	-8,930	-10,960	-2,290
Housing Options	393,180	409,563	163,220
Housing Needs and Advice	85,060	85,410	124,700
LAHF Properties	-287,710	-313,240	-342,120
Community Development	142,320	128,760	137,740
Travellers Services	-72,560	-84,810	-75,490
Pollution Reduction	164,180	165,520	168,030
Public Health	273,410	260,380	221,370
Food Safety	143,910	130,130	146,730
Health and Safety	74,890	70,840	78,890
Refuse Collection - Domestic	1,996,020	2,177,450	2,433,840
Garden Waste	-136,970	-123,560	-200,610
Refuse Collection - Trade Waste	-224,690	-224,860	-265,010
Street Cleansing	1,146,700	1,165,390	1,190,170
Streetscene	248,020	244,620	262,790
Public Conveniences	19,320	19,310	22,400
Arts Development & Culture	78,640	79,650	40,940
Planning Policy	384,030	378,610	956,630
Development Management	266,490	355,530	65,000
Building Control	54,110	54,110	54,110
Conservation	39,720	38,090	40,080
Planning Compliance	218,120	209,860	128,500
Technical Support	279,000	281,610	309,240
Leisure Centres	-452,970	-520,010	-376,580
Sports Development	189,640	188,130	77,620
Parks and Open Spaces	661,960	635,940	608,030
Cemeteries	-11,520	-14,820	-46,200
Markets and Fairs	-5,430	-9,620	-1,510
Community Events	102,130	92,650	99,070
Vehicle Workshop	0	0	0
TOTAL COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE & PLANNING	6,315,700	6,421,833	6,611,090

General Notes for Appendix A(ii):

1. Within all the Service Estimates detailed in Appendix A(ii), Support Services costs have not been reallocated with the exception of recharges to Capital Schemes.
2. Similarly, Capital Charges have not been reallocated as these 'costs' are reversed out within the Corporate Items section of the estimates, thereby having no impact on the Budget Requirement and Council Tax.
3. Estimates for 2025/26 include the assumptions on pay, expenditure and income detailed at Appendix C. In addition, staff cost allocations to services have been reviewed for 2024/25 and have resulted in costs being re-allocated to better reflect time spent on providing those services.

RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES			
Service	2024/25 Current Approved Estimate £	2024/25 Projected Outturn £	2025/26 Original Estimate £
Direct Services			
Miscellaneous Central Services	132,950	132,950	137,500
Unfunded Pension Costs/Apprenticeship Levy	997,890	998,600	961,680
Corporate Management	1,104,410	1,078,680	969,040
Council Tax Cost of Collection	538,950	546,550	658,190
Business Rates Cost of Collection	-19,450	-19,320	13,140
Housing Benefits	1,416,860	1,392,490	971,240
ICT Direct Service Costs	865,370	864,820	860,940
Policy & Comms	340,630	339,250	358,160
Land Charges	-16,650	-11,750	-22,550
Elections & Electoral Registration	225,550	231,450	252,650
Democratic Services	635,640	626,770	692,430
Emergency Planning	17,980	17,850	16,000
Total Direct Services	6,240,130	6,198,340	5,868,420
Support Services			
Accountancy	806,933	807,493	784,150
Information & Communication Technology	684,860	686,920	665,500
Customer Services/My Fenland	1,099,600	1,103,600	1,184,800
Transformation	275,100	278,600	299,000
Post & Reprographics	121,480	121,840	124,064
Internal Audit	214,330	213,660	167,840
Legal Services	169,300	176,840	302,680
Corporate Health & Safety	11,080	16,380	50,190
Human Resources	373,210	373,930	390,010
Fenland Hall	452,600	454,800	472,900
The Base	180,350	178,350	185,650
Total Support Services	4,388,843	4,412,413	4,626,784
TOTAL RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES	10,628,973	10,610,753	10,495,204

General Notes for Appendix A(ii):

1. Within all the Service Estimates detailed in Appendix A(ii), Support Services costs have not been reallocated with the exception of recharges to Capital Schemes.
2. Similarly, Capital Charges have not been reallocated as these 'costs' are reversed out within the Corporate Items section of the estimates, thereby having no impact on the Budget Requirement and Council Tax.
3. Estimates for 2025/26 include the assumptions on pay, expenditure and income detailed at Appendix C. In addition, staff cost allocations to services have been reviewed for 2024/25 and have resulted in costs being re-allocated to better reflect time spent on providing those services.

APPENDIX B
(0% Council Tax increase 2025/26 onwards)

Medium Term Financial Strategy	Projected 2024/25 £000	Estimate 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	Forecast 2028/29 £000	Forecast 2029/30 £000
<u>Expenditure</u>						
Service Expenditure/Income						
Gross Service Expenditure	31,082	30,834	30,373	30,873	31,386	32,026
Gross Service Income	-13,008	-12,268	-12,440	-12,617	-12,798	-12,983
ERS NI Contributions - Government Grant	0	-124	-124	-124	-124	-124
Vacancy Factor (1.5%)	0	-239	-245	-251	-258	-264
Transformation & Service Review Programme savings	-116	-550	-583	-616	-616	-616
Total Net Service Expenditure	17,958	17,653	16,981	17,265	17,590	18,039
Corporate Items						
Corporate Expenditure/Savings						
Internal Drainage Board Levies	2,251	2,468	2,592	2,721	2,857	3,000
Internal Drainage Board Levies Grant	-213	-313	-313	-313	-313	-313
Financing Charges - Interest on External Borrowing	515	1,170	1,910	2,250	2,675	2,675
Financing Charges - MRP Current Capital Programme	451	652	946	1,223	1,735	1,735
	3,004	3,977	5,135	5,881	6,954	7,097
Corporate Income Items						
Contribution to/(+)/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-693	-1,035	-26	-26	-26	-26
RTB/VAT Sharing Income	-150	-20	-20	-20	-20	-20
Investment and Property Fund Income	-808	-660	-1,030	-630	-950	-950
New Homes Bonus	-442	-593	-593	-593	-593	-593
CSP Guarantee Grant/Recovery Grant	-789	-435	-435	-435	-435	-435
Services Grant	-26	0	0	0	0	0
Extended Producer Responsibility Payment - pEPR	0	-958	-958	-958	-958	-958
Contribution to/from(-) Budget Equalisation Reserve	0	-1,432	0	0	0	0
	-2,908	-5,133	-3,062	-2,662	-2,982	-2,982
Total Corporate Items	96	-1,156	2,073	3,219	3,972	4,115
Gross Service/Corporate Expenditure	33,970	34,022	34,680	35,887	37,466	38,243
Gross Service/Corporate Income	-15,916	-17,525	-15,626	-15,403	-15,904	-16,089
Net Budget Requirement	18,054	16,497	19,054	20,484	21,562	22,154
<u>Funding - RSG, Business Rates & Council Tax</u>						
Revenue Support Grant	-185	-204	-209	-214	-220	-225
Business Rates						
Business Rates Baseline Funding	-11,178	-11,581	-12,176	-12,377	-12,582	-12,791
Tariff Payment to Government	7,554	7,637	7,805	7,961	8,120	8,282
Renewable Energy Rates Retained	-1,594	-1,578	-1,584	-1,618	-1,645	-1,681
Business Rates Pool - FDC Share of Benefit	-350	-350	-350	-350	-350	-350
Business Rates S31 Grants due in year	-3,098	-3,000	-2,730	-2,748	-2,768	-2,787
Business Rates Levy due in year	572	776	747	728	709	689
Business Rates Collection Fund Deficit/Surplus(-)	-1,292	45	0	0	0	0
Business Rates Levy Account Surplus Allocation	-31	-31	0	0	0	0
Total Business Rates Funding	-9,417	-8,082	-8,288	-8,404	-8,516	-8,638
Council Tax						
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus(-)/Deficit	-58	-18	-20	-20	-20	-20
Council Tax (0% increase 2025/26 onwards)	-8,044	-8,193	-8,320	-8,450	-8,582	-8,717
Total Council Tax Funding	-8,102	-8,211	-8,340	-8,470	-8,602	-8,737
Total Funding - RSG/Business Rates/Council Tax	-17,704	-16,497	-16,837	-17,088	-17,338	-17,600
Surplus(-)/Shortfall(+)	+350	0	+2,217	+3,396	+4,224	+4,554

Assumptions built into Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Within the forecasts are a number of assumptions which are necessary to produce the overall budget strategy. However, there is an element of risk associated with this process although the aim is to mitigate these risks as detailed in section 19 of the main report.

The main assumptions are as follows:

- 0% Council Tax increases have been included over the period of the MTFS. With the estimated increases in the Council Tax base in 2025/26 and thereafter, this equates to actual Council Tax income in 2025/26 of £8.193m rising to £8.450m in 2027/28 and £8.717m in 2029/30.
- 1.85% increase in Council Tax base in 2025/26 (Tax-base 32,154) and thereafter (increase of 500 Band D equivalent properties in 2026/27 rising to 530 in 2029/30).
- Inflation increases in Retained Business Rates income from 2026/27 onwards. Future net benefits or reduced retained income from Business Rates will be dependent upon the impact of the system re-set and other changes from April 2026 onwards.
- Inclusion of this Council's share (£350k) of the potential benefit arising from the continuation of the Cambridgeshire Business Rates Pool in 2025/26 onwards. Although Fenland will not formally be part of the Pool for 2025/26, the Pool members have agreed for Fenland to be no worse off as a result of the new Pool arrangements. Potential benefit from the Pool in future years will be dependent on any changes to the Business Rates Retention System from April 2026.
- Recovery Grant included at £435k in 2025/26 and over the medium term. Although the national total of this grant will remain in the Local Government sector in future years, it may be allocated differently as a result of changes to the Local Government funding system from April 2026, which could negatively affect our funding from this source.
- The New Homes Bonus (£593k allocated in 2025/26) has been included at £593k per annum from 2026/27. NHB will be abolished in 2026/27 and the total amount of funding allocated by a revised methodology. An allowance of £593k per annum has been included from 2026/27 onwards but this will be dependent on how the new funding methodology is redistributed and allocated.
- 2% pay award in 2025/26 (£304k cost) and thereafter together with an allowance for pay increments of around 0.5% p.a. (£76k cost).
- Employer's Pension Contributions – following the triennial valuation as at 31.03.2022, the contribution rate for 2023/24 – 2025/26 increased slightly to 17.6% of salary (17.4% in 2022/23) with an additional past deficit lump sum payment of £922k for 2023/24, £884k for 2024/25 and £845k for 2025/26 representing an overall increase of 1% p.a. in total contributions.
- Inclusion of a vacancy factor for 2025/26 onwards, equivalent to a reduction in staff costs of 1.5% (£239k in 2025/26).
- Specific allowance for inflation where required eg: employee costs (as detailed above), business rates, external contracts, energy and water, fuel costs etc. Otherwise, no allowance for inflation has been included.
- Estimated 10% increase in Internal Drainage Board Levies in 2025/26 and 5% increase per annum thereafter. The actual levies are not set by the Drainage Boards until after we have set our budget and Council Tax levels. To help off-set these

increases, the government is allocating £5m nationally (£3m in 2024/25) to the worst affected authorities. In 2024/25 we were allocated £213k of IDB grant and to reflect the increase in the national total, an amount of £313k has been included for 2025/26 onwards. Allocations for 2025/26 will be announced in the coming months (after we have set our budget) so the actual amount of grant received may be different to this.

- Investment interest rates are forecast to remain at current levels until Q2, 2025 before subsequently decreasing back to 3.5% in Q4, 2026 (£300k estimated income from temporary investments in 2025/26).
- Investment income includes the £4m investment in property funds in March 2022 (£130k p.a. income net of costs in 2025/26).
- Forecast income levels from fees and charges in 2025/26 include the agreed fee increases (Cabinet 27 January 2025) together with a review of activity levels.
- For 2025/26 onwards, provision has been included for a reduction in costs/increase in housing benefit subsidy reclaimed of £600k relating to temporary accommodation. This is a result of various initiatives currently progressing, in conjunction with current providers and from the impact of the additional houses purchased with support from the Local Authority Housing Fund and the current capital programme.
- Recharges to Fenland Future Limited to reflect the use of FDC officer time on the company's behalf has been included (£125k in 2022/23 and future years). This amount could vary depending on the amount of time and types of activities being carried out for the company.
- Potential net benefits from Fenland Future Ltd of loan interest and dividends from future developments have been included. These amounts could vary depending on the timing and profitability of developments being carried out by the company.
- No allowance has been made in the medium term forecasts for the potential impact of the government's waste strategy particularly relating to Food Waste. Depending on the level of government support provided, this could have a significant impact on the MTFS from 2026/27 onwards.
- £550k of in-year savings have been included in 2025/26 for potential savings from the Transformation Agenda 2 and Service Review programme, rising to £616k savings from 2027/28 onwards.
- Estimated financing costs (Interest and MRP) of the current capital programme as detailed in Appendix D(i) are included in the MTFS. These include the costs associated with the £30m contingency for Prospective New Projects included in the capital programme over the period 2025/26 – 2027/28.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FUNDING 2024 - 2028

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
CURRENT FORECAST EXPENDITURE	13,745	17,121	18,794	16,794
FORECAST RESOURCES AVAILABLE				
Capital Grants	6,910	3,678	1,194	1,194
Usable Capital Receipts - In Year	250	250	250	250
Reserves used in year to fund Capital	5	200	0	0
Section 106s and Other Contributions	120	0	0	0
Borrowing (Internal and Prudential) - Capital Programme	3,635	3,118	350	350
Borrowing (Prudential) - Prospective New Projects	0	5,000	10,000	15,000
Borrowing (Prudential) - CIS/Housing	2,425	1,875	0	0
Borrowing (Prudential) - CIS/FFL	400	3,000	7,000	0
TOTAL FORECAST RESOURCES	13,745	17,121	18,794	16,794

CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY 2024/25 - 2027/28												APPENDIX D	
			Revised 2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000		Total Cost £000	FDC Funding £000	External Funding £000	External Funders and FDC Reserves/S106		
Leisure Centres													
1	Condition Survey Improvements		455	1,655				2,110	2,110	0			
2	Energy Efficiency Works - Solar PV; Manor CHP; Manor Pool AHU		443					443	366	77	£77k CPCA Growing Fenland		
3	Manor Basketball/Tennis/Netball Improvements including site investment appraisal		60					60	0	60	£35k CPCA Growing Fenland; £25k FCC Communities Grant		
4	Leisure Centres - Facility Strategy		89	25				114	114	0			
Regeneration Programmes													
5	Heritage Lottery Fund - Non-FDC Properties		98					98	0	98	£98k HLF Grant.		
6	Heritage Lottery Fund - 24 High Street, Wisbech		1,903					1,903	1,665	238	£220k CPCA Grant; £238k HLF		
7	11 -12 High Street		60	0				60	60	0			
8	Future High Street Fund, March		4,639	500				5,139	0	5,139	£2,000k CPCA, £3,139k DLUHC Future High Streets,		
9	Nene Waterfront Infrastructure Improvements		305					305	65	240	£181k Brownfield Land Release Fund £59 FFL		
10	Whittlesey Market Place Improvements		20					20	0	20	£20k CPCA Growing Fenland Grant		
11	Whittlesey Southern Relief Road - SOBC		174					174	0	174	£174k CPCA Growing Fenland Grant		
Parks and Open Spaces													
12	Wisbech Park - Play Area Refurbishment		45					45	0	45	£20k DLUHC Levelling Up Parks Fund, £25k S106		
13	National Trust Peckover House		40					40	0	40	£40K DLUHC Changing Places Grant		
14	The construction of a sports pavilion on open space in Manea		40					40	0	40	S106 Funding		
15	Manea PC - Purchase Land		15					15	0	15	S106 Funding		
16	West End Park, March		10					10	0	10	S106 Funding		
17	Manea PC - Play Park Improvements		10					10	0	10	S106 Funding		
Cemeteries													
18	Cemetery Chapels Condition Survey Works		28	100				128	128	0			
19	Remedial Works in Closed Cemeteries		29	300				329	329	0			
20	Whittlesey St Andrew Church - Wall Maintenance		0	100				100	100	0			
Highways													
21	Category 2 Street Lights - FDC Lights		41	100				141	141	0			
22	Growing Fenland - Civil Parking Enforcement		0	322				322	0	322	£322k CPCA Grant		
								0	0	0			
Environment													
23	Replacement and Additional Litter Bins		0	27				27	27	0			
Sub Total			8,504	3,129	0	0	11,633	5,105	6,528				

Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2025/26

1 Introduction

CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code (Revised 2021)

- 1.1 CIPFA published the revised codes on 20 December 2021 and has stated that revisions need to be included in the reporting framework from the 2023/24 financial year. This Council has to have regard to these codes of practice when it prepares the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, and also related reports during the financial year, which are taken to Full Council for approval.
- 1.2 The revised codes will have the following implications:
 - a requirement for the Council to adopt a new debt liability benchmark treasury indicator to support the financing risk management of the capital financing requirement;
 - clarify what CIPFA expects a local authority to borrow for and what they do not view as appropriate. This will include the requirement to set a proportionate approach to commercial and service capital investment;
 - address Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues within the Capital Strategy;
 - require implementation of a policy to review commercial property, with a view to divest where appropriate;
 - create new Investment Practices to manage risks associated with non-treasury investment (similar to the current Treasury Management Practices);
 - ensure that any long term treasury investment is supported by a business model;
 - a requirement to effectively manage liquidity and longer term cash flow requirements;
 - amendment to Treasury Management Practice 1 to address ESG policy within the treasury management risk framework;
 - amendment to the knowledge and skills register for individuals involved in the treasury management function - to be proportionate to the size and complexity of the treasury management conducted by each council;
 - a new requirement to clarify reporting requirements for service and commercial investment, (especially where supported by borrowing/leverage).

- 1.3 In addition, all investments and investment income must be attributed to one of the following three purposes: -

Treasury management

Arising from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity, this type of investment represents balances which are only held until the cash is required for use. Treasury investments may also arise from other treasury risk management activity

which seeks to prudently manage the risks, costs or income relating to existing or forecast debt or treasury investments. The Council's investment in property funds falls into this category.

Service delivery

Investments held primarily and directly for the delivery of public services including housing, regeneration and local infrastructure. Returns on this category of investment which are funded by borrowing are permitted only in cases where the income is "either related to the financial viability of the project in question or otherwise incidental to the primary purpose".

Commercial return

Investments held primarily for financial return with no treasury management or direct service provision purpose. Risks on such investments should be proportionate to a council's financial capacity – i.e., that 'plausible losses' could be absorbed in budgets or reserves without unmanageable detriment to local services. An authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. This does not preclude the Council from taking forward investments as part of its Commercial and Investment Strategy so long as financial return is not the primary reason for taking forward the scheme. This particularly applies in the case of projects relating to housing where service delivery objectives can be achieved as well as a financial return.

- 1.4 As this Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy deals solely with treasury management investments, the categories of service delivery and commercial investments will be dealt with as part of the Capital Strategy report
- 1.5 These changes are now fully adopted within the 2025/26 TMSS report.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's assessment of its risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 2.2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans or using longer term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 2.3 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

- 2.4 Whilst any commercial initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are generally classed as non-treasury activities, (arising usually from capital expenditure), and are separate from the day-to-day treasury management activities.

3 The Capital Strategy Reporting Requirements

- 3.1 The CIPFA revised 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare an additional document, a Capital Strategy which will provide the following:
- a high-level long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
 - an overview of how the associated risk is managed; and
 - the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 3.2 The aim of the Capital Strategy is to ensure that all elected members on full Council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

4 Treasury Strategy Reporting Requirements

- 4.1 The Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals. These reports are required to be adequately scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and Cabinet before being recommended to the Council. Due to the timings of the Audit and Risk Management Committee in February 2025, this report has been recommended for approval directly to Cabinet.
- 4.2 **Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Treasury Strategy** (this report), the first and most important report is forward looking and covers:
- the capital plans (including prudential indicators);
 - a Minimum Revenue Provision policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
 - the Treasury Management Strategy (how investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
 - an Investment Strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

A Mid-Year Treasury Management Report - This will update Members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary and whether any policies require revision.

An Annual Treasury Report - This is a backward looking review document and provides details of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

- 4.3 The Strategy covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and associated prudential indicators;
- the MRP policy.

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;

- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- policy on use of external service providers.

These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and the MHCLG Investment Guidance.

- 4.4 **IFRS16 - Leases** The CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Code Board deferred implementation of IFRS16 until 1 April 2024, the 2024/25 financial year. IFRS 16 defines a lease as a contract or part of a contract, which conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for a consideration. Under the new standard the distinction between finance leases and operating leases under the previous leasing standard is removed and all leases are treated in the way the finance leases currently are. A 'right of use' asset is shown on the balance sheet with a corresponding liability of the discounted value of the future lease payments. There are exceptions for short, dated leases (under a year, or with less than a year remaining at transition) and low value leases (low value to be determined by the council using its approach to determining de minimus items). This means that all leases that do not meet the exceptions will be treated as capital expenditure from 2024/25 and form part of the Capital Financing Requirement. Although legally the Council doesn't own the asset during the lease duration, International Accounting Standards require that the Council capitalise the asset and liability on its balance sheet, much like a loan. Whilst this increases the CFR, the nature of the finance lease agreement doesn't require the Council to separately borrow to fund the asset.

- 4.5 **Training** - The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.

The training needs of treasury management officers and members are periodically reviewed.

5 **Capital Prudential Indicators 2025/26 to 2027/28**

- 5.1 The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist Members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.
- 5.2 The capital expenditure prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously and those forming part of this budget cycle. Commercial activities/non-financial investments relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties, loans to third parties etc.
- 5.3 The table below summarises the capital expenditure plans and how these are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a funding borrowing need.

Capital Programme	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Forecast Capital Expenditure	10,515	12,246	11,794	16,794
Commercial and Investment Strategy Schemes	3,230	4,875	7,000	0
TOTAL	13,745	17,121	18,794	16,794
Financed by:				
Capital Grants	6,910	3,678	1,194	1,194
Capital Receipts	250	250	250	250
Reserves used in year to fund Capital	5	200	0	0
Section 106 and Other Contributions	120	0	0	0
Total Financing	7,285	4,128	1,444	1,444
Net Financing Need for The Year (Borrowing)	6,460	12,993	17,350	15,350

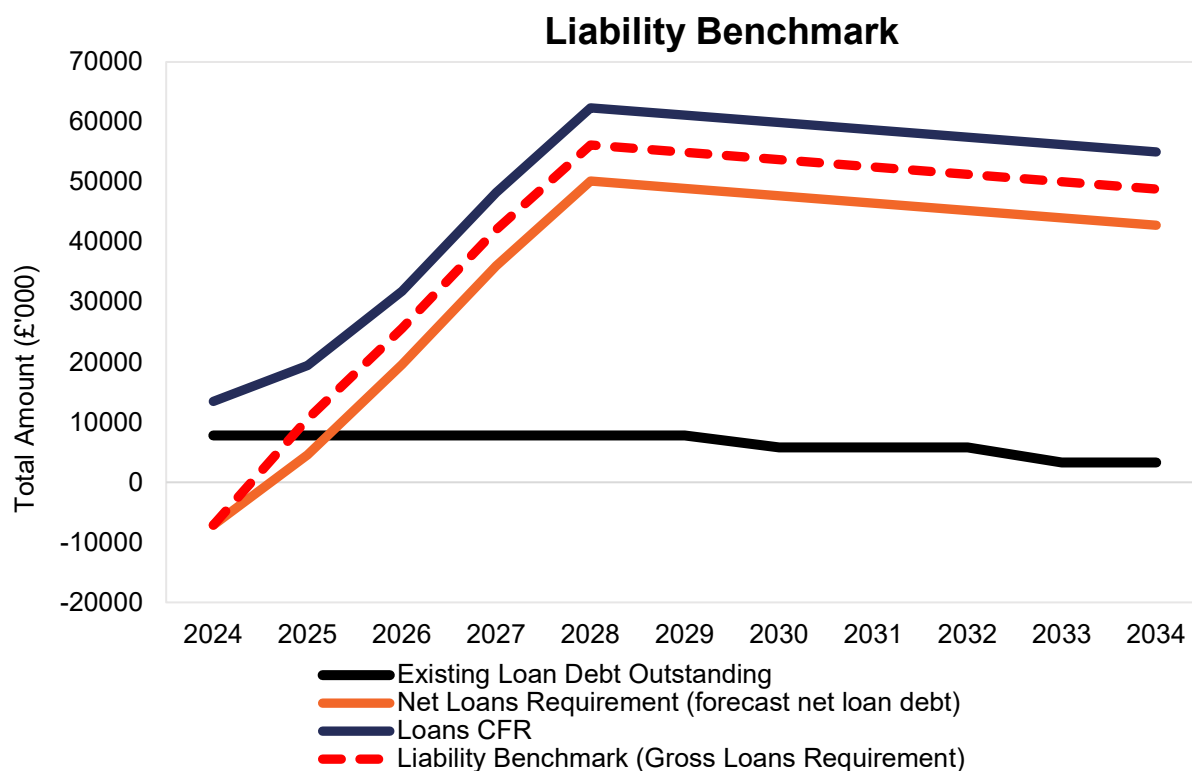
- 5.4 The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness, its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure shown above, which has not immediately been paid for will increase the CFR.
- 5.5 The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as each year the Council is required to pay off an element of the capital spend (including finance leases) through a statutory revenue charge (MRP). In the case of schemes taken forward as part of the Council's capital programme this has the effect of reducing the Council's (CFR) broadly over the asset's life.
- 5.6 In the case of capital expenditure incurred in accordance with the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy the MRP charge cannot be determined until such time that the Investment Board approves a scheme. Where the projected Capital Financing Requirement is disclosed in this report the figures used reflect the impact of borrowing to fund the full allocation of the remaining budget over the next 4 years but no assumptions have been made regarding how MRP might reduce the CFR attributable to these schemes. This approach is considered reasonable until such time that any new schemes are formally approved by the Investment Board. In accordance with the current Minimum Revenue Policy, a provision for MRP in relation to the investment and residential property acquired in previous financial years is incorporated into the information in this report and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.7 In this context, it is also important to note that, as well as the statutory MRP charge, the Council is permitted to make additional voluntary payments to reduce the CFR. These voluntary payments will typically reduce the statutory charge that would have been due in future years. Voluntary payments can be funded from capital resources. This is particularly significant in the context of the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy. As a result of investments undertaken, the Council may receive significant capital receipts and/or repayments of amounts due under the terms of loan agreements with third parties, including the Local Authority Trading Company. These amounts may be received before the maturity date of the external borrowing used to undertake the initial

investment. Any assumptions regarding the anticipated use of capital resources to reduce the CFR will be reported as part of future treasury management reporting.

- 5.8 The CFR includes any other long term liabilities (finance leases).

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
CFR – as at 31 March				
Opening CFR	13,471	19,480	31,821	48,225
Movement in CFR	6,009	12,341	16,404	14,127
Closing CFR	19,480	31,821	48,225	62,352
Movement in CFR represented by				
Net financing need for the year	6,460	12,993	17,350	15,350
Less MRP and other Financing Movements	(451)	(652)	(946)	(1,223)
Movement in CFR	6,009	12,341	16,404	14,127

- 5.9 The third prudential indicator is the Liability Benchmark (LB). The liability benchmark is a measure of how well the existing loans portfolio matches the authority's planned borrowing needs.
- 5.10 The purpose of this prudential indicator is to compare the authority's existing loans outstanding (the black line) against its future need for loan debt, or liability benchmark (the red line).
- 5.11 The liability benchmark below indicates a future borrowing requirement over the life of this strategy.
- 5.12 The timing of actual borrowing arranged may differ from the liability benchmark depending on actual cash balances, the rate at which the capital programme is delivered and actual use of reserves and working capital.



6 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

- 6.1 The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated general fund capital spend each year (the CFR) through a revenue charge (the minimum revenue provision), although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments if required (voluntary revenue provision).
- 6.2 MHCLG regulations have been issued which require the Council to approve an MRP statement in advance each year. A variety of options are provided to Councils within the guidance. Councils are permitted under the guidance to establish their own approach to setting MRP, and different approaches can be applied for different types of assets. The Council's principal responsibility is to ensure that it can demonstrate that whatever approach they adopt across their asset base it is prudent. Given the Council's decision to adopt a Commercial and Investment Strategy it was necessary to revise the MRP policy in 2020/21 to take account of investments which might feasibly be taken forward in accordance with the Commercial and Investment Strategy. The policy applicable for the current financial year onwards is as follows:
- (1) For unsupported borrowing (including finance leases) undertaken to fund the Council's capital programme, excluding any capital expenditure approved by the Council's Investment Board for Investment Properties, MRP will be based on the estimated useful life of the assets to be purchased or acquired. Specifically, from 2024/25 onwards this will be based on the 'Annuity Method' rather than the previously used 'Equal Instalment Method'. Repayments made under the terms of finance leases shall be applied as MRP.
 - (2) For Investment Properties purchased or constructed (following a decision taken by the Council's Investment Board) the MRP charge shall be based on the difference between the value of the asset and the value of any outstanding unsupported borrowing secured to fund the original purchase of the asset. A calculation shall be undertaken at the end of each financial year to identify the difference between the value of the asset and the amount borrowed. Where a difference exists MRP shall be charged over a period commensurate with the

period the Council expects to hold the asset as set out in reports presented to the Investment Board.

- (3) For any loans made to third parties, including those made to the Local Authority Trading Company, no MRP shall be charged where the loan requirement requires the third party to make repayments on at least an annual basis over the life of the loan. In the unlikely event of the Council providing a maturity loan to a third party, MRP shall be charged in equal amounts over the life of the loan.
- (4) Should the Council acquire an equity stake in any third party, the MRP charge will be for the lower of twenty years or the scheduled completion date of any projects funded by the third party using the proceeds from selling an equity stake to the Council.
- (5) For investment in Property Funds which the Council, following consultation with its Treasury Advisors, assesses as meeting the definition of capital expenditure MRP shall be charged over the period the Council expects to hold the investment. The period over which MRP can be charged for this type of investment shall not be permitted to exceed 20 years. The property funds referred to elsewhere in this document do not meet the definition of capital expenditure.

6.3 MHCLG have now published the revised Capital Finance: guidance on minimum revenue provision (5th Edition) which applies to the accounting periods starting on or after 1st April 2025. The two additions to the guidance are as follows:

- Capital receipts may not be used in place of the revenue charge. The intent is to prevent authorities avoiding, in whole or part, a prudent charge to revenue. It is not the intention to prevent authorities using capital receipts to reduce their overall debt position, which may have the effect of reducing the MRP made with respect to the remaining debt balance.
- Prudent MRP must be determined with respect to the authority's total capital financing requirement. The intent is to stop the intentional exclusion of debt from the MRP determination because it relates to an investment asset or capital loan. Authorities should still be able to charge MRP over the period in which their capital expenditure provides benefits, and begin charging MRP in the year following capital expenditure, in accordance with proper accounting practices set out in the government's statutory guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision.

7 The Use of Council's Resources and the Investment Position

The application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc) and temporary use of 'surplus cash balances' to both finance capital expenditure and other budget decisions to support the revenue budget reduces cash investment balances held (see below). Unless resources are supplemented with new sources (asset sales, capital grants, etc) then new borrowing will be required to fulfil the objectives as set in the Council's Business Plan. Detailed below are estimates of the year end balances for each resource.

Year End Resources	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Fund balances / reserves	14,130	11,400	11,200	11,000
Expected investments	9,900	7,800	8,600	9,600

8 Affordability Prudential Indicators

- 8.1 The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators; also within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council's overall finances. The Council is asked to approve the following indicators.
- 8.2 This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs) against the net revenue stream.

Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/8 Estimate
General Fund	5.11%	10.39%	15.99%	19.17%
Net Revenue Stream	£18.915m	£17.525m	£17.865m	£18.116m

- 8.3 Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments as % of net revenue stream. This indicator identifies the authority's reliance on income from Commercial and Service Investments such as rents from the Council's long-standing portfolio of non-operational assets managed to secure rental income and income from fees and charges earned from providing facilities for conferences and meetings (economic estates) and one commercial investment property.

Ratio of Income from Commercial and Service Investments to net revenue stream	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
General Fund	6.33%	6.92%	6.78%	6.69%
Net Revenue Stream	£18.915m	£17.525m	£17.865m	£18.116m

9 Treasury Management Strategy

- 9.2 The capital expenditure plans set out in section 5 provide a summary of future level of spend. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet service activity and the Council's capital strategy. This will involve both the organisation of cash flow and where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.
- 9.3 The Council's treasury portfolio as at 31 March 2024 for borrowing and investments was £7.8m and £14.251m respectively. As of 31 January 2025, investments are £11.099m (see Appendix A attached) and borrowing £7.8m.
- 9.4 The Council's forward projections for borrowings are summarised below. The next table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR).

	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Debt at 1 April	7,800	14,260	27,255	44,605
Expected change in debt to fund capital programme (excluding Commercial and Investment Strategy schemes)	3,635	8,120	10,350	15,350
Borrowing to fund Commercial and Investment Strategy Schemes	2,825	4,875	7,000	0
Actual gross debt at 31 March	14,260	27,255	44,605	59,955
Capital financing requirement (CFR) at 31 March	19,480	31,821	48,225	62,352
Borrowing less CFR – 31 March	(5,220)	(4,566)	(3,620)	(2,397)

- 9.5 At 1 April 2024 the Council's Debt position comprised £7.8m of external borrowing. These loans were taken out at prevailing market rates between 1994 and 2004. The term of these loans is between 25 and 50 years. Following the transfer of the Council's Housing Stock in 2007, which generated a significant capital receipt for the Council, the Council has retained investment balances which exceed the amounts borrowed. However, changes in prevailing interest rates since the loans were taken out mean that a high premium would be payable by the Council if it were to seek to repay the PWLB loans (£4.5m) early. The premiums to be applied are considered to be prohibitively high for early redemption to be regarded as a reasonable treasury management decision. Repaying the Barclays market rate loan of £3.3m may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment. The Council continues to keep this situation under review with the support of its appointed treasury management advisors. However, for the purposes of this strategy, it has been assumed that external borrowing of £7.8m brought forward, as at 1 April 2024, will continue to be carried forward.
- 9.6 Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt, does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2025/26 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that long term borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes (in the sense of anticipating future upward movements in interest rates), other than where the borrowing fits in with the Council's approved Investment Strategy.
- 9.7 The Council notes that the Prudential Code published by CIPFA prohibits local authorities from borrowing in advance of need. This prohibition has been recently re-affirmed by MHCLG in its Statutory Guidance on Local Authority Investments which states that this prohibition extends to undertaking borrowing to fund the purchase of financial and non-financial investments, including investment properties. This is on the basis that in such circumstances local authorities would be borrowing 'purely in order to profit from investment of the extra sums borrowed'. Section 4 of the Council's Capital Strategy explains how the Council has had regard for this guidance and notes the Council's approach to determining whether the motivation behind any proposed investment is purely to profit from investment of any sums borrowed.

- 9.8 Interest repayments associated with the external debt (including finance leases) above are shown below.

YEARS	INTEREST DUE £000
2024/25	515,000
2025/26	1,170,000
2026/27	1,910,000
2027/28	2,250,000

- 9.9 The operational boundary is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases this would be a similar figure to the CFR but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt.

Operational Boundary	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Debt	11,435	24,555	34,905	50,255
Other long term liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities / Non-Financial Investments	2,825	7,700	14,700	14,700
Total	15,260	33,255	50,605	65,955

- 9.10 The authorised limit is a key prudential indicator, which represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a legal limit beyond which external debt is prohibited and this limit needs to be set or revised by full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term but is not sustainable in the longer term.
- 9.11 This is a statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all council's plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised. The Council is asked to approve the following authorised limit.

Authorised Limit	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Debt	16,435	29,555	39,905	55,255
Other long term liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities / Non-Financial Investments	2,825	7,700	14,700	14,700
Total	20,260	38,255	55,605	70,955

10 Prospects for Interest Rates

- 10.1 The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited (formerly Link Group) as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table gives MUFG Corporate Markets central view.

Link Group Interest Rate View	11.11.24												
	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
BANK RATE	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10
25 yr PWLB	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50
50 yr PWLB	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30

- 10.2 At its meeting ending on 5 February 2025, the MPC voted by a majority of 7–2 to reduce Bank Rate to 4.50%.
- 10.3 MUFG's central view is that monetary policy is sufficiently tight at present to cater for some further moderate loosening, the extent of which, however, will continue to be data dependent. They forecast the next reduction in Bank Rate to be made in May and for a pattern to evolve whereby rate cuts are made quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (May, August and November).
- 10.4 Any movement on Bank Rate will, nonetheless, be very much dependent on inflation data in the second half of 2025.
- 10.5 Gilt Yields and PWLB Rates – Long-term gilt yields have risen to reflect both UK and US economic, monetary and fiscal policy expectations, and increases in bond supply. Volatility is likely to remain elevated as the market digests incoming data.
- 10.6 The overall longer-run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to fall back over the timeline of the forecasts, but the risks to the forecasts are to the upside.
- 10.7 MUFG's target borrowing rates are set two years forward (as they expect rates to fall back).
- 10.8 Borrowing advice: MUFG's long-term (beyond 10 years) forecast for Bank Rate has been increased to 3.25% (from 3%). As all PWLB certainty rates are currently significantly above this level, the borrowing strategy will need to be reviewed in that context. Overall, better value can be obtained at the shorter end of the curve and short-dated fixed LA to LA monies should also be considered. Temporary borrowing rates will, generally, fall in line with Bank Rate cuts.
- 10.9 The current forecast shown in paragraph 10.1, includes a forecast for Bank Rate to fall. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reflects expected investment rate income in future years. This is expected to reduce from that observed in 2024/25 as existing cash balances are used to fund capital expenditure and the base rate begins to reduce.
- 10.10 As there are so many variables at this time, caution must be exercised in respect of all interest rate forecasts.

11 Borrowing Strategy

- 11.1 As noted above in paragraph 9.7 the Council recognises that statutory guidance indicates that whilst the Council has the necessary powers to borrow in advance of need the government and CIPFA state it should refrain from doing so where such borrowing takes place purely in order to profit from investment of the extra sums borrowed. None of the Council's current borrowing was undertaken in advance of need.
- 11.2 The Council has previously maintained an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow have

been used as an alternative funding measure. This strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels, albeit only once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by restrictive near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains relatively elevated in 2025 even if some rate cuts arise.

- 11.3 The current MTFS assumes that external borrowing will be required over the four-year period to 31 March 2028. Assumptions about the level of external interest payable are reflected as part of the prudential indicators included in this document. Responsibility for deciding when to borrow externally, together with details of the amount to borrow and the term and type of any loan, rests with the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Finance Officer's decision will be informed by advice from the Council's treasury management advisors and information regarding the progress of schemes set out in the capital programme. Any borrowing decisions will be reported to Cabinet through either the mid-year or annual treasury management reports.
- 11.4 When the Council borrows externally it will ordinarily do so using funds borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board, though this does not preclude the Council considering other sources of lending. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to borrow short-term loans instead. Fixed LA to LA monies should also be considered.
- 11.5 Maturity structure of borrowing. These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large, fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing and are required for upper and lower limits.

Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2025/26	Lower %	Upper %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months to 2 years	0	100
2 years to 5 years	0	100
5 years to 10 years	0	100
10 years and above	0	100

Maturity structure of variable interest rate borrowing 2025/26	Lower %	Upper %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months to 2 years	0	100
2 years to 5 years	0	100
5 years to 10 years	0	100
10 years and above	0	100

12 Debt Rescheduling / Repayment

- 12.1 Rescheduling of current borrowing in our debt portfolio may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment, or rebalancing of the portfolio to provide more certainty is considered appropriate.
- 12.2 If rescheduling was done, it will be reported to the Cabinet at the earliest meeting following its action.

13 Annual Investment Strategy - management of risk

- 13.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).
- 13.2 The Council's investment policy has regard to the following: -
- MHCLG's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance");
 - CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 ("the Code"); and
 - CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021.
- 13.3 The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite
- 13.4 The above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA, place a high priority on the management of risk. The Council has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means.
- 13.5 Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties which also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the Short Term and Long Term ratings.
- 13.6 Ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- 13.7 Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year are listed below under the 'specified' and 'non-specified' investments categories. Counterparty limits will be as set through the Council's treasury management practices – schedules.
- 13.8 **Specified Investments** - These investments are sterling investments (meeting the minimum 'high' quality criteria where applicable) of not more than one year maturity, or those which could be for a longer period but where the Council has the right to repay within 12 months if it wishes. These are considered low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year are as follows:
- term deposits with local authorities;
 - term deposits with high credit criteria deposit takers (banks and building societies);
 - callable deposits with local authorities;
 - callable deposits with high credit criteria deposit takers (banks and building societies);
 - money market funds (CNAV) / (LVNAV) / (VNAV);
 - Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility (DMADF); and
 - UK Government gilts, custodial arrangement required prior to purchase.

- 13.9 **Non-Specified Investments** - These are any other type of investment (i.e. not defined as specified above). Investment instruments identified in both “specified” and “non-specified” categories are differentiated by maturity date and classed as non-specified when the investment period and right to be repaid exceeds one year. Non-specified investments are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use. Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year are as follows:
- term deposits with high credit criteria deposit takers (banks and building societies);
 - term deposits with local authorities;
 - callable deposits with local authorities;
 - callable deposits with high credit criteria deposit takers (banks and building societies);
 - Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility (DMADF);
 - UK Government gilts, custodial arrangement required prior to purchase; and
 - Property funds.
- 13.10 As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2023/24 under IFRS 9, this Authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. (In November 2018, the MHCLG, concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years ending 31.3.23. The override was a temporary measure due to end 31 March 2023, later extended by 2 years following consultation with the sector. The override is currently due to end March 2025.
- 13.11 At present, fluctuations in the value of the external property funds do not impact on the council's revenue account, because they are held in an unusable reserve via the statutory override arrangements set out in IFRS9.
- 13.12 The government recognises that there are differing views within the sector, regulators and other stakeholders as to whether the override should continue or be allowed to elapse. Many councils are in favour of the override being made permanent, while others have highlighted the importance of complying with IFRS 9 to improve transparency and encourage robust risk management of investments. It is the government's view that it is important that councils comply with good accounting practice and manage the risks of their investments effectively, and therefore the government is minded to not extend the override beyond March 2025. Councils would then need to comply with the requirements of IFRS 9 from financial year 2025-26. MHCLG issued a consultation as part of the local government finance settlement 2025/26 which ended on 15 January 2025. Any financial impact of discontinuing the statutory override would need to be budgeted for within the 2025/26 financial year when known.
- 13.13 Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. Short term cash flow requirements (up to 12 months) include payments such as, precepts, business rate retention, housing benefits, salaries, suppliers, interest payments on debt etc.
- 13.14 The current forecast shown in paragraph 10.1, includes a forecast for Bank Rate to fall to a low of 3.5%. As there are so many variables at this time, caution must be exercised in respect of all interest rate forecasts.
- 13.15 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows:

Average earnings in each year	Now
2024/25 (residual)	4.60%
2025/26	4.10%
2026/27	3.70%

- 13.16 Estimated investment income is £678,000 2024/25 and £530,000 in 2025/26. These estimates assume that none of the existing cash balances held by the Authority will be utilised to fund schemes approved by the Investment Board.
- 13.17 £4m of the Council's investments are held in externally managed pooled property funds where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income and long-term price stability.
- 13.18 As the Council's externally managed funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Council's medium to long-term investment objectives are regularly reviewed. Although the returns from these investments can be higher than short term investments there is an increased risk that capital values will rise and fall. Estimated income from property funds in 2024/25 and 2025/26 is £130,000 in both years.
- 13.19 **Investment treasury indicator and limit** - total principal funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year end.

	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Maximum principal sums invested > 365 days	5,000	5,000	5,000

- 13.20 For its cash flow generated balances, the Council will seek to utilise its call accounts and short dated deposits (overnight to 180 days) in order to benefit from the compounding interest.
- 13.21 At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Report.

14 Creditworthiness Policy

- 14.1 The Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by MUFG Corporate Markets. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:
- "watches" and "outlooks" from credit rating agencies;
 - Credit Default Swaps spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
 - sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.
- 14.2 This modelling approach combines credit ratings, Watches and Outlooks in a weighted scoring system, which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness

of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

- yellow 5 years;
- dark pink 5 years for ultra-short dated bond funds with a credit score of 1.25;
- light pink 5 years for ultra-short dated bonds funds with a credit score of 1.5;
- purple 2 years;
- orange 1 year;
- red 6 months;
- green 100 days
- no colour not to be used.

- 14.3 The MUFG creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information than just primary ratings and by using a risk weighted scoring system does not give undue preponderance to just one agency's ratings.
- 14.4 Typically, the minimum credit ratings criteria the Council will use will be short term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of F1 and a long-term rating of A-. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use
- 14.5 The Council's own bank currently meets the creditworthiness policy. However, should they fall below MUFG Corporate Markets Group creditworthiness policy the Council will retain the bank on its counterparty list for transactional purposes, though would restrict cash balances to a minimum.
- 14.6 All credit ratings are monitored weekly. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the MUFG Corporate Markets Group creditworthiness service.
- If a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
 - In addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in credit default swaps against the iTraxx European Senior Financials benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.
- 14.7 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of MUFG Corporate Markets Group Creditworthiness policy. In addition, this Council will also use market data and market information, information on any external support for banks to justify its decision making process.
- 14.8 To further mitigate risk the Council has decided that where counterparties form part of a larger group, group limits should be used in addition to single institutional limits. Group limits will be as set through the Council's Treasury Management Practices – schedules.
- 14.9 In relation to financial institutions, the Council currently only invests in UK banks and building societies, which provides sufficient high credit quality counterparties to meet investment objectives. It should be noted that in some cases these banks are subsidiaries of foreign banks, but these are of the highest credit quality.

15 External Service Providers

- 15.1 The Council uses MUFG Corporate Markets Treasury Limited (formerly Link Group) as its external treasury management advisors. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the authority at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisors.
- 15.2 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.
- 15.3 The scope of investments within the Council's operations now includes both conventional treasury investments, (the placing of residual cash from the Council's functions), and more commercial type investments, such as investment properties. The Council will engage specialist advisers for commercial-type investments.

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26-2027/28

1. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Council has established statutory and regulatory responsibilities for the management of its financial affairs. These responsibilities encompass revenue and capital expenditure. The specific responsibilities of full Council, the Cabinet, the Investment Board, Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Council's appointed Section 151 Officer are defined within the Council's constitution.
- 1.2 The Council regularly updates its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The MTFS provides a framework for setting the Council's annual revenue budget and updating the Council's three-year capital programme. The MTFS sets out the primary assumptions underpinning the assessment of the resources available to the Council and anticipated service budgets over the coming five financial years.
- 1.3 Whilst local authorities are required to set a balanced revenue budget, legislation permits local authorities to obtain credit and therefore fund their capital programmes from borrowing. Individual authorities are required to have regard for the Prudential Code published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The Prudential Code requires authorities to ensure:
- all capital expenditure and investment plans are affordable;
 - all external borrowing and long-term liabilities are within prudent and sustainable levels;
 - treasury management and other investment decisions are taken in accordance with professional good practice; and
 - authorities can demonstrate themselves to be accountable by providing a clear and transparent framework.
- 1.4 Historically, this Council has discharged its responsibilities under the Prudential Code by ensuring that the Treasury Management Strategy, which is approved annually by full Council, is prepared with reference to the latest capital programme. The Capital Programme is itself developed with explicit consideration of the extent to which proposed capital investment is affordable, prudent and sustainable given the resources available to the Council as set out in the MTFS.
- 1.5 Following an update to the Prudential Code in December 2021, local authorities are now required to have a Capital Strategy. The introduction of this requirement acknowledges that individual authorities will each have their

own approach to assessing priorities for capital investment, the amount the Authority can afford to borrow and the Authority's appetite to risk.

- 1.6 This strategy sets out in a single document the long term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made and establishes that the Council has arrangements in place to ensure it gives due consideration to risk, reward, and impact on the achievement of priority outcomes. The Strategy is updated annually and subject to approval by Full Council alongside the annual budget.

2. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

- 2.1 Capital expenditure incorporates a range of different types of financial transaction which the Council might enter into. What these transactions have in common is that they relate to investments decisions which impact on the Council and its stakeholders over a period which extends beyond the financial year in which the transaction is entered into. The Council's appointed S151 Officer ultimately has responsibility for determining whether expenditure is capital in nature in accordance with relevant regulation and statute.

Role and Purpose of the Asset Management Plan

- 2.2 The Council has developed an Asset Management Plan in accordance with acknowledged best practice. This document provides a strategic framework for managing the Council's current portfolio of land and buildings ensuring that officers and elected members can have confidence, in the long-term, that the Council has the land and property needed to fulfil the pledges set out in the Council's Business Plan.
- 2.3 The Asset Management Plan incorporates oversight of operational and non-operational property owned by the Council. Operational assets are those assets held by the Council to enable the Council, or its partners, to deliver those services which are either statutory in nature or provided on a discretionary basis to the extent that providing those services is consistent with the strategic objectives of the Council. Non-operational assets are those assets which are not directly used for the purposes of service delivery but are held to either provide the Council with a return on investment, either through rental income, appreciation in the value of the asset or the potential contribution that holding the asset makes to the Council's wider corporate objectives, e.g. taking forward opportunities to regenerate and develop the local economy.
- 2.4 Responsibility for the Asset Management Plan rests with the Council's Assets and Projects team which reports to the Council's Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer. The Assets and Projects team regularly appraise

the condition of the Council's property portfolio to determine the revenue and capital resources required to ensure the portfolio continues to meet the needs of Service Managers. When the needs of services managers change the Assets and Projects team will assist in determining the impact on the property portfolio, including the resources required to meet those needs. The Assets and Projects team recognise that the Council's property needs are unlikely to remain static and the past cost of maintaining a Council asset is not necessarily a reliable indicator of future costs. Forward projections regarding the resources to be allocated to asset management recognise the interaction between revenue and capital expenditure in determining the Council's cost base.

- 2.5 The capital resources required to meet investment needs identified as part of the Asset Management Plan are routinely assessed and anticipated capital expenditure is profiled over the financial years when it is expected to be incurred. On at least an annual basis capital schemes identified as part of the Asset Management Plan are presented to a meeting of the Council's Corporate Asset Team to determine when and if they should be incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme.

Investment in Vehicles, Plant, Equipment and IT

- 2.6 The Council has nominated service managers who are responsible for the vehicles, plant and information technology assets in use within the Council. These assets all have an expected useful economic life informed by an assessment by the nominated manager. The need to allocate capital resources to fund the replacement of these assets at the end of their useful life is assessed annually by the Council's Corporate Asset Team. There is also an annual appraisal of business cases relating to proposals to invest in additional equipment not reflected in the programme of rolling replacements.

Role and Function of the Corporate Asset Team

- 2.7 The Corporate Asset Team is an officer-led group which meets bi-monthly under the Chairmanship of the relevant Corporate Director. On behalf of the Council's Corporate Management Team, the Corporate Asset Team assumes responsibility for providing a strategic oversight in respect of all matters pertaining to asset management.
- 2.8 All proposed changes to the Council's three-year capital programme are subject to review by the Corporate Asset Team prior to being considered by Corporate Management Team, the Cabinet and Full Council. Any scheme which is not already incorporated into the Council's Asset Management Plan will only be considered for inclusion in the Capital Programme if the Officer proposing the scheme can demonstrate, with appropriate evidence, one or more of the following:

- there is a statutory obligation for the Council to incur the capital expenditure proposed;
- the proposed capital expenditure relates to works deemed necessary on the grounds of health and safety;
- capital expenditure is proposed to protect a Council asset and reduce the risk of excessive revenue expenditure being incurred in upcoming financial years;
- the proposed capital expenditure will generate income, either of a revenue or capital nature, in excess of the capital expenditure which is expected to be incurred including any financing costs but does not meet the definition of asset acquired 'primarily for yield' as defined in guidance issued by HM Treasury; and/or
- the proposed capital expenditure will (after including financing costs) reduce revenue expenditure incurred by one or more of services in future financial years.

2.9 The capital financing regulations permit the Council to treat as capital expenditure certain types of transaction which do not result in the acquisition of a physical asset by the Council. These transactions can be high-volume, small value transactions such as the awarding of Disabled Facilities Grants which are currently funded from monies received as part of Cambridgeshire County Council's Better Care Fund allocation. Such transactions do not require specific approval providing the nature and purpose of the expenditure has been approved as part of the Capital Programme.

2.10 Any proposals to incur capital expenditure which do not lead to the recognition of a physical asset where the expenditure proposed exceeds £10,000 but does not fall within the scope of the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy will be considered at a meeting of CMT. If approved by Cabinet, approval will be sought at a meeting of Cabinet before being considered at full Council if necessary. Possible examples include, but are not restricted to:

- granting loans to third parties (for reasons not linked to the objectives of the Commercial and Investment Strategy);
- providing grant-funding to a third party which enables that third party to undertake expenditure which would have been capital in nature had it been undertaken by the Council.

Role and Function of the Investment Board

2.11 During the 2019-20 financial year the Council initiated the development of a Commercial and Investment Strategy for the Council. The current version of the Strategy was approved by full Council on 9 January 2020.

- 2.12 The Commercial and Investment Strategy was developed in recognition of the investment opportunities available to the Council acknowledging that utilising the Council's powers to invest could bring substantial benefits not only to the Council but also to the wider District and its residents. The Capital Strategy has been updated to take account of the changes in the Council's arrangements for determining its capital priorities which arise from the implementation of the Commercial and Investment Strategy. This is explained in more detail in section four of this document.
- 2.13 Following the approval of the Commercial and Investment Strategy Cabinet approved the establishment of a sub-committee known as the Investment Board. The Investment Board has initially been allocated a maximum budget of £25M to take forward capital schemes which facilitate the achievement of the objectives set out in the Strategy. To date £6.190M of this allocation has been utilised to take forward specific schemes and the balance has been profiled over the upcoming three financial years.
- 2.14 The Investment Board undertakes its own appraisals of proposed capital schemes. The appraisal of such schemes will be separate from and in addition to the proposals for new capital schemes considered at meetings of Corporate Asset Team which follow the process outlined in paragraph 2.10 of this strategy. The Investment Board has delegated powers to approve schemes providing the maximum budget is not exceeded.
- 2.15 Capital schemes which fall within the remit of the Investment Board include the acquisition of share capital or the granting of loan funding to companies and/or partnerships in which the Council has an interest. The decision about whether to establish a company or enter into a partnership rests with Cabinet. The Investment Board is responsible for the approval of the business plans of any entities created as a result of a decision taken by Cabinet. Approval of the relevant business plan will precede the allocation of capital funds.
- 2.16 On 9 June 2020 Cabinet approved a business case for the establishment of a Local Authority Trading Company. Following that meeting the Council formally registered Fenland Future with Companies House (Company No. 12659496). Directors have been appointed to the Board of Fenland Future and the Board and during the 2024/25 financial year work on appraising potential investments and developing relevant business cases has continued.
- 2.17 The Council recognises that since the Commercial and Investment Strategy was approved in January 2020 guidance has been introduced restricting local authorities' access to Public Works Loan Board financing where that funding is to be used to acquire investment assets primarily for yield. Additionally, the Council recognises that where internal borrowing is utilised

to acquire investment assets this has the potential to increase the Council's overall level of debt by bringing forward the point in time when the Council needs to borrow externally. Notwithstanding these considerations, the Council believes there is still a substantial opportunity for the Council to deliver against its objectives linked to regeneration and improving the supply of housing in the District by investing responsibly under the aegis of the Commercial and Investment Strategy.

3. DEBT AND BORROWING AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Day-to-day responsibility for the Treasury Management function rests with the Chief Finance Officer. This section of the strategy reproduces key information taken from the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. The profile of borrowing linked to the Commercial and Investment Strategy shown below is indicative. The operational boundary and authorised limits shown in Tables 3 and 4 have been determined with reference to the budget allocated to the Investment Board referred to in paragraph 2.15 above. This recognises that the Investment Board could invest the remaining allocation in one financial year if this were deemed to be appropriate.

Key Considerations relating to Treasury Management

- 3.2 The tables below set out the Council's Investment and Debt positions with forward projections.

Table 1: Year End Investment Balances projected over the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2028

Year End Investments	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Fund balances / reserves	14,130	11,400	11,200	11,000
Expected investments	9,900	7,800	8,600	9,600

Table 2: Year End Debt and Net Investment projected over the period 1 April 2024– 31 March 2028

	2024/25 Revised Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Debt at 1 April	7,800	14,260	27,255	44,605
Expected change in debt to fund capital programme (excluding Commercial and Investment Strategy schemes)	3,635	8,120	10,350	15,350
Borrowing to fund Commercial and Investment Strategy Schemes	2,825	4,875	7,000	0
Actual gross debt at 31 March	14,260	27,255	44,605	59,955
Capital financing requirement (CFR) at 31 March	19,480	31,821	48,225	62,352
Borrowing less CFR – 31 March	(5,220)	(4,566)	(3,620)	(2,397)

3.3 At 1 April 2024 the Council's Debt position comprised other long-term liabilities relating external borrowing of £7.8M. These loans were taken out at prevailing market rates between 1994 and 2004. The term of these loans is between 25 and 50 years. Following the transfer of the Council's Housing Stock in 2007, which generated a significant capital receipt for the Council, the Council has retained investment balances which exceed the amounts borrowed. However, changes in prevailing interest rates since the loans were taken out mean that a high premium would be payable by the Council if it were to seek to repay any of the loans early. The premiums to be applied are considered to be prohibitively high for early redemption to be regarded as a reasonable treasury management decision. The Council continues to keep this situation under review with the support of its appointed treasury management advisors. However, for the purposes of this strategy, it has been assumed that external borrowing of £7.8M brought forward, as at 1 April 2024, will continue to be carried forward due to the current historically low interest rates.

3.4 Regulation requires the Council to determine, as part of the Treasury Management Strategy, the maximum external debt position for the upcoming three financial years. This is known as the Council's authorised limit. Additionally, the Council is required to set an operational boundary. The purpose of the operational boundary is to set a threshold for external

borrowing which the Council would not expect to exceed in the ordinary management of its affairs. Sustained breaches of the operational boundary would be indicative that the Council could be at risk of exceeding its authorised limit.

- 3.5 The current authorised limits and operational boundaries for the period covered by this strategy are set out in the table below.

Table 3: Operational Boundary over the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2028

Operational Boundary	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Debt	11,435	24,555	34,905	50,255
Other long term liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities/ Non-Financial Investments	2,825	7,700	14,700	14,700
Total	15,260	33,255	50,605	65,955

Table 4: Authorised Limit over the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2028

Authorised Limit	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Debt	16,435	29,555	39,905	55,255
Other long term liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities / Non- Financial Investments	2,825	7,700	14,700	14,700
Total	20,260	38,255	55,605	70,955

- 3.6 Table 2 above indicates that the Council's Actual Debt position is expected to increase over the period covered by this strategy. This reflects an anticipated decision to undertake external borrowing to fund the expenditure commitment set out in the capital programme. In accordance with the Council's constitution, any decision about when, how much and from where to borrow will be made by the appointed S151 Officer.
- 3.7 Regulations prevent the Council from borrowing in advance of needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. There is no requirement for the Council to draw on investment balances to fund its capital commitments prior to undertaking external borrowing but guidance being developed by CIPFA encourages authorities to considering exiting long-term investments to reduce the need to take on additional debt. To manage interest rate risk effectively, the Council will continue to consider medium and long-term forecasts of interest rates provided by its Treasury Management advisors to project likely returns from the investment of

surplus funds and the financing costs associated with external borrowing. This approach recognises that postponing long-term borrowing to future years could be more expensive over the life of the loan if interest rates were to increase.

- 3.8 The Council is required by statute to make arrangements to ensure that there is provision to repay as part of the Council's revenue budget any borrowing undertaken to finance the capital programme. This is known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and the Council is required to approve its MRP policy on an annual basis:

Table 5: Projected Minimum Revenue Provision over the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2028

	Projected Minimum Revenue Provision (£000)
2024/25	451
2025/26	652
2026/27	946
2027/28	1,223

- 3.9 Regulation requires the Council to ensure that its MRP policy results in prudent levels of MRP. The Council's MRP policies are explained in full as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement which is approved by Full Council annually. Specific provisions are in place to explain the approach taken to determine MRP for schemes taken forward as part of the Commercial and Investment Strategy.
- 3.10 At the present time no assumptions have been made regarding the MRP which would be due on schemes taken forward as part of the implementation of the Commercial and Investment Strategy. These assumptions will be updated as schemes are taken forward.
- 3.11 In recognition of the inherent volatility of commercial investment the Council has established an Investment Strategy reserve. One of the purposes of that reserve is that it should hold surpluses in respect of those years where actual income generated from commercial investments exceeds budget estimates. This can help reduce the impact on the General Fund of any unanticipated shortfall which might arise in future years.

4. FRS16 - Leases

- 4.1 The CIPFA LAASAC Local Authority Accounting Code Board (LASAAC is the Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee) had deferred the implementation of IFRS16 until 1 April 2024, the 2024/25 financial year. IFRS 16 defines a lease as a contract or part of a contract, which conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for a consideration. Under the standard the distinction between finance leases and operating leases under the previous leasing standard is removed and all leases are treated in the way the finance leases currently are. A 'right of use' asset is shown on the balance sheet with a corresponding liability of the discounted value of the future lease payments. There are exceptions for short, dated leases (under a year, or with less than a year remaining at

transition) and low value leases (low value to be determined by the council using its approach to determining de minimus items). This means that all leases that do not meet the exceptions will be treated as capital expenditure from 2024/25 and form part of the Capital Financing Requirement. Although legally the Council doesn't own the asset during the lease duration, International Accounting Standards require that the Council capitalise the asset and liability on its balance sheet, much like a loan. Whilst this increases the CFR, the nature of the finance lease agreement doesn't require the Council to separately borrow to fund the asset.

5. Environmental, Social and Governance Risk Management

- 5.1 This Council is supportive of the Principles for Responsible Investment (www.unpri.org) and will seek to bring ESG (environmental, social and governance) factors into the decision-making process for investments. Within this, the Council is also appreciative of the Statement on ESG in Credit Risk and Ratings which commits signatories to incorporating ESG into credit ratings and analysis in a systemic and transparent way. The Council uses ratings from Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's to support its assessment of suitable counterparties. Each of these rating agencies is a signatory to the ESG in credit risk and ratings statement, which is as follows:

"We, the undersigned, recognise that environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors can affect borrowers' cash flows and the likelihood that they will default on their debt obligations. ESG factors are therefore important elements in assessing the creditworthiness of borrowers. For corporates, concerns such as stranded assets linked to climate change, labour relations challenges or lack of transparency around accounting practices can cause unexpected losses, expenditure, inefficiencies, litigation, regulatory pressure and reputational impacts.

At a sovereign level, risks related to, inter alia, natural resource management, public health standards and corruption can all affect tax revenues, trade balance and foreign investment. The same is true for local governments and special purpose vehicles issuing project bonds. Such events can result in bond price volatility and increase the risk of defaults.

In order to more fully address major market and idiosyncratic risk in debt capital markets, underwriters, credit rating agencies and investors should consider the potential financial materiality of ESG factors in a strategic and systematic way. Transparency on which ESG factors are considered, how these are integrated, and the extent to which they are deemed material in credit assessments will enable better alignment of key stakeholders.

In doing this the stakeholders should recognise that credit ratings reflect exclusively an assessment of an issuer's creditworthiness. Credit rating agencies must be allowed to maintain full independence in determining which criteria may be material to their ratings. While issuer ESG analysis may be considered an important part of a credit rating, the two assessments should not be confused or seen as interchangeable.

With this in mind, we share a common vision to enhance systematic and transparent consideration of ESG factors in the assessment of creditworthiness.”

- 5.2 For short term investments with counterparties, this Council utilises the ratings provided by Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's to assess creditworthiness, which do include analysis of ESG factors when assigning ratings.

6. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

- 6.1 The Council has a long-standing portfolio of non-operational assets which it manages to secure a rental income and income from fees and charges earned from providing facilities for conferences and meetings. The main non-operational assets held by the Council are:

- Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech – Office Units, Conference and Meeting Space
- South Fens Business Centre, Chatteris - Office Units, Conference and Meeting Space
- South Fens Enterprise Park, Chatteris – Light Industrial Units for Small Business Use

- 6.2 Rents generated from the lease to third parties of areas of land, buildings and/or infrastructure held by the Council principally for the purposes of service delivery, i.e. premises at Fenland Hall, the Base and Wisbech Port have been assessed by officers to fall outside the scope of commercial activity in the context of this section of the Council Strategy. This reflects the fact that the motive for holding these assets is not principally commercial in nature.

- 6.3 Responsibility for assessing the need for capital investment in the current portfolio of non-operational assets, reflecting those non-operational assets held as at 31 March 2024 currently rests with the Corporate Asset Team in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraph 2.10 above.

- 6.4 During the 2020-21 financial year the Council approved a Commercial and Investment Strategy. The Council has established an Investment Board to take forward capital schemes which deliver against objectives set out in part two (commercial property investment) and part three of the Strategy (commercial investment and regeneration).

- 6.5 The Commercial and Investment Strategy sets out the assessment criteria to be used for investments undertaken in accordance with part two of the strategy. This requires the Council to determine the net yield associated with each proposed acquisition, after taking account of financing costs, including MRP, and to assess the particular circumstances relating to each acquisition to understand the risks the Council is subject to and possible sources of mitigation. The Council is cognisant of the recent changes to the regulations which govern the basis on which authorities can take out loans from the

Public Works Loan Board and specifically preclude authorities who plan to acquire investment assets primarily for yield from accessing PWLB loans. Reference to the current regulations has been incorporated into the Investment Board's decision-making processes.

- 6.6 Following approval of a proposal in March 2021 to date, the Council has acquired one commercial investment property which is let to a commercial tenant on a 25-year repairing and insuring lease.
- 6.7 The Investment Board is a sub-committee of the Cabinet. The Council's constitution requires that the committee's membership includes the Leader (who Chairs the Investment Board), the Portfolio Holder for Finance, as well as one other member of Cabinet appointed by the Leader or two members of Cabinet if the Leader also has the Finance Portfolio. The constitution requires the Chair of the Investment Board to ensure the Investment Board meets a minimum of three times each year. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will attend the Investment Board's meetings in an observational capacity.
- 6.8 The Investment Board is a decision-making body and its functions include the determination of investment appraisals and business cases submitted for its consideration. A report on the discharge of these functions is provided to the Cabinet twice a year.
- 6.9 The Investment Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance and financial delivery of those appraisals and business cases it agrees to fund. The Section 151 Officer ensures that reports on the activities of the Investment Board prepared for consideration by Cabinet include details about the impact of the Board's activities on the overall financial position of the Council.
- 6.10 Statutory guidance published by DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing Communities requires the Council to:
- assess and disclose publicly the extent to which it is dependent on profit-generating investments to deliver a balanced revenue budget over the life of the medium-term financial strategy; and
 - to set limits for gross debt and commercial income as a proportion of the Council's budgeted net service expenditure over the life of the medium-term financial strategy.

Commercial Income as a proportion of net service expenditure

- 6.11 The current limit for budgeted commercial income as a proportion of net service expenditure has been set at 20% (equivalent to commercial income of £3.299M per year based on 2025/26 budgeted net service expenditure).
- 6.12 The Investment Board was established in January 2020. To date it has approved the acquisition of one tenanted industrial property and thirty six houses under the Local Authority Housing Fund for Afghan and Ukraine

families and general temporary accommodation for the homeless. The indicator recommended by CIPFA is reported in the table below:

Table 6: Commercial Income as a proportion of Net Service Expenditure

Budgeted Income 2025/26 non-operational assets (Economic Estates)	£1.293M
Net Service Expenditure	£16.497M
Commercial Income as a % of Net Service Expenditure	7.83%
Approved Limit	20%

Gross Debt as a proportion of net service expenditure

- 6.13 The current limit for gross debt as a proportion of net service expenditure has been set at 375% (equivalent to gross debt of £61.86M per year based on 2025/26 budgeted net service expenditure).
- 6.14 As explained in paragraph 3.3 above whilst the Council has not undertaken external borrowing in recent years it does have £7.8M of external debt which was taken out at prevailing market rates between 1994 and 2004. This impacts on the calculation of gross debt as a proportion of net service expenditure as follows:

Table 7: Gross Debt as a proportion of Net Service Expenditure

Gross Debt expected as at 31 March 2025	£7.8M
Net Service Expenditure (2025/26)	£16.497M
Gross Debt as a proportion of Net Service Expenditure	42.5%
Approved Limit	375%

Commercial Property Investment – Loan to Value Assessment

- 6.15 An important consideration when appraising the impact of the Council's commercial and investment strategy on the Council is to consider the extent to which borrowing undertaken by the Council to fund investment in property is matched by the underlying value of the assets purchased.
- 6.16 When assets are first purchased it is common for the directly attributable costs associated with acquiring the asset, including applicable stamp duty, to exceed the realisable value of the asset. Consequently, if a property purchase is funded from borrowing this may mean in the early years of the Council's ownership the fair value of property owned by the Council may be less than the borrowing undertaken by the Council to fund the acquisition. Over time, if property prices appreciate this will have a positive impact on the Council's loan to value ratio.
- 6.17 The Council will obtain valuations of all its commercial investment properties annually and disclose the Loan to Value ratio as part of each year's capital strategy.

- 6.18 The Council has one commercial investment property which had been funded from borrowing. A valuation of that asset obtained as part of work completed to produce the 2023/24 statutory accounts indicated that, as at 31 March 2024, its value had increased to £4.39m which is an increase of £0.944m against the consideration the Council had paid to the vendor in March 2021 exclusive of stamp duty and legal fees.

Borrowing in Advance of Need

- 6.19 Statutory guidance on Local Authority Investments and the Prudential Code published by CIPFA requires that authorities must not borrow in advance of their needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Government has clarified that this requirement extends to the use of external borrowing to fund the purchase of non-financial investments, including investment properties.
- 6.20 As noted in paragraph 2.15 above the Council's Investment Board has been allocated a budget of £25M to take forward the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy. The Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy provides for two types of investments to be taken forward: part two of the strategy sets out the process to be followed for commercial property investment and part three is concerned with investments for regeneration and place-shaping.
- 6.21 The Council will need to undertake external borrowing if it is to utilise the full budget of £25M which has been allocated by Full Council.
- 6.22 The statutory guidance recognises that the Council can disregard the provisions of the Prudential Code and the statutory guidance providing it explains its reasons for doing so and its policies for investing the extra amounts borrowed and the arrangements in place to manage the associated risks. However, the decision taken by government in November 2020 to preclude Councils from accessing loans from the Public Works Loans Board if they plan to acquire investment assets primarily from yield limits Councils' opportunities to take forward proposals which would previously have been possible.
- 6.23 The delivery of objectives linked to the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy represents a key element of the Council's Business Plan. Whilst the regulatory context in which Councils are permitted to invest has altered and is expected to alter again following implementation of the revised Prudential Code from 2024/25s, this Council nevertheless believes there are opportunities for prudent investment in the District. Such investments can contribute to enhancing the District's economic vitality and act as leverage which enhances the viability of investment in our District funded by the private sector.
- 6.24 The Commercial and Investment Strategy sets out in detail the appraisal and decision-making approach the Investment Board is required to follow before any investment in commercial property is undertaken. This ensures that appropriate governance arrangements are in place and the Council has due regard to the risks associated with investments both individually and in

the context of the overall level of risk presented by the Council's current portfolio.

- 6.25 Active monitoring of the portfolio will take place throughout the year with reference to the indicators included in this strategy together with appropriate commentary relevant to the particular investments held by this Council.

7. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- 7.1 The Council has professionally qualified staff across a range of disciplines including finance, legal and property that follow continuous professional development (CPD) and attend courses on an ongoing basis to keep abreast of new developments and skills.
- 7.2 Appropriate external advice will be engaged from suitably qualified professionals as and when required. This will apply particularly in those circumstances when the Council needs to undertake independent due diligence prior to making a decision regarding a proposed investment. Additionally, the Council will continue to enlist the year-round support of external Treasury Management advisors. This support is currently provided by MUGF Corporate Markets.
- 7.3 Internal and external training is offered to members to ensure they have up to date knowledge and expertise to understand and challenge capital proposals brought forward for approval and interpret the treasury management policies developed by officers in conjunction with relevant professional advisors.

PARISH PRECEPTS 2025/26

TAX BASE (Equated Band D Properties)	PRECEPT 2024/25 £	COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY £	PARISH	TAX BASE (Equated Band D Properties)	PRECEPT 2025/26 £	COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY £	INCREASE FROM 2024/25 %
363	13,419	36.97	BENWICK	363	14,000	38.57	4.3
3,451	173,500	50.28	CHATTERIS	3,517	189,500	53.88	7.2
297	18,500	62.29	CHRISTCHURCH	298	22,200	74.50	19.6
882	65,000	73.70	DODDINGTON	890	65,000	73.03	-0.9
1,288	78,420	60.89	ELM	1,291	80,772	62.57	2.8
405	22,500	55.56	GOREFIELD	406	23,000	56.65	2.0
1,189	59,925	50.40	LEVERINGTON	1,240	62,000	50.00	-0.8
926	84,759	91.53	MANEA	932	90,400	97.00	6.0
6,841	360,000	52.62	MARCH	6,945	375,000	54.00	2.6
251	13,000	51.79	NEWTON IN THE ISLE	251	26,000	103.59	100.0
461	20,010	43.41	PARSON DROVE	469	20,071	42.80	-1.4
416	18,000	43.27	TYDD ST GILES	429	25,600	59.67	37.9
6,047	174,000	28.77	WHITTLESEY	6,226	177,000	28.43	-1.2
883	67,168	76.07	WIMBLINGTON	903	67,168	74.38	-2.2
6,602	407,110	61.66	WISBECH	6,694	412,060	61.56	-0.2
1,269	89,965	70.89	WISBECH ST MARY	1,300	110,257	84.81	19.6
31,571	1,665,276	52.75	GRAND TOTAL	32,154	1,760,028	54.74	3.77

Reserve Name	Balance 01.04.24 £	Capital Funding £	Revenue Contributions to(+)/from(-) 2024/25 £	Revised Balance 31.03.25 £	Capital Funding £	Revenue Contributions to(+)/from(-) 2025/26 £	Estimated Balance 31.03.26 £
Travellers Sites	479,244		57,130	536,374		53,940	590,314
CCTV - Plant & Equipment	51,128		10,000	61,128		10,000	71,128
Station Road, Whittlesey - Maintenance	13,200		2,800	16,000		2,800	18,800
Management of Change	234,313		-206,690	27,623		-27,623	0
Business Rates Equalisation Reserve	800,516			800,516			800,516
Capital Contribution Reserve	116,117			116,117			116,117
Port - Buoy Maintenance	145,798			145,798			145,798
Repairs and Maintenance	658,706	-5,000		653,706	-200,000		453,706
Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) - Wisbech	49,235			49,235			49,235
Highways Street Lighting	85,140		-6,920	78,220		19,230	97,450
Solid Wall Remediation	100,000			100,000			100,000
Investment Strategy Reserve	1,340,168			1,340,168			1,340,168
Budget Equalisation Reserve	1,654,142			1,654,142			1,654,142
Planning Reserve	335,601		-256,060	79,541		-32,503	47,038
Elections Reserve	111,382		-30,750	80,632		-34,110	46,522
Port - Pilots Staff Development Training	11,875			11,875			11,875
Cambridgeshire Horizons	2,320,442		-173,110	2,147,332		-660,080	1,487,252
Homeless Prevention Reserve	444,997		-8,330	436,667		-9,960	426,707
Specific Government Grants (received in previous years)	1,318,484		-81,253	1,237,231		-356,290	880,942
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES	10,270,485	-5,000	-693,183	9,572,302	-200,000	-1,034,595	8,337,706
General Fund Balance	2,000,000			2,000,000			2,000,000
TOTAL RESERVES	12,270,485	-5,000	-693,183	11,572,302	-200,000	-1,034,595	10,337,706

Comments / Conditions of Use

Can only be used for specific future maintenance liabilities.

Available for future CCTV maintenance & replacement liabilities.

Required for future road maintenance.

Available for the effective management of any organisational changes required to meet the Council's future priorities.

Available to assist the Council in smoothing out volatility in the business rates retention system.

Available to fund specific spending commitments in future years.

Available for future buoy maintenance to service windfarms.

Available to provide funding for one-off schemes, not covered by the normal Repairs and Maintenance revenue budgets.

To manage the Heritage Lottery Funded scheme in Wisbech.

Available to fund future repairs and maintenance relating to street lighting.

Available to fund potential costs linked to solid wall installations in the District.

Established to provide future funding for Commercial and Investment Strategy projects.

Year-end surpluses are transferred to this reserve. If a deficit is forecast this reserve can be used to offset the expected shortfall.

Available to fund additional planning costs not reflected in the annual budget, including the development of the Local Plan.

Available to fund four-yearly District-wide elections.

Available to fund the training of maritime pilots to fulfill the authority's statutory functions.

Available for the Council's future use in accordance with the conditions attached to the receipt.

Available to fund homeless prevention measures and temporary accommodation costs.

Available to fund specific spending commitments in future years.

Unallocated general reserve required for various and unplanned for contingencies, to mitigate risks associated with future financial planning as well as for general day to day cash flow needs.

NB: In accordance with the Council's Financial Rules and Scheme of Financial Delegation (Part 4, Rule 6 of the Constitution), paragraphs B57 - B60 delegates authority to the Chief Finance Officer to approve expenditure from these reserves in accordance with their approved use as detailed above.

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Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	Leisure Centre Facility Strategy – potential refurbishment and improvement projects	

1 Summary - Developing a Leisure Facility Improvement and Refurbishment Plan for years 0 - 3

- 1.1 Cabinet has instructed officers, working with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, to assess Fenland's leisure centres and develop a planned investment programme to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose for the future in line with the Council's Inspire programme.
- 1.2 The report highlights costs of potential projects covering all four leisure facilities in Chatteris, Wisbech, March and Whittlesey and offers Cabinet suggested options to move work forwards.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 This report details potential investment opportunities for the Council's leisure facilities which could be progressed alongside the essential and ongoing condition survey works.
- 2.2 The projects highlighted within the report contain facility improvements that will improve customer satisfaction, with some projects, detailed in the report, expected to generate additional revenue that may be used to support some of the associated capital borrowing costs.
- 2.3 In 2021 a condition survey assessment identified standstill works to the Hudson, Manor and George Campbell centres was required. Chatteris, being newer, at that time, did not require any work. Following investment of £1m in capital work, there remains £9.155m of identified outstanding condition survey work across the Hudson, Manor and George Campbell facilities to be completed in the next 5 years.
- 2.4 The Council's current capital programme funds condition survey works within the leisure centres to the sum of £2.160m. This sum included energy efficiency work which is in addition to the condition survey work. Therefore, an additional circa £7m of condition survey work is required just to keep the centres in good working order in the next 5 years before any additional investment in improved facilities is considered.
- 2.5 A recent assessment of the Chatteris facility has identified a further £50,000 of condition survey work. The relatively young age of this facility means that ongoing capital costs continue to remain low.
- 2.6 In November 2023 Cabinet authorised work to assess improvement and refurbishment costs to ensure that Fenland's leisure facilities are fit for the

future. This report offers Cabinet options and a financial analysis for the next steps that the Council can take with projects across all leisure centres in the district.

- 2.7 Given the value of the capital work options for the leisure centres, Members need to give serious consideration to the financial impact, potential financial risks and overall affordability as a part of their considerations of this report. Therefore, the financial cost of each potential option is emphasised, whilst noting the community benefit that any enhancement would bring.
- 2.8 Members may wish to agree to all, none or a combination of the proposals, noting that the condition survey works are essential to the operational integrity of the centres and cannot be easily avoided if Members wish the centres to remain open. Of course, in some cases, these condition works will be superseded by new capital investment if selected by Members e.g. the Manor Sports Hall roof will not be replaced if a new single refurbished site is selected as an option.
- 2.9 Members will note that there is a significant series of planning stages associated with leisure investment projects such as the creation of new swimming pools (Chatteris) and redesigned centres (Manor). There are also considerable upfront costs to develop these proposals prior to any construction work commencing, therefore before commissioning works to develop these proposals, Members need to have a high level of certainty that they are committed to delivering these projects to the final stages of completion and opening to the public otherwise there will be sunk cost that will have to be attributed to the revenue account if there is not a physical asset at the end of the process.
- 2.10 Given the publication of the government white paper in relation to English Devolution and local government organisation, it is likely Fenland District Council will be abolished in March 2028.
- 2.11 Members need to note and consider the timeframe of each potential project and when it is likely to be completed to inform their decisions around which projects to support.
- 2.12 Investment in leisure centres is one of many proposals that Members are considering as part of the Fenland Inspire programme. The financial investment outlined in the report for leisure is significant and unprecedented and at a scale not undertaken previously. Members need to consider any investment in leisure centres alongside any other potential aspirations for other Fenland Inspire projects given the large scale financial investment required, acknowledging that all projects may not be able to be funded if they come later in the Fenland Inspire programme.

3 Ongoing condition survey work

- 3.1 To agree to budget for and include in the capital programme the outstanding condition survey work for the Hudson, Manor and George Campbell Centres of up to £7 million over the next 5 years.

4 Manor Leisure Centre project

- 4.1 Options:

1. Continue to offer the facilities and carry out condition survey works at a cost of £4.3m. The Council has already budgeted for £2.1m but the remaining £2.2m for this option will attract an annual revenue cost of £156,855 for the next 40 years.

2. Carry out a major change as described in the report, adding padel courts, moving exercise class and soft play facilities into a remodelled and refurbished swimming pool centre and demolishing the old sports hall. Adding in the options of a new replacement rifle range and new sports hall.

4.2 Option 2: Manor Leisure Centre financial assessment (**excl. rifle range** (£750,000) and **sports hall** (£2,500,000);

2025/26	RIBA stage 3 & 4 costs	£626,463	
2026/27	Construction costs	<u>£10,240,000</u>	
	Total project costs		<u>£10,866,463</u>
Funded by:	Identified condition survey costs	£4,331,745	
	Borrowing funded by revenue	£4,850,000	
	Additional borrowing	<u>£1,684,718</u>	
	Total funding		<u>£10,866,463</u>

4.3 The change in Council's financial position, as a result of this project, is a requirement for additional borrowing of around £6,534,718 on top the borrowing detailed in 5.1 Option 1 and will cost a further £461,351 annually for the next 40 years but will be offset by the additional revenue raised by the new Leisure Centre estimated at £345,000 per year. Adding the options of the rifle range and sports hall will increase borrowing costs further.

4.4 Significant financial risks for this project include:

- The inclusion of additional facilities will increase the cost and add additional borrowing requirements.
- Inflationary adjustments and UK economy uncertainty may increase costs.
- RIBA Stages 3 and 4 will develop detailed designs to complete pre-construction works and these stages may identify additional costs. This is prior to construction contracts being signed, so cost mitigation measures may be implemented to maintain construction costs in the region of £10.24m.
- If the decision is not to go ahead with the new construction, then the RIBA costs of £626,463 will be a sunk cost and reverted back to revenue.
- Note the swimming pool will be closed during construction works for around 6 months. The current gym, based within the swimming pool building will be transferred to the sports hall building for the period of the swimming pool building remodelling to ensure continued service for customers and income to Freedom Leisure, with little impact on use of the gym and exercise classes.
- With the new facilities increasing footfall to the centre, along with the consolidation of the facilities into one space, it is predicted the centre will increase revenue by approximately £345,000 annually. This sum includes approximately £44,000 (pro-rata for this facility) should the Council follow an agency agreement approach to our ongoing contract with Freedom

Leisure. The estimated borrowing costs funded by revenue are derived from this projected £345,000 uplift in income to the Council as a result of the project and the agency agreement.

- Positive discussions have been held with our leisure operator, Freedom Leisure, in regard to this project and an increase in the management fee paid to FDC to reflect the new facilities should be in the region of this sum, but is subject to further discussions and a formal legal arrangement.

5 Chatteris Leisure Centre condition surveys work

- 5.1 A recent assessment of the leisure centre has identified minor works to keep the facility up to standard, with costs of approximately: **£50,000**

Total funding by additional borrowing £50,000

- 5.2 The annual revenue impact of this additional borrowing will be £3,530 over the life of the asset.

6 Expanding Chatteris Leisure Centre

- 6.1 Elected Members have expressed a desire to add a swimming pool to the Chatteris Leisure facility to fill a gap in provision in the town.

- 6.2 A business case for a 25m x 4 lane swimming pool has been developed.

- 6.3 The estimated net running cost is £106,823 per year. This will impact on the revenue costs to the Council and demonstrates that the project cannot generate a positive cashflow to support any borrowing to support the capital project.

- 6.4 The high level feasibility cost estimate for the construction of the facility is £7.434m, excluding necessary additional car parking capacity at the site.

- 6.5 Chatteris Swimming pool financial assessment:

2025/26	RIBA stages 0-2 costs	£164,482	
2025/26	RIBA stages 3 & 4 costs	£513,623	
2026/27	Construction costs	<u>£6,888,286</u>	
	Total project costs		<u>£7,566,391</u>
	Total Funding by additional borrowing		<u>£7,566,391</u>

- 6.6 The annual revenue impact of this additional borrowing will be £534,187 over 40 years.

- 6.7 Significant financial risks for this project include;

- Inflationary adjustments and UK economy uncertainty may increase costs.
- RIBA Stages 3 and 4 will develop detailed designs to complete pre-construction works and these stages may identify additional costs. This is prior to construction contracts being signed, so cost mitigation measures may be implemented to maintain construction costs in the region of £6,888,286.
- Significant borrowing costs.

- Will run at an annual operational deficit.
- No discussions have been had with Freedom over potential operation as yet.

7 George Campbell Leisure Centre

- 7.1 This project will comprise of a mixed approach to condition survey work, some improvements and refurbishments will cost in the region of £2.89m

George Campbell Financial Assessment

2025/26	Minor improvements	£390,000	
2025/26	Condition survey work	£450,000	
2026/27	Condition survey work	£550,000	
2027/28	Condition survey work	£750,000	
2028/29	Condition survey work	<u>£750,000</u>	
	Total project costs		<u>£2,890,000</u>
Funded by:	Identified condition survey costs	£2,500,000	
	Additional borrowing	<u>£390,000</u>	
	Total funding		<u>£2,890,000</u>

- 7.2 The annual revenue impact of this additional borrowing will be approximately £204,034 over 40 years.

8 Hudson Leisure Centre

- 8.1 A mixed approach to short term improvements (0-2 years) and medium term improvements (2 – 3 years) is recommended.

- 8.2 A realistic financial assessment is not available at this time as further costing works are required for refurbishment and enhancement projects.

- 8.3 Expected spending already identified is as follows:

2025/26	Padel courts	£450,000	
2025/26	Condition survey work	£450,000	
2026/27	Condition survey work	£550,000	
2027/28	Condition survey work	£550,000	
2028/29	Condition survey work	<u>£500,000</u>	
	Costs excluding enhancement and refurbishment work		<u>£2,500,000</u>
Funded by:	Identified condition survey costs	£2,050,000	
	Borrowing funded by revenue	<u>£450,000</u>	
	Total funding		<u>£2,500,000</u>

- 8.4 The annual revenue impact of this additional borrowing will be approximately £176,500 over 40 years.

9 Financial summary

The works identified above total:		<u>£23,872,854</u>
Necessary, sunk, condition survey costs total	£9,155,000	
(only £2,106,000 is currently in the capital programme)		
Borrowing funded by increased revenue total	£6,100,000	
Borrowing reqd additional to condition surveys	<u>£8,617,854</u>	
Total Funding		<u>£23,872,854</u>

Total Funding not included in the current capital programme or supported by increased revenue:

£15,612,854

A summary of total borrowing costs is available in [Schedule 2](#)

- 9.1 As the report discusses, the Council does need to continue investment in the leisure centres for condition survey works, otherwise the facilities will fall into disrepair and will not be able to deliver the level of service required for the community and within the contract with Freedom Leisure.
- 9.2 Enhancement projects will improve the leisure offer to residents. Those that generate revenue to offset capital borrowing costs are, arguably, more affordable than those that do not generate additional revenue. Other projects, other than the condition survey work, which do not increase revenue to offset borrowing costs should be considered alongside Cabinet's other ambitions for capital spending as part of the emerging Fenland Inspire Project.
- 9.3 Cabinet should note that enhancement projects at the Hudson Centre are not yet costed and do not feature in the overall total cost. However, it should also be noted that some of the Hudson works may be funded by the Government funded Wisbech Long Term Plan for Towns funding, from 2026/27 – subject to a revised Government prospectus and Town Board approval.
- 9.4 Delivery in the timeframes indicated will be challenging and may require additional staffing capacity, especially in the context of further Fenland Inspire projects coming forwards, to ensure effective delivery with those staffing costs added into the capital programme. Any cost would be insignificant in the context of the project costs detailed.

Recommendations

- 9.5 Subject to the careful consideration of the information above, and the various options and their costs presented in the report below, and recognising that the Council could opt to continue with only condition survey works at a total cost of £9.155m, various decisions are available to Cabinet are as follows:
- 9.6 **Continuing condition survey work within the leisure centres**
- 9.7 That Cabinet agrees that condition survey work across the leisure facilities remains necessary and should remain funded within the capital programme. 5-year costs are estimated to be £9.155m.
- 9.8 That Cabinet instructs the S151 officer to make continued provision for condition survey work by adding an additional **£7m** into the capital programme in the next three years, adjusted as necessary to be included within other leisure capital project options detailed below.
- 9.9 **Manor Leisure Centre**
- 9.10 For Cabinet to progress the Manor Leisure Centre significant refurbishment project, detailed in this report, to RIBA Stage 3 at a cost of **£276,775**, with Cabinet authorising the S151 Officer to add this additional sum and any other relevant expenditure into the Council's capital programme in 2025/26 including the rifle range and sports hall options.

- 9.11 For Cabinet to agree RIBA stage 4 to be completed concurrently with RIBA 3 at an additional cost of **£349,688** and authorise the S151 Officer to add this additional cost and any other relevant expenditure into the Council's capital programme in 2025/26 including any additional RIBA 3/4 costs related to the rifle range and sports hall options.
- 9.12 Cabinet should note that upon completion of RIBA Stage 4 a report will be developed offering options for Cabinet to recommend to Full Council to either proceed with construction works or halt the project. Currently construction cost is estimated at **£13.49m** for the facility (including the rifle range and sports hall options) and could proceed in 2026/27. If Council decides not to proceed with construction, then the RIBA 3 and 4 costs will revert to revenue costs.
- 9.13 **Chatteris Leisure minor refurbishment works**
That Cabinet approves refurbishment work of the facility and authorises the S151 Officer to add an additional **£50,000** into the Council's capital programme for these works in 2025/26.
- 9.14 **Chatteris Leisure Centre Expansion Project**
That Cabinet considers carefully the Chatteris Swimming Pool project and if the capital costs are acceptable authorises the S151 Officer to add an additional **£164,482** into the capital programme to develop the Chatteris swimming pool project to RIBA Stage 0-2.

Cabinet to note this is a capital cost, but should the project not proceed past this point, then this expenditure would revert back to a revenue cost.
- 9.15 **George Campbell Leisure Centre minor improvements**
- 9.16 For Cabinet to approve to fund short-term projects for the George Campbell Leisure Centre and if agreed authorise the S151 Officer to add an additional **£390,000** into the Council's capital programme for these works.
- 9.17 Cabinet notes, in addition to the short term projects above, condition survey works will continue at the site at a cost in the region of **£2.5m**.
- 9.18 **Hudson Leisure Centre short term improvement projects**
- 9.19 For Cabinet to authorise the S151 officer to add an additional **£450,000** into the capital programme for 2025/26 for the development of three external covered floodlit padel courts at the Hudson Leisure Centre.
- 9.20 For Cabinet to consider whether to instruct officers to develop estimated costs for each of the non-condition survey, short-term, Hudson projects identified, namely:
- Adapt the multi-function space that is currently used for spinning into an assisted fitness and older persons health and wellbeing space
 - The current gym has unused spare space at the end of the gym – this has potential for conversion into activity rooms for boxfit, circuit training and spin

- 9.21 That Cabinet instructs Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure to bring to Cabinet further refurbishment options for the Hudson Leisure Centre considering:
- The addition of a kitchen space to generate additional revenue from soft play and soft play parties
 - Remodelling of access to the sports hall and possible soft play improvements to generate increased community use and revenue
 - Consideration of further uses for the sports hall that would generate additional revenue, linked with the new café / kitchen
 - External entrance and reception improvements
- 9.22 Cabinet to note that agreement to pursue any of the projects above is subject to Full Council approval of the Budget on 24th February 2025.

Wards Affected	All	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/24AUG23/02 KEY/22JAN25/02 KEY/22JAN25/03 KEY/22JAN25/04 KEY/22JAN25/05	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Alex Miscandlon Cllr Chris Boden	Portfolio Holder for Leisure Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Originator	Phil Hughes phughes@fenland.gov.uk	Head of Leisure Services
Contact Officers	Carol Pilson cpilson@fenland.gov.uk	Monitoring Officer and Corporate Director
	Peter Catchpole petercatchpole@fenland.gov.uk	S151 Officer and Corporate Director
	Phil Hughes phughes@fenland.gov.uk	Head of Leisure Services
Background Papers	Cabinet Report November 2023 Cabinet Report January 2025 2021 Condition survey reports Alliance Leisure documentation	

10 The role of Local Authority Leisure Centres

- 10.1 Local authority leisure centres are more than just places to swim, play sports, or work out. They are integral components of communities, contributing significantly to public health, social cohesion, economic development, and overall community well-being.
- 10.2 The provision of leisure centres is a discretionary Council service.
- 10.3 The switch 6 years ago to contracted management under Freedom Leisure has brought significant revenue savings compared with the previous in-house arrangement. This partnership continues to work well and the agreement with Freedom has further 9 years to run.
- 10.4 The council remains responsible for the main fabric of the buildings and all significant mechanical and electrical systems within the buildings.

11 Leisure Centre background details

- 11.1 The three larger centres are all of a significant age and as such, despite ongoing maintenance and some limited investment from time to time, are showing that age. The facilities are falling behind what the community expects of a modern facility.

- 11.2 Leisure facility ages:

Hudson:

- Pool build date c.1974
- Sports hall mid-1970s
- Indoor bowls hall 1980s, conversion to exercise studio & gym in 2019

George Campbell:

- Pool tank, plant room and the original changing rooms (now the older gym section and spinning room) 1960s
- Pool covered and reception area added 1984
- Gym changing rooms added in the early 1990s
- New pool changing rooms 2013, with gym extension and exercise studio

Manor: consisting of 2 buildings, 30m apart

- Dryside building; (hall and soft play) built 1974
- Swimming pool building: open air pool built mid-1960s
- Pool covered in 1984 with changing facilities and reception added
- Gym added at a later date to the pool building

Chatteris Leisure Centre:

- 13 years old, modern design

12 Condition Survey costs for the facilities to standstill

- 12.1 A condition survey of the sites undertaken by CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) in 2021 has identified required work - to stand still - and the Council has put a capital budget in place to carry out some of these works.
- 12.2 Work has taken place in the past 3 years delivering;

- Leisure centre roofing project replacing roofs across 3 facilities
- Electrical works incl. BMS system replacement
- Boiler replacement works across all three pools
- Refurbishment of the George Campbell gym changing rooms

12.3 The annual breakdown of condition survey standstill maintenance requirements is summarised below;

2021 Condition Survey	Identified Work	Completed Work	Outstanding Work	35% Inflationary Adjustment	Total Outstanding
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
George Campbell	2.386	0.331	2.055	0.719	2.775
Manor	3.268	0.059	3.209	1.123	4.332
Hudson	2.127	0.610	1.517	0.531	2.048
Total	7.781	1.000	6.781	2.373	9.155

12.4 As highlighted above, FDC addressed most leisure centre roofs in the past three years. It should be noted that work has **NOT** been carried out on the Manor sports hall roof, pending decisions regarding the future of the building due to the £500,000+ estimate for this roof's replacement cost.

12.5 A June 2024 assessment of the two smaller roofs at the George Campbell that cover the original pool changing rooms has revealed that these have exceeded the end of their useful life. The same is true of the plant room roof at the same centre. A project to replace these is underway with high level estimated costs in the region of £450,000 plus design and project management costs.

12.6 Leisure Improvements

- 12.7 To further develop the condition survey standstill work and consider possible improvements to the facilities to make them suitable and financially viable for the future, a further comprehensive suite of surveys including mechanical and structural assessments, architectural assessments and demand analysis work and detailed business planning has been undertaken.
- 12.8 This work has highlighted potential improvements to the facilities above the condition survey standstill element, which will allow facilities to be offered to the Fenland community that will be fit for the future, continuing to attract customers, grow the income base and support the Council's aspirations to help our communities become healthier.
- 12.9 If facilities are not able to attract customers, they will become an unviable business proposition. This would mean that revenue costs may become unsustainable in 9 years when the Freedom Leisure contract expires. If this situation occurs and the facilities were not financially viable, the cost of offering leisure facilities to the local community may not be affordable.
- 12.10 Since January 2024, an experienced leisure centre specialist company – Alliance Leisure - supported by specialist sub-contractors has assessed the three large leisure facilities. Alliance Leisure has completed in excess of 200 facility builds or refurbishments within public sector leisure facilities to a total cost of c.£300m. The Portfolio Holder visited refurbishment projects that Alliance has completed in the East of England. The impact of these refurbishments was plain to see, with the operator reporting reduced running costs and increased attendances and revenue. This report summarises the work completed to date and highlights potential projects to move forwards, with estimated costs. It also considers project affordability when taking into account reduced costs or increased efficiencies and increased income as a result of the projects – net of the necessary condition survey costs.

Project options

13 Manor Leisure Centre

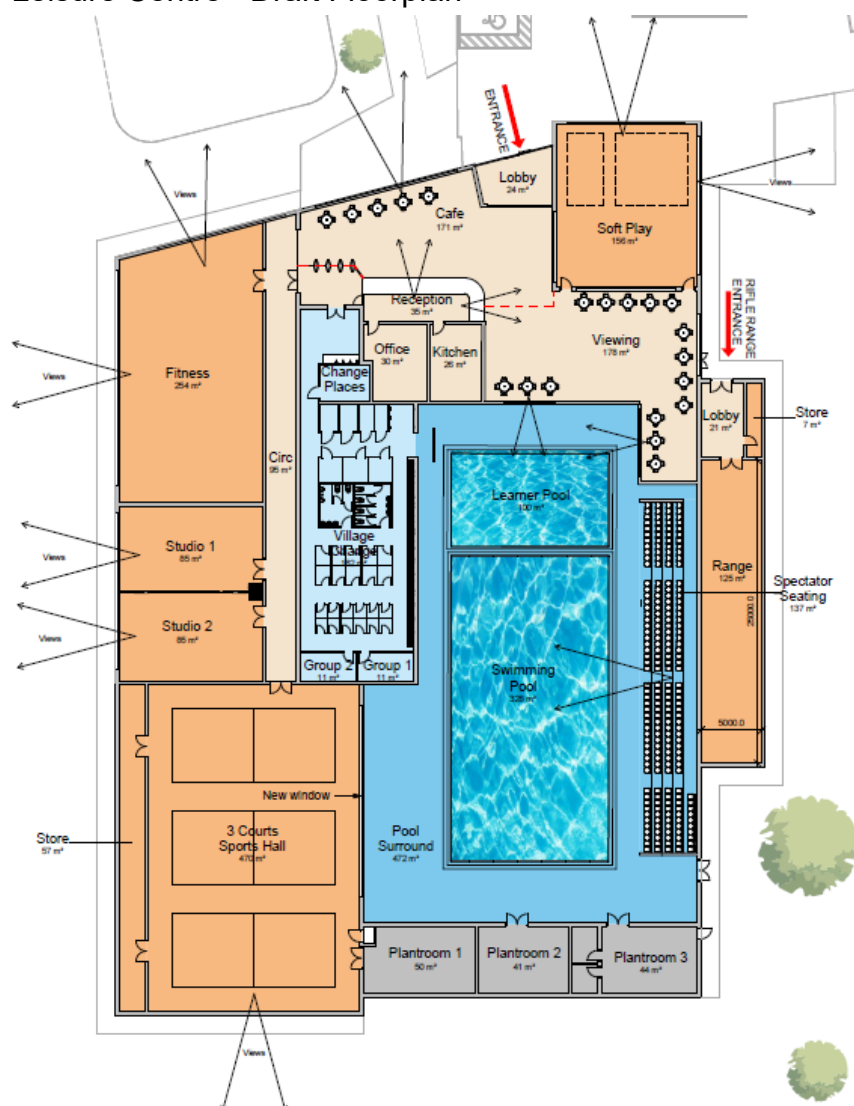
- 13.1 Whittlesey and the surrounding villages are growing. The link between Peterborough and Whittlesey has been improved with the addition of the Ralph Butcher Causeway. The leisure centre consists of two older buildings that will not be fit for the local community in the short term but are currently outperforming estimates, with the learn to swim sessions proving particularly successful. This performance may also be linked to 'imported' demand from Peterborough, where the main leisure facility – the regional pool – has been closed permanently.
- 13.2 The Manor consists of 2 buildings that were built (unwisely) 30m apart. This approach is incredibly inefficient in terms of services, maintenance and staff. It is also less than ideal for customers, security and safety. Both facilities have aged and look now externally tatty with significant work required to bring them up to a good standard both inside and out.
- 13.3 The Manor sports hall building requires a new roof over the main hall. This work has previously been estimated at £500,000. However, a recent estimate

for significantly smaller roofing works at the George Campbell is in the region of £450,000. Taking this into account it is considered that the Manor sports hall roof replacement will cost in excess of £500,000.

- 13.4 The sports hall building is used for soft play (in old, converted squash courts), exercise classes in 2 rooms and the occasional function in the larger room. Function profit in the past year has been below £7,500 with this forming a very small proportion of the Manor's overall customer use. Whilst a sports hall is a community asset, the town does offer other options in this regard, in the secondary school and with the nearby Eastrea Centre being a particularly good venue offering a large smart modern hall and kitchen facilities.
- 13.5 Running costs for the 1974 sports hall building are high as it is an older building and inefficient. The design – with a myriad of corridors and old changing rooms - no longer reflects what it is used for. Similarly, the large sports hall is used - on the whole - for exercise classes and cooling such a large space is expensive, with no HVAC (fresh air in, stale air out) provision in place.
- 13.6 Taking this into account, the team's assessment is that the sport hall building should be demolished, with the soft play and exercise class elements then being added into the swimming pool building.
- 13.7 A new build for all Manor facilities is costed at approximately £25m and has been discounted as unaffordable.
- 13.8 Adding the exercise studios and soft play facilities noted above onto a redesigned and refurbished swimming pool building is the only realistic option, bringing the benefits of increased efficiency in terms of staffing, energy, ICT systems, mechanical & electrical systems and overall building maintenance.
- 13.9 In addition, the improvement for customers and the customer experience will be considerable. With the improvements in the pool building and the additional footfall, the addition of a small kitchen and café area will further drive revenue and footfall, improving the business position further.
- 13.10 The current pool building is uninviting, with a very small entrance area and reception, with the front of the building dominated by the wall of the rifle range at the front of the facility. To improve the facility by adding an enhanced reception, café and kitchen and the soft play and exercise class provision from the sport hall building, will require the front of the facility being completely remodelled. This significant investment will ensure that the facility is fit for the future, whilst also attracting more customers, generating more income and the consequential community benefits.
- 13.11 The draft floorplan below demonstrates how the Manor pool building can be remodelled to incorporate all functions desirable within a leisure centre. This work would include replacement of current plant (excluding recent replacements) and refurbishment of the facility that is not remodelled.
- 13.12 Member feedback regarding the necessary removal of the rifle range from the front of the facility, as well as the loss of the little-used events / sports hall space has resulted in options for the addition of the rifle range on the side of the facility, as well as the sports hall to the rear of the building.

- 13.13 Another enhancement, which will further improve the revenue position of the refurbished facility is the addition of a covered, floodlit, 3-court padel facility. This would likely be positioned on the eastern side of the facility and plans to progress it will be incorporated into the wider facility footprint.
- 13.14 Note that this is a draft floorplan and if the project moves to the next stage, considerable detail and design work will be undertaken to deliver the final proposal. As a draft at this stage, anyone reviewing this floorplan must bear in mind that the final proposal will be different to this draft. It should also be noted that an aspect of moving the proposal forwards is community consultation, as well as local Member consultation.
- 13.15 It is also important to remember the financial impact that changes to the facility may have. Ideally improvements, such as the padel facility, would have a positive impact on the net business position and this improved position can then be used to help to pay for borrowing to fund the capital works.

13.16 Manor Leisure Centre - Draft Floorplan



Estimated costs and the financial impact of the changes proposed to the Manor pool building

13.17 Total project costs

The drawing above, with added padel courts, but **without** the rifle range and sports hall has an estimated cost of £10.24m.

Adding a sports hall (c.£2.5m) and a rifle range (c.£0.75m) increases the cost to £13.49m.

13.18 Necessary committed condition survey funding

The current condition survey costs for the Manor are estimated at £4,331,745. It is necessary to commit this funding to the facility if the Council does nothing other than adopt a standstill approach and as such this required funding is considered a necessary sunk cost.

13.19 Agency Agreements

FDC is investigating the potential of adjusting the current agreement with Freedom into an agency agreement. This is a more tax efficient vehicle than

the current agreement in place. This would bring increased income from Freedom to FDC and is included, pro-rata for this leisure centre, in the improved revenue estimates below.

13.20 Improved revenue position to pay for the cost of capital

Based on the floorplan, excluding the addition of the sports hall and rifle range, the improved annual revenue position (a combination of improved income levels and reduced costs) is estimated to be £345,667 in a mature year.

FDC's investment would require a change in the agreement with Freedom Leisure in order that Freedom pays an additional management fee due to the projected increase in income and reduction in costs. At this stage, whilst costs are uncertain, discussions regarding the projected income figures have been undertaken with Freedom Leisure but are currently estimates and do not form any legal agreement.

Firm figures and a legal agreement would be drawn up prior to proceeding with a contract for construction of the improved facility.

13.21 The annual increase of £345,667 in the Council's revenue position has the potential to fund capital investment of **£4.85m** over a period of 40 years. This capital funding, along with the necessary condition survey costs of £4,331,745 means that the project, subject to firm costings and agreement with Freedom Leisure, will require additional funding from the Council of £1,684,718, given that the condition survey works are unavoidable costs.

Adding in the sports hall capital cost and the rifle range capital cost will increase costs to the Council as those facilities will have a very minor revenue payback improvement implication.

13.22 Financial summary

Manor Leisure Centre project costs (excl. rifle range and sports hall);

2025/26	RIBA stage 3 & 4 costs	£626,463	
2026/27	Construction costs	<u>£10,240,000</u>	
	Total project costs		<u>£10,866,463</u>
Funded by:	Identified condition survey costs	£4,331,745	
	Borrowing funded by revenue	£4,850,000	
	Additional borrowing	<u>£1,684,718</u>	
	Total funding		<u>£10,866,463</u>

13.23 The change in Council's financial position, as a result of the project, is a requirement for additional borrowing of around £1,684,718.

13.24 Significant financial risks for this project include;

- The inclusion of additional facilities will increase the cost and add additional borrowing requirements.
- Inflationary adjustments and UK economy uncertainty may increase costs.
- RIBA Stages 3 and 4 will develop detailed designs to complete pre-construction works and these stages may identify additional costs. This is prior to construction contracts being signed, so cost mitigation measures may be implemented to maintain construction costs in the region of £10.24m.

13.25 Manor Leisure Centre project timescales:

- 6 weeks FDC managed local elected Member discussions and a community consultation process regarding draft plans
- 15 weeks RIBA Stage 3
- RIBA Stage 4 may be run concurrently or following the completion of RIBA Stage 3 and will take approximately 20 weeks.

Should the Council then decide to move forwards to construction of the facility, construction will take around 54 weeks, with an additional 6 weeks lead in time.

A summary of the expected time to completed construction looks as below. As highlighted above the programme could be shortened by around 20 weeks if RIBA 3 and RIBA 4 were completed concurrently.

Tasks & Milestones	Start Date	End Date		2025				2026				2027	
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Cabinet Report	24/02/2025	24/02/2025	Edit	Today	Cabinet Report								
Manor Project Initialisation	03/03/2025	03/03/2025	Edit		Manor Project Initialisation								
Manor RIBA Stage 3 ordered	04/03/2025	05/03/2025	Edit		Manor RIBA Stage 3 ordered								
Community and Local Member consultation	10/03/2025	21/04/2025	Edit		Community and Local Member consultation								
RIBA 3 work	23/04/2025	08/09/2025	Edit		RIBA 3 work								
Cabinet Report re RIBA 3 and decision to move to RIBA 4	15/09/2025	15/09/2025	Edit										
RIBA 4 lead in time	24/09/2025	12/10/2025	Edit										
RIBA 4 work	17/10/2025	06/03/2026	Edit										
Cabinet Report re RIBA 4 & construction decision	18/03/2026	18/03/2026	Edit										
Pre-contract governance work	04/04/2026	19/04/2026	Edit										
Lead in time for contractor	21/04/2026	09/06/2026	Edit										
Construction	09/06/2026	14/06/2027	Edit										

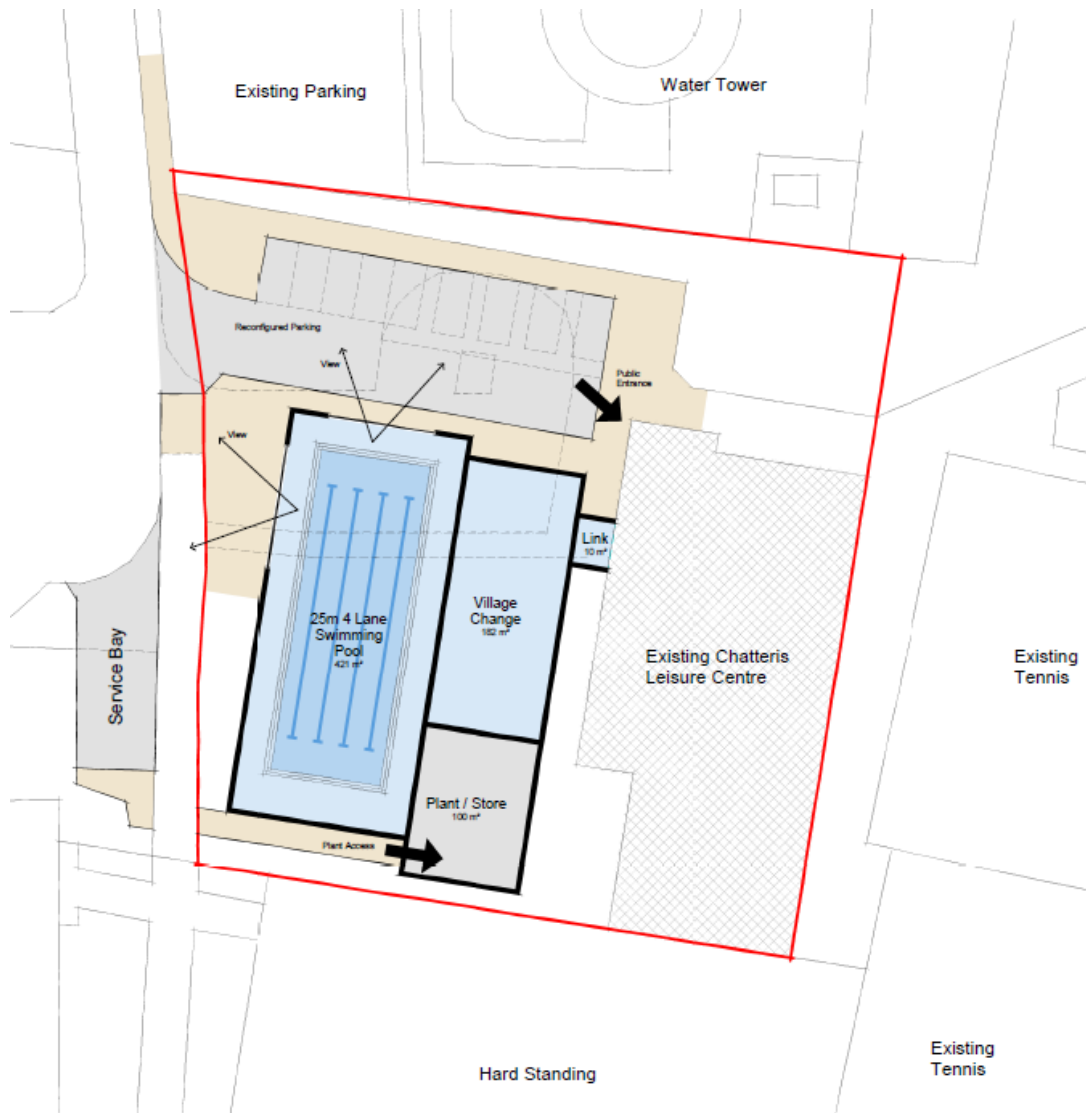
14 Chatteris Leisure Centre – condition survey works

- 14.1 Chatteris Leisure Centre was developed 13 years ago as a gym and an exercise studio. In the past year improvements have been made to the car park at a cost to the Council of £137,000.
- 14.2 An assessment of the current facility has highlighted short term refurbishment costs in the region of £50,000 to be undertaken as part of the condition survey works. This work would include:
- Carpet replacement
 - Changing room white goods, showers and flooring replacement
 - Dance studio floor covering replacement
 - Dance studio air conditioning capacity improvements
 - Repaint of the gym

It is recommended that this work takes place in 2025/26 as part of the condition survey project.

15 Expanding Chatteris Leisure Centre

- 15.1 Elected Members have expressed a desire to add a swimming pool to the Chatteris Leisure facility to fill a gap in provision in the town.
- 15.2 Officers have worked with experienced cost consultants, leisure architects and a specialist in leisure business modelling to develop the following information:
- 15.3 A swimming pool will fit on the footprint of the land adjacent to the current leisure centre. The land is in the ownership of Cambridgeshire County Council and the current Chatteris Leisure Centre lease would need adjusting to reflect the additional land required and what it is to be used for. This work will need to be undertaken initially, alongside consultation with Cromwell School to avoid any abortive works in the case of a lease being refused.
- 15.4 The footprint for the facility may be seen below. This is an early draft to give Cabinet a good impression of how the facility will sit within the site and how it works together with the current leisure centre. Note that access will be through the existing facility, keeping everything under one roof and controlled by one reception and leisure team.
- 15.5 The swimming pool will be a 25m x 4 lane deck level pool, with a swimming customer only changing village. This pool will be suitable for all manner of swimming from baby sessions all the way through to competitive club swimming.



- 15.6 A business case for this facility has been developed. The estimated net running cost is £106,823 per year. This highlights that the facility cannot support capital borrowing through a net income stream.
- 15.7 The high level feasibility cost estimate for the construction of the facility is £6,888,286 with additional preconstruction costs totalling £678,105.
- 15.8 It should be noted that this does not consider any potential changes to the school's car park capacity. It is apparent that there is space for an additional 30 cars on the site. Early on in the project, consideration of this necessary increase in capacity should be identified, along with associated capital costs, as the pool will generate additional need for parking and any planning application will need to take this into account.

15.9 To move this work forwards the following stages are necessary with an approximate timescale laid out below;

- RIBA stages 0-2 will cost £164,482 and take some 6 weeks to complete.
- Once RIBA Stage 2 is completed it is anticipated that running RIBA stage 3 and 4 concurrently to develop a detailed design and cost confident estimates would cost a further £513,623. This work will take 18-20 weeks if run concurrently.
- Construction will take a further 52 weeks once a contractor is procured.

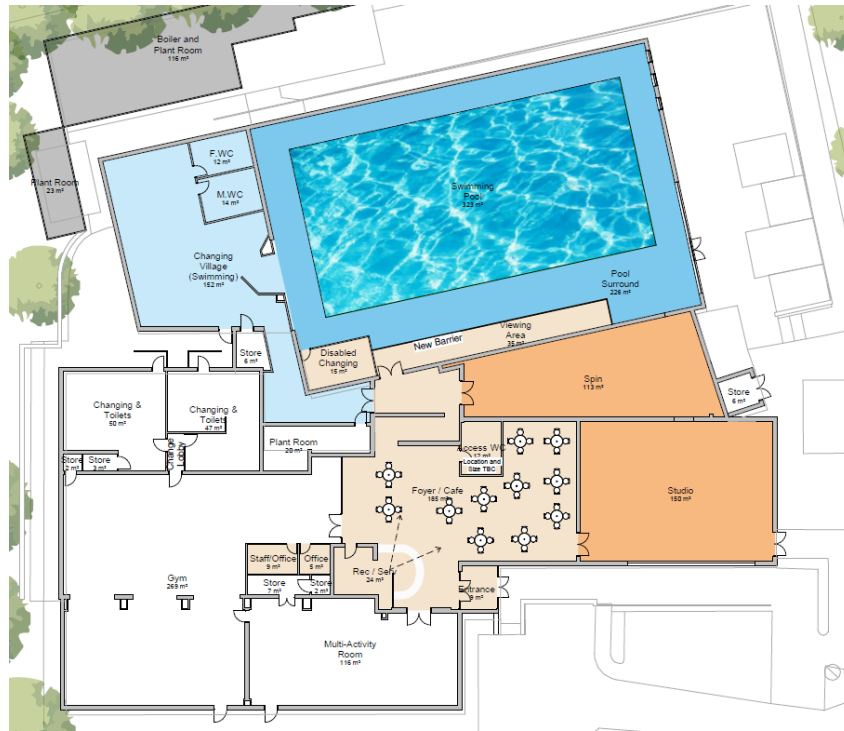
15.10 If Cabinet wishes to move this project forwards it is recommended that RIBA stages 0-2 are commissioned at a cost in the region of £162,482, with a report back to Cabinet to follow in 8 – 12 weeks (due to lead time). At that further Cabinet discussion more accurate figures will be available and taking the step to RIBA Stages 3 and 4 can be discussed with more confidence.

Tasks & Milestones	Start Date	End Date		2025				2026				2027
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Cabinet Report - RIBA 1 & 2	24/02/2025	24/02/2025	Edit	Today	Cabinet Report - RIBA 1 & 2							
Lead in to RIBA 1 & 2	03/03/2025	24/03/2025	Edit		Lead in to RIBA 1 & 2							
RIBA 1 & 2 work	31/03/2025	17/05/2025	Edit		RIBA 1 & 2 work							
Cabinet Report re RIBA 3 & 4 decis...	16/06/2025	16/06/2025	Edit			Cabinet Report re RIBA 3 & 4 decision						
RIBA 3 & 4 lead in time	30/06/2025	21/07/2025	Edit			RIBA 3 & 4 lead in time						
RIBA 3 & 4 work	21/07/2025	08/12/2025	Edit			RIBA 3 & 4 work						
Cabinet recommendation to procee...	15/12/2025	15/12/2025	Edit					Cabinet recommendation to proceed to construction				
Full Council decision to proceed to ...	15/12/2025	15/12/2025	Edit					Full Council decision to proceed to construction				
Construction lead in time	05/01/2026	16/02/2026	Edit					Construction lead in time				
Construction	16/02/2026	26/02/2027	Edit					Construction				

16 George Campbell Leisure Centre

- 16.1 The footprint of the George Campbell Leisure Centre means that there is little space for expansion – but there remains unused space already within the facility. Altering the use of unused space is far cheaper than building new space.
- 16.2 Assessing local latent demand for the facilities highlights that increasing the size of the facilities is unnecessary. A larger facility will not attract a significantly higher number of users. In addition, a third gym has opened in the town giving more options to residents to exercise.
- 16.3 The Alliance team assessed the current facility. It is of an age and requires substantial improvements to mechanical and electrical equipment (as highlighted in the 2021 condition survey – some replacements of which are necessarily ongoing at present, please see the January 2025 Cabinet report for further information).
- 16.4 The programme detailed in the floorplan below is about replacement of mechanical and electrical equipment, refurbishment of the facility throughout and the remodelling of reception and the two old swimming pool changing rooms into a café space, an advanced spin (exercise bike) studio and increasing the footprint of Studio 1 to make the space more flexible.
- 16.5 The addition of a learner pool has been assessed. The expected cost is just under £2m and would increase the net cost of running the facility, not reduce it. This being the case, and with the large 6 lane pool already in place, adding the learner pool is regarded as an unworthy investment.

16.6 George Campbell Leisure Centre Draft Floorplan



Costs and revenue impact of the potential projects at the George Campbell

16.7 Condition Survey Costs

The current condition survey costs are estimated at £2,774,520 in necessarily committed condition survey costs.

16.8 Improvement Options:

1. A full refurbishment of the leisure centre, including condition survey works and the alterations to the floorplan as identified above has an estimated cost of £5.4m.
2. A mixed approach to condition survey work, some improvements and refurbishments will cost in the region of £2.89m.

Neither option will significantly improve the revenue position of the facility, so the potential to use increased revenue income to offset capital borrowing costs is unlikely.

The best value recommendation for this facility is to consider **Option 2; A mixed approach to condition survey and improvements; total cost £2.89m**

- 16.9 The George Campbell facility requires some roofing works and the replacement of mechanical and electrical equipment as part of ongoing condition survey works. However, the majority of the facility - in terms of user experience and condition - is in a relatively good condition and will not have a significant negative impact on user experience or footfall in the future.

16.10 Some of the improvements suggested by the Alliance team that will generate additional customer satisfaction and footfall are relatively simple to undertake, namely;

- The improvements to reception to establish a coffee servery and a more attractive reception space
- Changes to Studio 1 to increase useable space, utilizing the old, unused, male swimming pool changing room
- The addition of a spin room in the former female swimming pool changing room

It is considered that these improvements could be carried out with a limited impact to the ongoing operation of the facility at a cost in the region of £390,000. This investment in the facility would improve the customer offer, but not significantly enough to improve the revenue position to support the costs of the improvements.

In the background condition survey works would continue, with most of these improvements (for example roofing) invisible to customers. The suggested coffee servery, studio 1 and spin room improvements are deliverable in the immediate term.

16.11 An expected delivery timescale of the three improvements works detailed above are as follows:

Tasks & Milestones	Start Date	End Date		2025				2026
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Cabinet approval to proceed with m...	24/02/2025	24/02/2025	Edit	Today	Cabinet approval to proceed with minor improvement works			
Minor improvement project develop...	17/03/2025	30/04/2025	Edit			Minor improvement project development		
Contractor procurement	05/05/2025	13/06/2025	Edit			Contractor procurement		
Contract award	03/07/2025	03/07/2025	Edit				Contract award	
Contracts and governance	14/07/2025	08/08/2025	Edit				Contracts and governance	
Contractor lead in time	18/08/2025	30/09/2025	Edit				Contractor lead in time	
Spin studio handover	21/11/2025	21/11/2025	Edit					Spin studio handover
Studio 1 handover	05/01/2026	05/01/2026	Edit					Studio 1 handover
Reception remodelling completed	09/01/2026	09/01/2026	Edit					Reception remodelling completed
Construction	06/10/2025	09/02/2026	Edit				Construction	

17 Hudson Leisure Centre

- 17.1 The Alliance team assessed the current facility. Substantial improvements to mechanical and electrical equipment (as highlighted in the 2021 condition survey – some replacements of which are ongoing at present) are required with current costs estimated at £2,048,490, with further improvements desirable to the facility itself.
- 17.2 Two good examples of improvements required are the dryside (i.e. non-swimming pool) toilets and changing facilities and the main entrance to the facility. The changing and toilet facilities reflect their 1970's origins and are not at an acceptable level of quality and do not reflect the offer of the gym and exercise classes. The main entrance to the building gives a poor first impression. Work is needed outside the building to develop a more positive impact on current customers and potential customers before they have even stepped into the building.
- 17.3 Discussions regarding an internal remodelling and refurbishment to provide additional activities and improved quality to develop additional revenue streams are underway, but initial efforts have not produced a plan that will offer good value and significantly improve revenue streams and customer satisfaction. It must also be remembered that the Hudson currently serves an important role in elections and any reduction in the sports hall space would have unacceptable consequences on the ability to manage elections in the facility.
- 17.4 A mixed approach to short term improvements (0-2 years) and medium term improvements (2 – 3 years) is recommended as follows;

Short Term Improvement and condition survey work

- 17.5 The following improvements can be delivered in the short term and will have an immediate impact on customer satisfaction.

17.6 Condition Survey work

- Refurbished dry changing rooms - designs underway as part of condition survey works
- Refurbished swimming pool changing rooms – condition survey works
- Mechanical and electrical equipment replacement; fire alarm / intruder alarm / PA system / CCTV system / pool air handling unit replacements are all planned aspects of the ongoing condition survey works with a project for this work underway
- An electrical rewire is planned for 2026 as part of the condition survey work

17.7 Non-condition survey works to improve customer offer:

- Add 3 external, covered, floodlit padel tennis courts to the facility at a cost of £450,000, generating an annual net revenue of £90,000. This revenue will support borrowing of £1.25m over a 40 year period and the project can be delivered in the immediate term, subject to planning approval.

- Adapt the multi-function space that is currently used for spinning into an assisted fitness and older persons health and wellbeing space
- The current gym has unused spare space at the end of the gym – this has potential for conversion into activity rooms for boxfit, circuit training and spin

17.8 It is recommended that the Council goes to the market for estimated costs for the non-condition survey work detailed above and reports back to Cabinet in mid-2025 with recommendations on how to take the projects forwards and at what cost.

Medium term improvements: 2 – 3 years

17.9 In addition to the above short term improvements, further consideration should be given to:

- The addition of a kitchen space to generate additional revenue from soft play and soft play parties
- Remodelling of access to the sports hall and possible soft play improvements to generate revenue
- Consideration of further uses for the sports hall that would generate additional revenue, linked with the new café and also linked to the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation that may negate the need for as large a hall for elections.
- External entrance and reception improvements

17.10 It is recommended that these options should be assessed once the Council has clarity from Government regarding the revised prospectus to the Long Term Plan for Town funding that Wisbech has been promised, as the Town Board has stated its support for improvements to the leisure centre.

18 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 18.1 The recommendations are developed from the options for each facility in the report. Any recommendations need to be assessed for their affordability, any potential return on investment and the broader financial context that the Council is working within and specifically any other capital projects that Cabinet has ambitions to deliver in the shorter term.

19 CONSULTATION

N/A

20 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 20.1 The report considers alternatives for each facility.
- 20.2 The Council does have the alternative option of closing facilities (subject to contract negotiations with Freedom Leisure) as they are not statutory services. This option is not presented in the report for any of the leisure centres as it is understood that this is not an option that elected Members would consider.

21 IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

N/A

Financial Implications

- 21.1 The report lays out the significant costs that all leisure works will require. The Council has the option to settle for the current facilities and continue to carry out condition survey works. Alternative options include investments with a revenue return to fund those improvements and other options that improve amenities for local residents, but do not generate any revenue sums to support borrowing to deliver the capital projects.
- 21.2 As reported throughout the report there is a risk of incurring significant revenue expenditure if the projects do not progress following the feasibility work as outlined in this report. Consideration should therefore be given to the likelihood of each project being delivered before initial expenditure is committed.
- 21.3 Significant capital expenditure will be needed to deliver these projects and without any external funding borrowing will be needed to deliver the outcomes listed above. As stated in the report the cost of borrowing will add material pressure to the projected deficits particularly as the additional revenue generated by these projects will not cover these costs.
- 21.4 Cabinet should consider these all potential leisure projects in the broader context of further ambitions to deliver capital improvements for local residents across Fenland and the affordability of both the leisure and other potential projects.
- 21.5 Although £30m has been factored into the budget over the next three years to support the Fenland Inspire work the projects detailed within this report would

utilise a significant proportion of this fund. Although this can be viewed as a positive investment in important facilities it is clear that the potential impact a large capital development programme on a discretionary function would be significant and could impact other services and the Council's overall financial position.

Equality Implications

21.6 N/A

22 Schedule 1 – detail of the RIBA project stages



The RIBA Plan of Work organises the process of briefing, designing, delivering, maintaining, operating and using a building into eight stages. It is a framework for all disciplines on construction projects and should be used solely as guidance for the preparation of detailed professional services and building contracts.

Stage Boundaries:
Stages 0-4 will generally be undertaken one after the other.

Stages 4 and 5 will overlap in the **Project Programme** for most projects.

Stage 5 commences when the contractor takes possession of the site and finishes at **Practical Completion**.

Stage 6 starts with the handover of the building to the client immediately after **Practical Completion** and finishes at the end of the **Defects Liability Period**.

Stage 7 starts concurrently with Stage 6 and lasts for the life of the building.

Planning Note:

Planning Applications are generally submitted at the end of Stage 3 and should only be submitted earlier when the threshold of information required has been met. If a **Planning Application** is made during Stage 3, a mid-stage gateway should be determined and it should be clear to the project team which tasks and deliverables will be required. See **Overview guidance**.

Procurement:
The RIBA Plan of Work is procurement neutral – See **Overview guidance** for a detailed description of how each stage might be adjusted to accommodate the requirements of the **Procurement Strategy**.

ER Employer's Requirements
CP Contractor's Proposals

RIBA Architecture.com

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strategic Definition	Preparation and Briefing	Concept Design	Spatial Coordination	Technical Design	Manufacturing and Construction	Handover	Use
	Projects span from Stage 1 to Stage 6; the outcome of Stage 0 may be the decision to initiate a project and Stage 7 covers the ongoing use of the building.							
Stage Outcome at the end of the stage	The best means of achieving the Client Requirements confirmed If the outcome determines that a building is the best means of achieving the Client Requirements , the client proceeds to Stage 1	Project Brief approved by the client and confirmed that it can be accommodated on the site The brief remains "live" during Stage 2 and is derogated in response to the Architectural Concept	Architectural Concept approved by the client and aligned to the Project Brief The brief remains "live" during Stage 2 and is derogated in response to the Architectural Concept	Architectural and engineering information Spatially Coordinated	All design information required to manufacture and construct the project completed Stage 4 will overlap with Stage 5 on most projects	Manufacturing, construction and Commissioning completed There is no design work in Stage 5 other than responding to Site Queries	Building handed over, Aftercare initiated and Building Contract concluded	Building used, operated and maintained efficiently Stage 7 starts concurrently with Stage 6 and lasts for the life of the building
Core Tasks during the stage	Prepare Client Requirements Develop Business Case for feasible options including review of Project Risks and Project Budget Ratify option that best delivers Client Requirements Review Feedback from previous projects Undertake Site Appraisals Project Strategies might include: - Conservation (if applicable) - Cost - Fire Safety - Health and Safety - Inclusive Design - Planning - Plan for Use - Procurement - Sustainability See RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview for detailed guidance on Project Strategies	Prepare Project Brief including Project Outcomes and Sustainability Outcomes , Quality Aspirations and Spatial Requirements Undertake Feasibility Studies Agree Project Budget Source Site Information including Site Surveys Prepare Project Programme Prepare Project Execution Plan No design team required for Stages 0 and 1. Client advisers may be appointed to the client team to provide strategic advice and design thinking before Stage 2 commences.	Prepare Architectural Concept incorporating Strategic Engineering requirements and aligned to Cost Plan , Project Strategies and Outline Specification Agree Project Brief Derogations Undertake Design Reviews with client and Project Stakeholders Prepare stage Design Programme	Undertake Design Studies , Engineering Analysis and Cost Exercises to test Architectural Concept resulting in Spatially Coordinated design aligned to updated Cost Plan , Project Strategies and Outline Specification Initiate Change Control Procedures Prepare stage Design Programme	Develop architectural and engineering technical design Prepare and coordinate design team Building Systems information Prepare and integrate specialist subcontractor Building Systems information Prepare stage Design Programme Specialist subcontractor designs are prepared and reviewed during Stage 4	Finalise Site Logistics Manufacture Building Systems and construct building Monitor progress against Construction Programme Inspect Construction Quality Resolve Site Queries as required Undertake Commissioning of building Prepare Building Manual Building handover tasks bridge Stages 5 and 6 as set out in the Plan for Use Strategy	Hand over building in line with Plan for Use Strategy Undertake review of Project Performance Undertake seasonal Commissioning Rectify defects Complete initial Aftercare tasks including light touch Post Occupancy Evaluation	Implement Facilities Management and Asset Management Undertake Post Occupancy Evaluation of building performance in use Verify Project Outcomes including Sustainability Outcomes Adaptation of a building (at the end of its useful life) triggers a new Stage 0
Core Statutory Processes during the stage:	Strategic appraisal of Planning considerations Planning Building Regulations Health and Safety (CDM)	Source pre-application Planning Advice Initiate collation of health and safety Pre-construction Information	Obtain pre-application Planning Advice Agree route to Building Regulations compliance Option: submit outline Planning Application See Planning Note for guidance on submitting a Planning Application earlier than at end of Stage 3	Review design against Building Regulations Prepare and submit Planning Application	Submit Building Regulations Application Discharge pre-commencement Planning Conditions Prepare Construction Phase Plan Submit form F10 to HSE if applicable	Carry out Construction Phase Plan Comply with Planning Conditions related to construction	Comply with Planning Conditions as required	Comply with Planning Conditions as required
Procurement Route	Traditional Design & Build 1 Stage Design & Build 2 Stage Management Contract Construction Management Contractor-led	Appoint client team	Appoint design team	ER CP Appoint contractor	ER CP Pre-contract services agreement Appoint contractor	Tender Appoint contractor ER CP Appoint contractor CP Appoint contractor Preferred bidder CP Appoint contractor		Appoint Facilities Management and Asset Management teams, and strategic advisers as needed
Information Exchanges at the end of the stage	Client Requirements Business Case	Project Brief Feasibility Studies Site Information Project Budget Project Programme Procurement Strategy Responsibility Matrix Information Requirements	Project Brief Derogations Signed off Stage Report Project Strategies Outline Specification Cost Plan	Signed off Stage Report Project Strategies Updated Outline Specification Updated Cost Plan Planning Application	Manufacturing Information Construction Information Final Specifications Residual Project Strategies Building Regulations Application	Building Manual including Health and Safety File and Fire Safety Information Practical Completion certificate including Defects List Asset Information If Verified Construction Information is required, verification tasks must be defined	Feedback on Project Performance Final Certificate Feedback from light touch Post Occupancy Evaluation	Feedback from Post Occupancy Evaluation Updated Building Manual including Health and Safety File and Fire Safety Information as necessary

Core RIBA Plan of Work terms are defined in the RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview glossary and set in **Bold Type**.

Further guidance and detailed stage descriptions are included in the RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview.

© RIBA 2020

23 Schedule 2 – Borrowing requirements and their annual impact on the Council's revenue budget

Financial Summary of Leisure Centre potential refurbishment and improvement projects							40 Years				
Leisure Centre Name	Funding Method	Capital Budgets					Borrowing Costs - MRP and Interest				
		Total	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Manor		10,866,463	626,463	10,240,000	0	0	199,647	618,206	618,206	618,206	618,206
	Budgeted Conditional Survey	2,110,000	626,463	1,483,537	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Condition Survey	2,221,745		2,221,745	0	0	0	50,656	156,855	156,855	156,855
	Additional Borrowing	6,534,718		6,534,718	0	0	0	148,992	461,351	461,351	461,351
		10,866,463	626,463	10,240,000	0	0	0	199,647	618,206	618,206	618,206
Chatteris Conditions Survey	Condition Survey	50,000	50,000	0	0	0	1,140	3,530	3,530	3,530	3,530
Chatteris Swimming Pool	Additional Borrowing	7,566,391	678,105	6,888,286	0	0	15,461	47,874	534,187	534,187	534,187
George Campbell mixed approach project	Condition Survey	2,500,000	450,000	550,000	750,000	750,000	10,260	44,310	87,700	140,650	176,500
	Additional Borrowing	390,000	390,000	0	0	0	8,892	27,534	27,534	27,534	27,534
		2,890,000	840,000	550,000	750,000	750,000	19,152	71,844	115,234	168,184	204,034
Hudson Leisure Centre mixed approach project	Condition Survey	2,050,000	450,000	550,000	550,000	500,000	10,260	44,310	83,140	120,830	144,730
	Additional Borrowing	450,000	450,000	0	0	0	10,260	31,770	31,770	31,770	31,770
		2,500,000	900,000	550,000	550,000	500,000	20,520	76,080	114,910	152,600	176,500
		23,872,854	3,094,568	18,228,286	1,300,000	1,250,000	56,273	398,976	1,386,067	1,476,707	1,536,457

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Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	Fenland Waste Strategy	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 For Cabinet to agree and recommend an updated waste collection system to Council for domestic waste collection in Fenland that provides for the legislative changes resulting from the Environment Act 2021 as they commence from 30 March 2026.
- 1.2 To agree the addition of weekly domestic food in Fenland from 30 March 2026 for residential properties, and food waste collections from domestic communal collection points at flats and similar during the subsequent 6 months.
- 1.3 In line with Simpler Recycling, to agree the continued collection of the legally required recycling materials from domestic premises as a comingled collection and agree the updated TEEP statement as required by DEFRA.
- 1.4 To approve updated Waste Service Standards that allow for these changes in legislation.
- 1.5 To delegate the urgent procurement of required containers to the appropriate director in consultation with the portfolio holder.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 45A, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, places a duty on English waste collection authorities to make sure that waste is collected from households in their area. From the end of March 2026, waste collection authorities must provide weekly food waste collections from all households, to allow people to dispose of their organic waste frequently.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the Council implements the required weekly food waste collections as a separate service alongside the existing domestic waste collections, which remain unchanged.
- 2.3 Within the guidance, the government is clear that waste collection authorities will continue to decide collection frequency and the methodology for collecting the residual (non-recyclable waste) and dry recyclable waste streams in a way that meets local needs and provides value for money for the taxpayer.
- 2.4 Simpler Recycling guidance requires authorities to collect paper and card separately from other dry recycling materials from the end of March 2026 unless this is not technically, economically or environmentally practicable (TEEP).

- 2.5 Fenland's current mixed dry recycling collection performs in the top quartile nationally for weight of recycling produced per household, and WRAP provided analysis from 2022 showed that adding a separate collection of paper and card would not be economically or environmentally practicable.
- 2.6 As a result, the recommendation for Cabinet to recommend that Council approve an updated TEEP statement that allows the Council to continue the current blue bin recycling collection system where all legally required recycling materials are co-collected in a single container for ease of use by the customer.
- 2.7 Within Fenland, food waste makes up more than a third of the 23,000 tonnes of domestic residual waste produced and collected in Fenland each year.
- 2.8 Fenland's [Waste Service Standards](#), last updated in 2018, require an update to include the requirements of weekly food waste and other changes. These are set out in appendix 1, including some minor changes to reflect improved working practices.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Recommend to Full Council the approval of Fenland's updated Waste Service Standards as set out in appendix 1
- 3.2 Recommend to Full Council the approval of updated TEEP statement as set out in appendix 2 in line with Simpler Recycling and Environment Act 2021 requirements.
- 3.3 Recommend to Full Council the approval of the suggested amendment to the waste strategy as set out in appendix 4 to allow for the required weekly food waste collections to commence from 30 March 2026.
- 3.4 For members to note that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership are working on an update to the current area-based waste strategy approved by Council in 2008. This will be presented for member consideration later in 2025.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	<i>[Insert Reference No. From Forward Plan. (It is a legal requirement to include key executive decisions on the forward plan for 28 days before the decision requested in this report is taken).</i>
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Peter Murphy Portfolio Holder for Refuse & Cleansing, Parks and Open Space. Cllr Peter Murphy Portfolio Holder for Refuse and Cleansing, Parks and Open Spaces.
Report Originator(s)	Mark Mathews Head of Environmental Services
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd Chief Executive Carol Pilson Corporate Director

Background Papers	Fenland's Waste Service Standards 2018. New Burdens Doctrine Guidance Cabinet Report 15 July 2024 - DEFRA Funded Food Waste Vehicle Purchase Fenland TEEP Assessment

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

2 Weekly Food Waste Collections

- 2.1 The government announced in 2018 that a key element of their waste and resources plan was for the weekly collection of domestic food waste and increased requirements for businesses to recycle more, with an emphasis on both closed loop waste management and the producer pays principles.
- 2.2 Following extended consultation periods and many years of delays, including uncertainty for Cambridgeshire around if the county would collect food waste at all, the weekly collection of food waste from all properties will be a legal requirement from the end of March 2026.
- 2.3 'All properties' includes flats, communal collection areas and remote properties. For Fenland this represents a particular issue, because around 1,709 (3%) of properties are on either narrow or extremely remote roads, 3,953 (8%) are flats and 16,257 (33%) are rural.
- 2.4 As reported to Cabinet in [July 2024](#), upon appeal, Defra have improved the capital funding offered by £235,000 to £1,061,991 towards the vehicles and other equipment, such as food waste caddies, required.
 - The vehicles have been ordered and Cabinet approval will be sought in March to secure the required containers for the food waste collection.

- 2.5 Fenland's most recent waste analysis demonstrates large percentages of food waste within residual (green bin/black bag) waste.

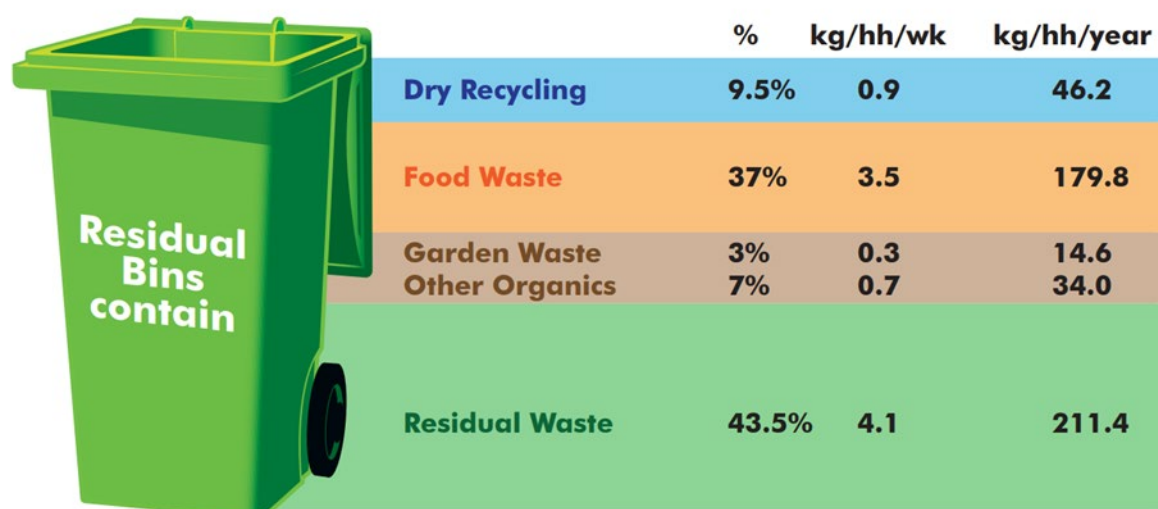


Figure 1: Residual Waste Analysis Results

- 2.6 The waste analysis shows that each property creates almost 180 kg of food waste each year. This is more than a third of the residual waste collected.
- 2.7 We know from the experience of other authorities that, with ongoing good quality communications and the provision of kitchen caddies and liners, around half of this material is separated for the food waste collection by customers.
- 2.8 As such the current rounds and logistics are modelled on this basis along with WRAP research data and an anticipated 3,200 to 4,000 tonnes of food waste being collected each year.
- 2.9 The standard receptacles offering will be as follows, although colour of the caddies may be different:

5 litre kitchen caddy	All properties	
Roll of caddy liners	All properties	
23 litre outdoor caddy with lockable handle	All properties with a suitable kerbside waste collection point	

120 – 240 litre wheeled bin housing	Communal collection points shared by flatted properties.	

2.10 The detail of the types of food waste customers will be able to recycle will require confirmation from the County Council and their contractor, but will likely include:

- Food waste, such as plate scrapings and spoilt or mouldy food
- fruit and vegetables, including peelings, rinds and cores
- All food scraps, including eggshells, bread, rice, pasta
- cooked or raw meat and fish, including bones
- dairy foods, such as cheese, eggs, yoghurt
- teabags and coffee grounds
- the plastic or paper bags used to line the kitchen caddy

The food waste service will **not** collect:

- garden waste
- food packaging, including cardboard
- metals or glass
- animal waste, litter or carcasses
- other household waste.

- 2.11 A clear communications plan is being developed for approval of the portfolio holders such that all households have the correct guidance and information to make best use of the new service. WRAP have already provided Fenland with communication templates to match the national campaigns, and in cooperation with the portfolio holders these will be utilised to develop the bespoke Fenland literature and social media information.
- 2.12 Alongside the capital funding and investment by Defra a commitment has been made to cover the net revenue burden in line with New Burdens doctrine.
- 2.13 There will be an increased staffing resource requirement, along with support services, and this will be presented to members once Defra has provided

improved clarity over how the [New Burdens](#) funding will work for rural districts such as Fenland.

- 2.14 Along with staffing, we are also awaiting a capital bid request made to Defra for an extension to the vehicle workshop at Melbourne Avenue and will keep members up to date with this as we hear.
- 2.15 Members will be kept up to date through portfolio holder updates, briefings and further reports to cabinet and other relevant committees.

3 Recycling Blue Bin Performance 2022/23

- 3.1 When considering the requirements of Simpler Recycling we need to look at how effective the current recycling service is.
- 3.2 Defra's most recently published waste and recycling information (2022/23) shows that Fenland's customers actively use the recycling service.

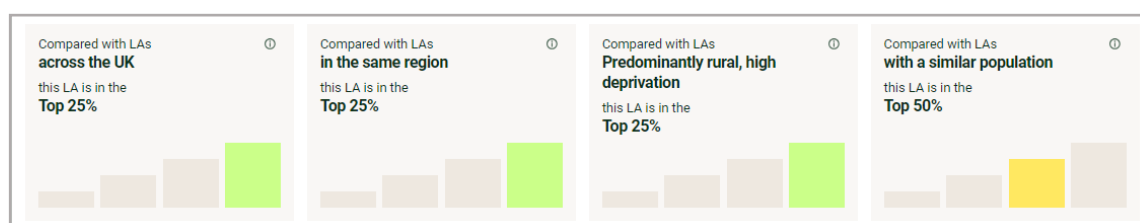


Figure 2: Defra 2022/23 Fenland's Collected Weight of Recycling Performance

- 3.3 When it comes to the weight of good quality recycling that Fenland's customers put in their blue bins, they perform in the top quartile nationally, regionally and when compared to similar authorities.

THIS LAs AVERAGE YIELD PER HOUSEHOLD						
6 Core Materials	Paper	Cardboard	Cans	Glass	Plastic Bottles	Plastic Tubs And Trays
206.1kg	43.2kg	58.7kg	12.5kg	65.1kg	14.4kg	12.2kg
COMPARED TO LAs ACROSS THE UK						
175.7kg	33.7kg	47.3kg	11.9kg	56.9kg	14kg	11.8kg

Figure 3: WRAP Average Weight of Materials Per Household (kgs) 2022/23

- 3.4 On average each household in Fenland sorts more than 206kg of good quality materials for recycling each year. This is 18% more than the national average.

4 Simpler Recycling

- 4.1 A clarification of the [Simpler Recycling](#) policy paper announced by government recently, creates a default requirement for households to have 4 containers for:
 - residual (non-recyclable) waste
 - food waste
 - paper and card

- all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass)
- 4.2 The policy also sets out that councils still have the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need. This includes maintaining mixed dry recycling co-collected in a single bin, as Fenland does at present, where a case for economic and/or environmental benefits can be shown. This must be established through a published statement of the Technical, Environmental, Economic and Practicable (TEEP Assessment) reasons for a continued mixed recycling collection.
- 4.3 The updated TEEP Assessment is provided at appendix 2 and refers to the comprehensive work completed by WRAP funded consultants in 2022, with the report's Executive Summary provided for information at appendix 3, around the effectiveness of potential changes to collections systems.
- 4.4 The summary of the WRAP findings for Fenland were (costs from 2022):
- Where [separately collected] food waste is introduced there is an increase in the recycling rate from 40% to 45%.
 - Where the dry recycling service is changed from comingled to two-stream or multi-stream, there is no change in recycling performance.
 - Only when the residual bin capacity is decreased from 240 litres to 180 litres does the recycling rate increase again to 50%.
 - Where a multi-stream [kerbside sort] recycling collection is introduced the increase in costs is highest at £1,179,000 but with no further impact on the recycling rate compared to other options.
 - The next most expensive options are those with fortnightly two-stream dry recycling collections using a split body vehicle at between £879,000 and £926,000, but again with no increase in the recycling rate.
 - Where a two-stream dry recycling collection using alternating collections rather than a split body RCV is introduced, this has the lowest cost increase but the same recycling performance as all other options.
- 4.5 The conclusion of this work is that they predict a 5% increase in the overall recycling rate as a result of introducing food waste collections, but that the more costly additional recycling services, such as an additional separate paper/card collection, do not offer any increase in the amount of recycling collected.
- 4.6 It is therefore clear that the proposed update to Fenland's TEEP statement should reflect this conclusion because there is no economic or environmental advantage for any changes to the current comingled recycling collections.
- 4.7 Agreement to this updated statement will allow the Council to continue to collect recycling comingled in blue bins without the need to move to the additional recycling bin for paper and card suggested by Simpler Recycling.

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Waste Service Standards set out the approach that our customers can expect to the domestic waste services provided, including our response to service issues such as missed collections or contaminated bins. The implementation of weekly food waste collections has been included in this updated standards document for approval [appendix 1].
- 5.2 The simpler recycling guidance requires the council to collect paper and care separately unless it can be demonstrated through a TEEP statement why this might not be the best solution for the collection authority area. The evidence is that it would cost in the region of £1 million to offer this additional service with no increase in recycling collected and no environmental benefit. The TEEP statement at appendix 2 is required if the Council is to continue to collect recycling through the very effective blue bin service.
- 5.3 The current Waste Strategy is out of date and requires updating to include the statutory weekly food waste collections from domestic premises.
- 5.4 There is a larger piece of work ongoing with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough partner authorities that will result in a new waste strategy being agreed for the area. Ahead of agreement to this new strategy Fenland will need to include the provision of weekly food waste collections from all premises. Waste Strategy changes require the approval of Council upon recommendation from Cabinet.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Government extensively consulted on the changes that ultimately created changes enacted in the Environment Act 2021.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Simpler Recycling – to create an additional service separately collecting paper and card was considered, but the additional cost and lack of benefit resulted in the proposed continuation of the existing recycling service.
- 7.2 Weekly Food Waste – co-collecting with garden waste was considered, but didn't offer any efficiencies over a separate collection and complicated the disposal options.
- 7.3 Residual Waste Bin Size - A move to 180 litre residual waste bins in line with the WRAP recommendations was considered, but the portfolio holder was not convinced that the upfront cost to Fenland of providing each property with a new residual waste bin would generate sufficient savings to warrant the change.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.2 The weekly food waste collections are a statutory requirement for waste collection authorities to implement prior to April 2026.

8.3 Financial Implications

- 8.4 As previously reported to members, there remains the risk that the capital funding provided by Defra will not meet with the total capital costs of the new service. Defra have been written to requesting further clarification on this issue and this is something that the district council association is also pursuing.
- 8.5 Likewise, we still await clarity, beyond that net costs are covered as set out in the New Burdens Guidance, on how the revenue funding will be provided to cover the costs of the new service and the transition to this service.

8.6 Equality Implications

- 8.7 The waste and recycling service is offered in a universal fashion, with service adjustments such as assisted collections where required and the related equality impact assessment will be updated ahead of the food waste service implementation.

9 SCHEDULES

Appendix 1 – Waste Service Standards Updated 2025

Appendix 2 – TEEP Assessment Fenland District Council 2025

Appendix 3 - Executive Summary WRAP Collection System Modelling 2022

Appendix 4 - Domestic Waste Collection Frequency and Methodology

Waste Service Standards (Reviewed 2025)

Fenland District Council provides an integrated refuse and recycling service that includes the collection of a broad range of dry recycling materials and garden waste. The Garden Waste Service is a subscription only service. **From 30 March 2026 this service will include the separate weekly collection of domestic food waste.**

Points of note, supplementary to service standards approved in 2018:

- 1. Added food waste caddies as a Bin option ready for the 2026 commencement of that statutory weekly service.**
- 2. Additional bin deliveries will attract the standard delivery fee as set out in fees and charges.**
- 3. Qualifying criteria for additional blue bin is reduced from 5 people in a household to 4, and a delivery charge applies.**
- 4. Customers have 2 days from the day of collection to report a missed collection.**
- 5. The County Council no longer process residual domestic or commercial waste via Mechanical Biological Treatment. This document is updated accordingly.**
- 6. To maximise efficiency, Garden Waste 'missed collections' are co-collected with residual waste 'missed collections'.**

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
1	Bin¹ out and no record on in-cab system of reason for non-collection, and in the case of Garden Waste Service, that there is a valid subscription for the bin. "Missed Bin"	Following customer contact – - A return collection will be offered same or next day at the request of customer up to two working days from the day of collection In cases of non-residual waste: - Customer made aware that recycling or composting cannot be guaranteed and materials might be sent for landfill or Energy from Waste. ~~treatment at Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant with residual waste~~ - Sacks offered as additional storage where customer does not want recycling disposed of. ~~at MBT plant~~ ~~In cases of Garden Waste Service~~ ~~Subscription application details sent to customer where a subscription is not in place~~ ~~Garden Waste collected on missed collections will be collected separately from other materials and will be processed for composting~~	- Collection² same or next working day - Deliver by post, 2 appropriate sacks and system highlighted for collection on next scheduled collection - Advise customer that excess will be allowed at the next collection as an exception to our normal policy on additional waste - Garden Waste Service, check bin clearly displays subscription sticker and property is on collection record	- Waste removed in a timely fashion - Responsive service delivery for customer - Efficient collection system - Customer ownership of bin collection system - Improved customer awareness of services - Encourage participation in Garden Waste Service

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
2	Bin reported via in-cab system ³ as not at point of collection prior to time of collection. "Bin Not Out"	- No repeat collection provided Following customer contact – - Customer made aware that general waste can be taken to HWRC for disposal - Sacks offered where customer will need to contain extra recycling or refuse until the next collection - Bin can be presented on next scheduled collection.	- Record made on in-cab system - Bin emptied on next scheduled collection day for that bin - Deliver by post 2 clear or black sacks and system highlighted for collection on next scheduled collection	- Encourages responsible use of the refuse/recycling service - Improved education and awareness about the service - Effective use of resources - Prevents misuse of the Garden Waste Service
3	Wrongly sorted ⁵ recycling or composting bin identified prior to collection	- No repeat collection provided - Information in relation to reason for non-collection attached to bin Following customer contact – - Customer made aware that general waste can be taken to HWRC for disposal - Sacks offered where customer will need to contain extra recycling - Contaminated non-subscription brown bins removed within 5 working days	- Record made on in-cab system with detail of issue - Educational leaflet or letter produced and sent where appropriate - Bin emptied on next scheduled collection day for that bin - Deliver by post, 2 recycling sacks and system highlighted for collection on next scheduled collection - Arrange removal of any non-subscription bins identified and reported as presented and containing incorrect materials - Educational visit offered where more than 2 occasions	- Encourages responsible use of the refuse/recycling service - Maintains awareness about the service and value of recycling/composting - Reduces chance of rejected loads at transfer station at a cost of ~£1000 per load. - Removes unused brown bins from circulation

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
			in 6 months. • Repeat occasions and deliberate misuse referred for enforcement	
4	Wrongly sorted recycling or composting bin identified after collection	• Customer made aware of issue with materials presented via letter, leaflet, card or personal visit	• Record made on in-cab system • Educational letter produced and sent next working day • Educational visit offered where more than 2 occasions in 6 months. • Repeat occasions and deliberate misuse referred for enforcement	• Encourages responsible use of the refuse/recycling service • Maintains awareness about the service and value of recycling/composting • Reduces chance of refused loads at transfer station at a cost of ~£1000 per load.
5	Customer identified by crew as not making effective use of recycling system	• ~~Bin emptied~~ • Customer made aware of issue with materials presented via letter, leaflet, card or personal visit	• Driver request Recycling Support visit in case of serious or repeat issues • Educational visit offered where more than 2 occasions in 6 months. • Repeat occasions and deliberate misuse referred for enforcement	• Enforces responsible use of the refuse/recycling service • Improved education and awareness about the service • Increased efficiency
6	Bin deemed to be beyond a reasonable weight by collection team “Heavy Bin”	• No repeat collection provided • Information in relation to reason for non-collection attached to bin Following customer contact – • Customer made aware that	• Record made on in-cab system with detail of issue • Educational letter produced and sent where appropriate • Bin emptied on next scheduled collection day for that bin if heavy items removed • Deliver by post, 2 appropriate	• Safe manual handling • Reduced potential for injury and compliance with local risk assessments and Health & Safety obligations

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		weight of bin needs reducing and that general waste can be taken to HWRC for disposal • Sacks offered where customer will need to contain extra recycling or refuse	sacks and system highlighted for collection on next scheduled collection	
7	Bin reported by customer as damaged	• Bin replaced once delivery fee paid. • Where bin damaged as the result of arson, this information will be shared with local fire safety team. • Sacks offered where customer will need to contain extra waste or recycling. • Bin replaced free of charge if damaged during collection and reported by crew.	• Crew record any issues on in-cab system • Replacement delivered within 5 working days following day of payment • New subscription issued where required	• Maintain customer satisfaction with service • Continuity of service following damage to containers
8	Bin lost or Stolen	• Customer asked to complete form after bin remains lost for two weeks • Bin replaced for fee after such time • Sacks offered where customer will need to contain extra waste, recycling	• Letter, bags and form delivered to customer for completion • Collection via bags arranged for subsequent two collections • Bin delivered 5 working days following return of payment • Usual delivery fees apply to replacement bins	• Maintain customer satisfaction with service • Reduce likelihood of unnecessary bin deliveries via two week wait

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
9	Waste in addition to the standard bins provided (or their sack equivalent). “Side Waste”	- Waste will not be collected unless contained within appropriate and approved bins/containers supplied and authorised by this council - Information stickers attached to unauthorised containers¹ of additional waste Following customer contact – - Customer made aware that general waste can be taken to HWRC for disposal - Customer made aware that additional blue bins are available for larger families who meet the criteria - Additional Residual bins for households of 6 or more who are recycling actively and cannot contain residual waste in bins supplied. Delivery charges apply. - Garden Waste Only See No.15	- Exception – where cases 2,3,4 6, 7 or 8 above result in authorised sacks being used for one week only - Record of additional waste kept on in-cab system - Information letter sent to customer where appropriate, including options around garden waste disposal - Additional and unauthorised containers will be removed and disposed of	- Manual handling - Heath & safety - Resident responsibility - Promotion of safe working practice
10	Bin lid not closed to a reasonable degree	- Bin emptied where safe to do so - It may be appropriate to treat bags presented on top of wheeled bin, with lid open or closed as per additional waste (9)	- Information letter sent to customer where appropriate - Driver request Recycling Support visit in case of serious or repeat issues	- Heath & safety compliance - Promotion of safe working practice - Prevent damage to bin

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
11	Street level access issue	• Every effort will be made by collection team to collect obstructed bins • Collection team return later same day to review access • Where feasible, bins will be walked to and collected • Upon failed later attempts record made on in-cab system Vehicular obstruction • Notice left with vehicles that regularly cause an issue for collection teams • Support for regular issues will be sought via local Police	• Arrangements made for return next working day upon failed second attempt • Where road construction or planned works prevents normal collection then temporary arrangements will be made and customers affected informed by letter	• Maintain customer satisfaction with service
12	Arrangements where customer cannot manage to move bins themselves. “Assisted Collection”	• Assisted collection provided from an agreed location on customer's property. • Application form to be completed. • Service commences week following first point of contact for a period of four weeks without completed application. • Bins will be collected, emptied and returned to the agreed point of collection. • Assisted collections will be reviewed a maximum of once	• Assisted collection recorded on in-cab system • Crews can report requirement of, and non requirement of, service via in-cab system	• Maintains customer's ability to live independently in their own home

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		every eighteen months via reapplication. - The council reserves the right to remove/refuse this service where other occupiers of the property can facilitate the presentation of waste. - An assisted collection can be refused where the nature or length of the surface over which the bin needs to be moved is considered unreasonable or unsafe. See Nos.18 and 21. - A reasonable limit will be placed on the number of garden waste subscription bins per property.		
13	Bins (and uncollected waste) not removed from collection point following collection	- Bins/waste should be removed from the collection point by the end of the day following collection. - Information letters sent where repeat issues. - Bins removed and replaced with alternative arrangements where persistent problems are identified.	- Letter sent to property and landlord where appropriate - Officer visit as required - Removal of bins a last resort solution	- Encourages responsible use of the refuse/recycling service - Improved education and awareness about the service - Increased efficiency
14	Bank holiday collection arrangements	- One day holidays will usually result in the collection being performed one day in arrears unless other arrangements prove to be beneficial. - Arrangements for the Christmas	Customers informed via website and delivery of bank holiday information.	- Customer well informed and confident with collection arrangements - Effective service delivery

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		and New Year will be advised each year.		
15	Request for extra waste containment	- Families of four or more will be entitled to an additional blue bin upon application. - Unused or abused bins will be removed. - Additional clear sacks for recycling can be requested and presented next to blue bins. - Garden Waste Only bins can be supplied and charged in line with Fees and Charges. - Home composting promoted - Unauthorised bins will not be emptied and will be removed and disposed of.	- Additional blue and green bins can be supplied upon criteria being met. Delivery charges apply for agreed additional bins. - Blue bin supply is expected to take precedence over green bin. - A record will be kept of such bins supplied and regularly reviewed. - Annual charges will need to be paid in advance or bins will not be collected. - Where bins are presented and not identified as authorised on the system then a record will be made on the in-cab system and the bins will be removed. and an information letter will be sent to customer.	- Increase recycling where possible - Reduce impact of additional waste on local environmental quality - Option of additional waste collection for properties of multiple occupancy - Demonstrate changes to policy as a result of customer request - To adhere to the objective of increasing recycling and reducing waste to landfill/Efw
16	Private access driveways	- With the exception of existing custom and practice collections are made at the Highway boundary with each property. - New dwellings where this might be an issue will be considered on their individual merits and where possible, agreement sought with developer to resolve any	- Supervisors will visit - General principle adhered to is that we offer a collection from the boundary of private property with the Highway, but each case is examined on its merits	- Waste collection issues planned out of future developments - Service provided where possible and suitable

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		potential issues at the planning stages in line with ~~Recap~~ waste guidelines. • With the authority of all concerned parties and receipt of suitable indemnity appropriate private roads can be included within collections. • Where access is narrow or not appropriate then an agreed point of collection will be established.		
17	Clinical Waste Collection Service	• Local collection points ~~are advertised through the Council shops, website. and with local healthcare professionals.~~ • Where a customer qualifies for a Clinical (Hygiene) Waste Collection on medical grounds then this will be provided in addition to the standard collections. • Service commenced for a period of three weeks prior to receipt of qualification materials. • Clinical Waste does not include offensive waste (Hygiene Waste) which can reasonably be accommodated with other residual waste services offered. • As set out in 22 below, charges can be made for the collection	• Qualification criteria may be required. • Clinical Waste resulting from treatment by medical professionals will not be collected. • Customer offered option of an additional residual waste container where required to contain Hygiene Waste. • Where charges apply, these will be waived where customers, through care in their own home, require collection of large amounts of Clinical Waste on a weekly or two-weekly basis.	• Compliance with duty of care • Equality of service provision • Enable care within their own home for those who require it • Efficient and effective Clinical Waste Service • Work in partnership with local business to provide the best service options

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		of Clinical Waste.		
18	Bin not presented in appropriate location for collection	- Recorded on system as 'not on boundary' - One courtesy collection possible same or next working day - Further occasions will result in non-collection of bin	- Information letter sent - Location of collection to be agreed by supervisor	Service efficiency
19	Bins not present at property at change of occupier	- Where bins have previously been delivered to a property and one or more is missing following a change of occupier then replacements will be charged for at a set fee. - Current fee is set out in Fees and Charges - New builds and first sets of bins are supplied at reasonable charge or purchased and provided by the developer	- Letter sent to new occupier - Bin delivered five working days from day of payment receipt - Details of Garden Waste subscription sent	- Reduce incidence of bins being removed from properties as customers move within or outside of the district - Increased efficiencies - Promote Garden Waste Service

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
20	Change of occupier waste issues	A one-off courtesy collection for new occupiers is available where customers find bins full following a change of occupier at a property.	- Collection provided same or next working day of suitable contents of approved bins at property all waste sent for processing at Mechanical Biological Treatment plant - Local household waste recycling centres will take a range of household waste delivered by householder - Courtesy collection available only to property occupiers and reasonable limits apply	Maintain customer satisfaction with service
21	Collections from properties on or near poor quality or extraordinary roadways including isolated and inaccessible properties	Where roadway, adopted or otherwise, present a risk to staff, an exceptional cost or could damage council vehicles, then the roadway will not be utilised.	Alternative locations for collection will be given to customers by supervisors.	- Reduced risk of accident - Providing an efficient and effective service to all customers
22	Charges for waste collection	- Where the Controlled Waste Regulations, as adopted by County Council and Fenland District Council, allow then charges will be applied and identified in Fees and Charges. - To reduce cold callers collecting presented waste and resultant fly-tipping, fees charged for Bulky Waste collection are non-refundable.	- Garden (organic) Waste - Bulky Waste - Commercial Waste - Clinical Waste	- Service efficiency - Reduced costs of collection - Users of service pay for those services - Reduced flytipping

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
23	Waste generated by Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) ⁸	• In keeping with the Council's support of recycling and the waste hierarchy, and in keeping with the license for the property, landlords of HMOs must ensure that their tenants understand and comply with the waste collection arrangements at their property, as set out within these service standards. • As set out in 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10 of these service standards, waste must be contained in the containers provided and sorted and presented to allow for the maximum amount of recycling to be achieved. • In line with 15 of these service standards, household of five or more will be entitled to an additional blue bin upon application and unused or abused [recycling] bins will be removed. • In line with 9 of these service standards, households of 6 or more who are recycling actively and cannot contain residual waste in bins will be supplied with an additional residual waste bin. Delivery charges apply. • Waste accumulations at	• Additional blue and green bins can be supplied upon criteria being met • Blue bin (recycling) supply is expected to take precedence over residual waste bin • A record will be kept of such bins supplied and regularly reviewed • Where bins are presented and not identified as authorised on the system then a record will be made on the in-cab system, the bins will be removed	• Increase recycling where possible • Reduce impact of additional waste on local environmental quality • Option of additional waste collection for properties of multiple occupancy • Provide clarity to landlords on their responsibilities • To adhere to the objective of increasing recycling and reducing waste to landfill • Ensure domestic waste and waste as a result of commercial activities is separate and appropriately disposed of.

	SERVICE ISSUE	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION	CUSTOMER IMPACT
		properties, waste outside of these service standards, construction waste and waste generated as property occupier(s) change are not domestic waste and will need collection by approved waste carriers at the instruction of the landlord.		

Footnotes –

1. **Bins** – this term is to include all types of refuse containment approved by FDC for customer use in this system; historically 240lt and 140lt wheeled bins, or 90lt sacks, and can include 180lt or other size containers as the preferred waste container size. In relation to the subscription garden waste service, the container is a 240lt wheeled bin **or sack alternative in approved locations. To include 23lt Food Waste containers, Food Waste Sacks and Kitchen Caddies from March 2026.**
2. **Collection** – attend property or normal collection point or the purpose of collecting waste as presented. The collection will be considered as having been completed by attendance regardless of whether waste is presented or not.
3. **In-cab system** – primarily on-board electronic systems for the recording of events and property attributes, although the term to also include back-up paper-based systems.
4. **Offensive Waste** – a category of waste including sanitary waste, nappies and incontinence pads.
5. **Wrongly sorted** – also known as incorrectly sorted and contaminated. This is to be any material deemed by the collection staff to be outside of the materials suitable for collection in the supplied container, and as a result designates the entire contents of the Bin¹ as wrongly sorted. Collection staff will use their best judgement in determining sensible levels but will act to preserve the quality of the materials collected.
6. **Containers** – bins, sacks, boxes or otherwise, that are used with or without ~~the~~ authority, to contain and present waste.
7. **Subscription** – refers to the charges identified within Fees and Charges for the collection of brown Bins¹ as part of the Fenland Garden Waste Service.
8. **HMOs** - are subject to mandatory licensing in line with section 55(2)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 and the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018. As defined in legislation, an HMO (including flats) is a property occupied by five or more persons, from two or more separate households.

Template written assessment: collecting paper and card with plastic, metal and glass

Waste collection authorities and other waste collectors can use this template to create a written assessment to collect paper and card with other dry recyclable waste (plastic, metal and glass). You do not have to use this template and can choose to use a different format. You should retain a record of your written assessment and any supporting evidence.

You should read the [guidance on collecting paper and card with other dry recyclable waste](#) before you fill in this template.

Information about your organisation

Name of waste collector or waste collection authority

Fenland District Council

Waste carrier number

CBDL8197

Information about the assessment

How many written assessments have you (the waste collector or waste collection authority) completed?

2 prior to this assessment

What geographical area, collection route or type of premises does this written assessment cover?

Fenland District, all domestic collections

Which dry recyclable waste will you collect with paper and card?

Dry Mixed Recycling – DMR [metals, glass, plastics, paper and card]

Exceptions you are relying on

Which exception, or exceptions, are you relying on (technical, economic or environmental)?

Economic and Environmental

1. Collecting separately is not 'technically practicable'

If you are relying on this exception, add the technical reasons why

What type of data have you used?

Add all that apply.

For example:

- analysis completed by your organisation
- analysis completed by a consultant
- WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Programme) data
- photographs
- floor plans
- other documentation (describe)

2. Collecting separately is not 'economically practicable'

If you are relying on this exception, add the economic reasons why.

As identified in previous [assessments](#) separate collection of paper and card will double the costs of collection with a low return on the materials collected that does not cover the additional costs of collection.

Fenland is party to a jointly procured dry mixed recycling contract until Sept 2029. To vary this contract to allow for the separate collection of paper and card would be difficult and expensive.

WRAP report conducted by Eunomia in 2022 looking at viability of collection options determined that fortnightly 2 stream collections increased costs without an increase in the recycling rate.

What type of data have you used?

Add all that apply.

For example:

- analysis completed by your organisation
- analysis completed by a consultant
- WRAP data
- other documentation (describe)

WRAP report conducted in 2022* (TRU001-018) that assessed the collection options for Fenland as a rural district authority and concluded: “**fortnightly two-stream** dry recycling collections using a split body vehicle (Options 2a and 3b) at between **£879,000** and **£926,000** [overall net above existing 2022 costs], ... with **no increase** in the **recycling rate.**”

*[WRAP, 2022, Waste and Recycling Services Support for Fenland District Council Final Report, Prepared by Eunomia]

3. Collecting separately has ‘no significant environmental benefit’

If you are relying on this exception, add the environmental reasons why.

With no additional recycling anticipated by WRAP through their work in 2022 specifically on Fenland, we cannot see why the additional vehicles and travelled miles for collection would be of any benefit overall.

What type of data have you used?

Add all that apply.

For example:

- analysis completed by your organisation
- analysis completed by a consultant
- WRAP data
- other documentation (describe)

WRAP report conducted in 2022* (TRU001-018) that assessed the collection options for Fenland as a rural district authority and concluded: “**fortnightly two-stream** dry recycling collections using a split body vehicle (Options 2a and 3b) at between **£879,000** and **£926,000** [overall net above existing 2022 costs], ... with **no increase** in the **recycling rate.**”

*[WRAP, 2022, Waste and Recycling Services Support for Fenland District Council Final Report, Prepared by Eunomia]

Waste and Recycling Services Support for Fenland District Council



This report provides Fenland District Council with information on the relative cost and performance of alternative collection options to help inform future service design.

WRAP's vision is a world in which resources are used sustainably.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through re-inventing how we design, produce and sell products; re-thinking how we use and consume products; and re-defining what is possible through re-use and recycling.

Find out more at www.wrap.org.uk

Document reference (please use this reference when citing WRAP's work):

[WRAP, 2022, Waste and Recycling Services Support for Fenland District Council Final Report, Prepared by Eunomia]

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Front cover photography: Waste Collection

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Executive Summary

Eunomia Research and Consulting (Eunomia) was commissioned in January 2022 by WRAP, on behalf of Fenland District Council (FDC), to carry out an options appraisal of the household waste collection service. The purpose of this options appraisal was to assess possible service changes through an options appraisal process, which may help FDC increase current recycling performance at the same time as identifying potential efficiency savings.

The outcomes of this study are intended to inform FDC's decision-making regarding the scope and nature of future household waste collection services in Fenland. Findings from this study will also support FDC in defining specifications for the new waste treatment and disposal contract due to commence in September 2024.

The proposed options, set out in Table E1, were modelled, using Eunomia's Hermes' collection tool in order to provide FDC with cost, operational and performance information on each of the options.

Table E1: Options Modelled

Option	Residual waste	Dry recycling	Garden waste	Food waste
Baseline	Fortnightly via 240 litre wheeled bin	Fortnightly via 240 litre wheeled bin (glass, paper & card, tins & cans, aerosols, foil, plastic bottles & PTT, cartons)	Fortnightly chargeable via 240 litre wheeled bin	
Option 1				Separate weekly food via 7l caddy and 23l bin using dedicated vehicles (7.5t or equiv.)
Option 1a	Fortnightly via 180 litre wheeled bin			Separate weekly food using dedicated vehicles (7.5t or equiv.)
Option 2a		Fortnightly two-stream recycling (card & paper separate) via wheeled bin (containers stream) and reusable sack OR wheeled bin (fibres stream) on split body RCV		Separate weekly food using dedicated vehicles (7.5t or equiv.)

Option	Residual waste	Dry recycling	Garden waste	Food waste
Option 2b		Alternating fortnightly two-stream recycling (card & paper separate) via wheeled bin (containers stream) and wheeled bin (fibres stream) on RCV		Separate weekly food using dedicated vehicles (7.5t or equiv.)
Option 3a		Alternating fortnightly two-stream recycling (card & paper separate) via wheeled bin (containers) and wheeled bin (fibres) on RCV with Pod		Weekly food co-collected with recycling/residual via Pod
Option 3b		Fortnightly two-stream recycling (card & paper separate) via wheeled bin (containers stream) and wheeled bin (fibres stream) on split body RCV with Pod		Weekly food co-collected with recycling/residual via Pod
Option 4		Weekly via multi-stream collection utilising Resource Recovery Vehicles (via boxes / reusable sacks)		Weekly food co-collected with multi-stream dry recyclables utilising Resource Recovery Vehicle

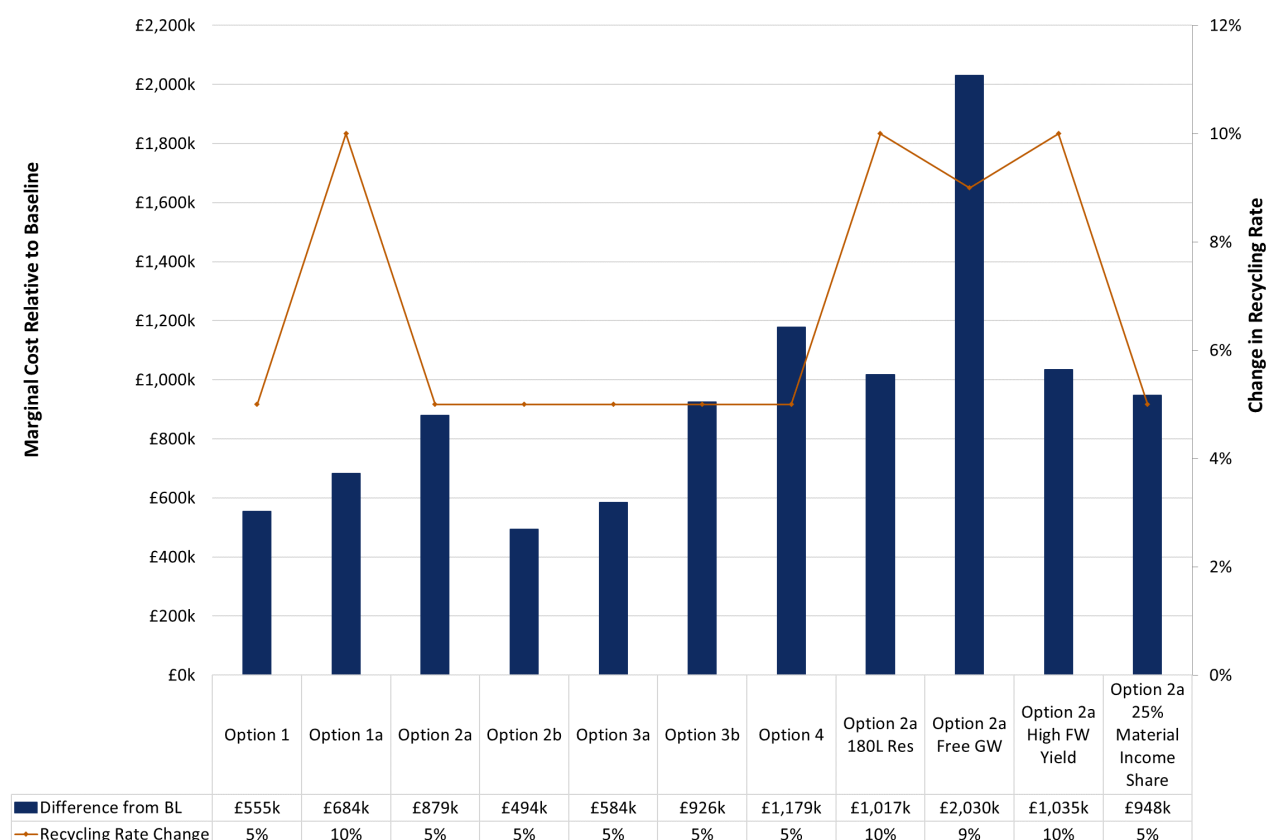
From the options modelled and the qualitative assessment undertaken as part of Stage 1, a 'preferred option' (Option 2a) was taken forward to Stage 2 for further investigation. The following variants and sensitivities were modelled in addition to Option 2a:

- Reduction in the capacity of the residual waste bin from 240-litres to 180-litres;
- Free garden waste;
- Higher food waste yield; and
- Decreased material values whereby FDC receive 25%, instead of 50%, of material income share.

In order to model future scenarios effectively, a baseline model was created, which reflected as closely as possible FDC's waste operations from a performance and operational perspective. The indicative change in performance assumed under each of the different options was informed by the benchmarking exercise, these assumptions and cost and operational data were agreed with FDC in advance of modelling.

Figure E1 summarises the change in the marginal costs of collection compared to the baseline and the performance of the different options.

Figure E1: Difference in Cost and Performance of Options compared to the Baseline



The different proposed options will entail a range of potential changes to kerbside collections for residents and ultimately alter the net cost of the waste service. The information presented in Figure E1 suggests:

- Where only **food waste** is introduced (Option 1), there is an **increase in the recycling rate** from 40% to **45%**.
- Where the **dry recycling** service is changed from comingled to **two-stream or multi-stream** (Options 2a – 4), there is **no change in recycling performance**.
- Only when the residual bin capacity is decreased (Option 1a) from 240 litres to 180 litres does the recycling rate increase again to **50%**.
- The marginal **cost of reducing residual capacity** (Option 1a) is the **lowest** out of all the options. However, if this was introduced it may **prevent a future change** to a **3-weekly** residual collection which is becoming more popular.
- Where a **multi-stream** recycling collection is introduced (Option 4), the increase in costs is **highest** at **£1,179,000** but with **no further impact** on the **recycling rate** compared to other options.
- The **next most expensive** options are those with **fortnightly two-stream** dry recycling collections using a split body vehicle (Options 2a and 3b) at between **£879,000** and **£926,000**, but again with **no increase** in the **recycling rate**.
- Where a **two-stream** dry recycling collection using **alternating collections** rather than a split body RCV is introduced (Option 2b), this has the **lowest cost increase** but the **same recycling performance** as all other Stage 1 options apart from 1a.

The main findings of Stage 2 modelling suggest:

- Again, as with Option 1a, the **reduction of residual capacity increases recycling performance** by **5%** compared to **Option 2a** and **10%** compared to the **baseline**. However, due to the **two-stream** dry recycling scheme and factors such as the cost of split body RCVs and increased tipping times, the **difference in cost** compared to the baseline is **higher** than in Option 1a and 2a.
- The impact of a **free garden waste service** was found to **increase recycling rates** by **9%** compared to the **baseline** and **4%** compared to **Option 2a**. This results from garden waste that was previously composted or collected at HWRCs being collected at the kerbside and diversion from the kerbside residual stream. However, this has the **highest costs** out of any of the options, including Stage 1 options.
- **Higher food waste yields** also **increase performance** by an **extra 5%** compared to Option 2a as with reducing residual capacity, but at an **increased cost**.
- If FDC receives **25%** instead of 50% of the **material income share**, **costs increase** slightly compared to Option 2a due to the **loss of income**.

There are several key points that have emerged from the modelling process which are worth noting whilst considering the options available to FDC.

- All options modelling an increase in the recycling rates, driven initially by the **introduction of food waste**, and further increased due to the **reduction of residual bin capacity** from 120-litres per week to 90-litres per week.
- Both of these changes lead to the greatest improvement in recycling performance. However, this may make it more difficult to introduce a 3-weekly residual collection in future (provision of 60-litres per week residual bin capacity if using a 180-litre bin rather than 80-litres per week if a 240-litre bin was still used) if this became an option for consideration.
- The changes to recycling systems such as two-stream and multi-stream increase costs without any associated improvement in recycling performance. However, the multi-stream option was found to drastically reduce contamination whilst improving the quality of material collected for recycling.
- For the two-stream options with either alternating collections or the use of a split body vehicle, the options with vehicles with pods (Options 3a and 3b) allow food waste to be collected on residual and recycling rounds. However, these are more expensive than their non-pod counterparts (Options 2a and 2b) and there are hidden costs that are not included within the modelling. For example, in Option 3b, a single compartment RCV with pod is used for residual and a split-back RCV with pod is used for recycling, meaning that the number of spare vehicles required would be higher and there is an inability to share fleet across the services.

The sensitivities also provided some interesting points for consideration.

- If much higher food waste yields are desired, it is important to consider the role communications have to play, and to ensure an appropriate budget is allocated to engage with residents so that positive behaviour change is maintained and consistent messaging and feedback on performance is provided.

Appendix 4

Domestic Waste Collection Frequency and Methodology

Update to Waste Strategy February 2025

Waste Type	Frequency	Container	Alternative	Communal Collection
Dry Mixed Recycling	2 weekly	240 lt Blue Wheeled Bin	Clear Sack	360-1100 lt Wheeled bin
Residual Waste	2 weekly	240 lt Green Wheeled Bin	Black Sack	360-1100 lt Wheeled bin
Food Waste	Weekly	23 lt food waste caddy		120-240 lt wheeled bin in food waste housing
Garden Waste	2 weekly - subscription based service	240 lt Brown Wheeled Bin	Paper Sacks	
Clinical Waste [Sharps]	Chargeable upon request		Returned via participating pharmacies	
Dialysis Waste	Weekly	Yellow Sacks		
Hygiene Waste	2 weekly	240 lt Grey Lidded Wheeled Bin		
Bulky Waste	Chargeable upon request		Household Waste Sites	

Notes:

1. Changes highlighted in red.
2. Fenland's Waste Service Standards provide details of additional containers for larger families and other process elements.
3. Commercial Waste Services are also offered in line with legislation.

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24.02.25	
Report Title:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To consider approval of a Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan 2024-2029

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 It is a requirement from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to publish a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy and action plan.
- 2.2 The council has responded positively to the needs of the community and successfully bid for central government funding to provide services and initiatives to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Fenland.
- 2.3 The strategy set out in Appendix A and Action Plan at Appendix B has been co-produced under the leadership of the portfolio holder with a large number of partners in the public, private and community and voluntary sector who recognise that homelessness is everyone's business and homelessness is an unacceptable outcome.
- 2.4 The council has undertaken two consultation exercises including the community and those with lived experience to help shape the documents. The council received 24 responses to the consultation in total. The consultation feedback and the council's response is set out in Appendix C & D and the changes in response to the consultation are highlighted in yellow in the action plan. As part of the consultation the strategy and action plan was sent to our advisors at the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government for comment, no comment or feedback was received.
- 2.5 Once approved, the documents will be published on the website

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2024/2029.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Samantha Hoy Portfolio Holder for Housing shoy@fenland.gov.uk
Report Originator(s)	Sarah Gove Housing & Communities Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Dan Horn Assistant Director dhorn@fenland.gov.uk Sarah Gove (as above) sgove@fenland.gov.uk Carol Pilson Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk
Background Papers	MHCLG Homelessness Code of Guidance For Local Authorities

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Council is required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & local Government (MHCLG) to produce a strategy outlining how it will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 1.2 The strategy at Appendix A outlines the positive impact achieved to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, thanks to the extensive and effective partnership across both statutory and voluntary partners. It also sets out the needs and trends for homelessness within Fenland to enable the council to respond positively and proactively with partners which include broader statutory public services and third sector organisations to maximise positive outcomes for our clients. This is detailed into an action at Appendix B
- 1.3 Whilst demand for services relating to general needs homelessness is increasing in line with the national picture (8 % in 2024) , largely due to the cost of living crisis, the number of rough sleepers has reduced from 10 to 7 (based on the annual rough sleeper count independently verified in November 2023 & 2024). However, the strategy sets out steps to manage demand and provide a range of options for anyone who contacts our services.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The strategy action plan (informed by the consultation responses) sets out 9 key areas with specific actions to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Fenland over the next 5 years.
- 2.2 The action plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure progress is made and issues remain current . This will be done through the annual service planning cycle linked to the business plan of the council.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The strategy set out in Appendix A and Action plan at Appendix B has been co-produced under the leadership of the Portfolio Holder with a large number of partners in the public, private and community and voluntary sector who recognise that homelessness is everyone's business and homelessness is the unacceptable outcome.
- 3.2 The consultation process was undertaken from July 2024 for 10 weeks. There were 15 responses from Fenland residents, people working in Fenland and those in public sector organisations at Appendix D. The council also undertook a separate consultation exercise with those people with lived experience. There were 9 responses undertaken via face to face or telephone interview with 4 key questions. An Interpreter was used where English was not the first or understood language. This was a valuable insight to those clients who had been or who are currently homeless or rough sleeping. The results can be seen at Appendix C with the actions added to the action plan and highlighted yellow.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Council is obliged to produce a Strategy and has followed all of the appropriate procedural steps to bring this before Cabinet for consideration. The only other alternatives are to not produce a strategy at all which would be contrary to requirements or to produce a different strategy however, the content of the strategy recommended for approval has been arrived at following detailed preparation.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

The Council is obliged to produce a strategy. The recommendations set out in this Report are designed to ensure that the Council meets its obligations in relation to the Strategy and is presented following fulfilment of the required procedural steps such as stakeholder input and wider consultation.

5.2 Financial Implications

Not Applicable

5.3 Equality Implications

An Equality Customer Impact Assessment (ECIA) has been completed and can be seen at Appendix E

6 SCHEDULES

Appendix A - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy

Appendix B - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan

Appendix C - Consultation responses – lived experience client group

Appendix D- Consultation responses – general consultation community, partners, etc

Appendix E - Equality Customer Impact Assessment

Fenland District Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29

Draft Version

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Introduction

In Fenland our partnership strives to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, it's in our core values. We are proud of the achievements we have made together for our clients who are at the heart of all that we do.

The case study below sets the scene for our strategy 2024-2029, one of ambition and creativity despite very significant nationwide challenges.

Our strategy sets out the current picture in Fenland, what we have achieved and how together we plan to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next 5 years.

We are very proud of our partnership of ambitious and committed professionals who help to bring about great outcomes for our clients.

This case study celebrates our collaboration with Ferry Project and Places For People, Homes England and Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) and the council to enable 6 Modular Homes (Jubilee Place) under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme for which we are extremely grateful. Secondly, and most importantly it became home for M who has kindly agreed to share his story.

Case Study

M was being supported by CGL Outreach Team whilst sleeping rough locally. This was a result of his alcohol addiction and subsequent loss of work. M's alcohol dependency resulted in regular hospital visits, and he also suffers with anxiety and depression. M had full settled status; however, he had no passport or benefits in place. He was also not seeking any support for his alcohol use or mental wellbeing. M only speaks his native language of Polish therefore it was difficult for him to access services.

M was identified as a potential client for Jubilee Place and his progress was discussed regularly at the weekly Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) meetings. The decision was made to accommodate M into one of Ferry Project Emergency Accommodation units (Bunker Bed) which gave the bilingual team of RSI workers time to work with M to keep him safe, address his initial basic needs and work on breaking down the barriers linked to his homelessness. This was valuable time decompressing from living on the streets.

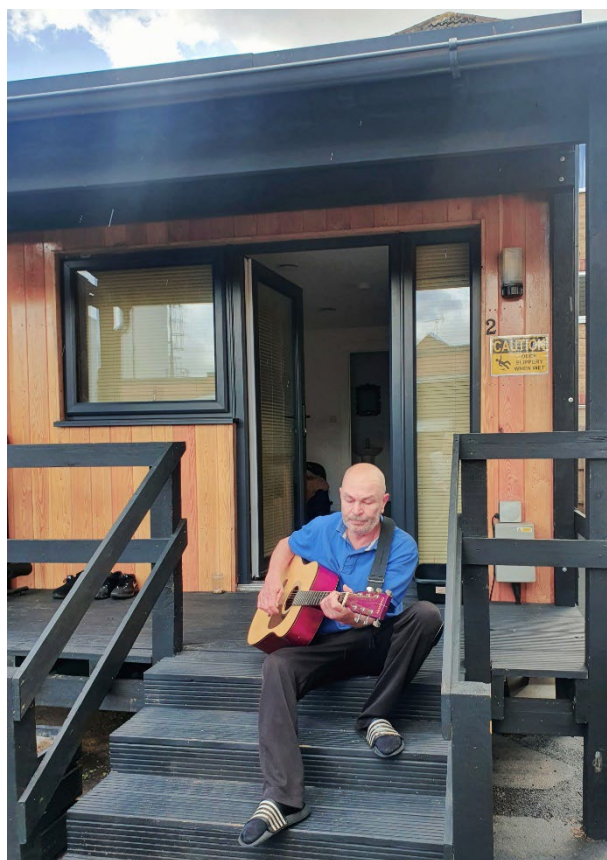
M was supported with: Food, Clothes; GP appointments to gain medication for his anxiety and depression; obtaining his passport to help with possible work opportunities in the future; applied for Universal Credit; accessed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Courses to help with the language barrier.

A bespoke support plan was also put in place in preparation for his move to Jubilee Place including a budgeting plan, setting up direct debits for service charges, TV licence and council tax, as well as food shopping. M was also referred to CGL drug and alcohol team, for support with his alcohol addiction.

During support sessions and conversations M spoke about his mental wellbeing, M spoke about how he learned to play a guitar at an early age in Poland and used music and singing to cope with his depression. Staff managed to obtain an acoustic guitar for M, that was donated to the Ferry donation hub.

M has expressed keen interest to get back into employment in the future. M is also medicated for his depression and anxiety, he regularly plays his guitar for the other tenants at Jubilee Place in the evenings and weekend barbeques, M is also happy to play for staff and visitors.

M advised his support team that he feels his journey is going well because he is really well supported. He is working on his alcohol dependency, engaging with CGL, mental health support and his GP. M is attending his appointments and has become really engaged. M tells us that he is 'really happy'.



Life changing and life saving

This image not only celebrates all of the hard work that our valuable partners provide in all that they do but offers hope going forward that we can help to prevent homelessness, end rough sleeping and this is the inspiration that this photo of M represents.

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Review and Action from Fenland District Council.

Over the last few years, we have lived through exceptional circumstances with the pandemic, and I am proud to have given my support to the teams to deliver significant opportunities to our clients during this time. I am incredibly grateful for everyone's efforts and the results of effective collaborative working to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity and to work towards an end to rough sleeping in Fenland has been truly inspirational.

Our heartfelt thanks to our Housing Options Team and RSI team – namely, FDC, CGL & Ferry Project for their enduring enthusiasm, drive and determination, you have all made a huge different to people's lives. I would also like to thank all our other partners in the wider homeless system - for example Clarion through enabling the Council to lease 15 properties for temporary accommodation, funding 10 additional homes for rough sleepers through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, and their enthusiasm and commitment to embrace the highly successful Housing First partnership in Fenland, CHS group and Longhurst for their housing related support service for young people, Amicus and YMCA for move on accommodation to name just a few.

Whilst we have made significant headway to reaching our goal of zero rough sleepers in Fenland, we face significant challenges in homelessness moving forward, with the cost of living crisis and those rough sleepers without recourse to public funds or those who are not yet ready to engage.

We are determined to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Fenland through energy and vision in partnership with our teams.



Councillor Sam Hoy
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Purpose and summary of the strategy

The council has worked together with partners to develop this strategy and action plan.

Homelessness doesn't just mean not having somewhere to live, but a range of issues that contribute to it such as health and mental health, support needs, relationships and life choices, families, looking for a better life within Fenland from abroad and more recently individual circumstances linked employment and affordability of the cost of living.

The council works with the following partners to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness: Amicus Housing Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire, CGL, Clarion Housing, Ferry Project, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, P3, Probation Service, Rosmini Centre, Salvation Army, YMCA Trinity, Cornerstone, Longhurst Group, CHS Group and My Space.

“Homelessness is everyone’s responsibility”

Our aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible. We can only achieve this by working collaboratively and successfully accessing central government funding to provide resources to provide a range of options for our clients.

Our strategy is broken down into 6 segments:

1. Vision, definition of homelessness and values
2. Homelessness and rough sleeping governance. This includes an overview of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) partnership
3. Strategic review and current context
4. Key challenges arising from the review
5. Core aims and commitments within the strategy
6. Delivery and monitoring

Vision, definition of homelessness and values

Our Vision

Our vision as a partnership is to prevent homelessness and eliminate rough sleeping as soon as possible.

Everyone has a right to a home and that is what we are striving to achieve together.

Definition of homelessness

The council and its partners are committed to working together to end rough sleeping in Fenland. We summarise our definition of homelessness as where someone:

- Has no accommodation available to them in the UK or abroad
- Has no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- Lives in a split household due to availability of accommodation for whole households
- Is where it is unreasonable to continue to occupy accommodation
- Is experiencing violence from any person
- Is unable to secure entry to their home
- Lives in a moveable structure but has no place to put it

It is the aim and ambition of this strategy to:

- Ensure no one sleeps rough or lives in places which are not designed as a home, including tents, vehicles, squats or non-residential buildings.
- Anyone staying in temporary accommodation has a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) identifying next steps, this also includes detail about support.
- Everyone who is threatened with homelessness (56 days or sooner) is provided with the advice, assistance and support needed to prevent homelessness where possible.
- For those leaving prison and survivors of domestic abuse, care leavers and Armed Forces Veterans to work together with partners to ensure a smooth transition and avoid homelessness wherever possible

Our Values

Our rough Sleeping partnership agreed the following values;

- **Partnership** – we work better together and achieve better outcomes for our clients with our unique and specialist skills, preventing homelessness where possible. A “one team” culture
- **Energy** – We bring our energy to get things done and motivate each other
- **Ambition** - We are forward thinking and creative to find solutions
- **Commitment** – we are bound by our partnership to work towards ending homelessness together and putting our clients at the centre of what we do

Homelessness and rough sleeping governance and an overview of the RSI (Rough Sleeping Initiative) partnership

About the RSI partnership

The RSI partnership was formed in 2019 following investment from central government to help alleviate rough sleeping. The partnership has since broadened and includes links to multiple charities and statutory organisations including the council's Housing Options team. This was particularly important in 2020 with the pandemic, we already had the partnership infrastructure to respond proactively and so successfully for our clients.

Members of the RSI include:

- Amicus Trust
- Clarion Housing
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Cambridgeshire County Council - Housing First
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT)
- Change Grow Live (CLG) Outreach and Tenancy Sustainment & CGL Drug and Alcohol Services
- Ferry Project
- Fenland District Council - Housing Options Team, Private Sector Housing team, Accountancy team
- Housing First (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Housing Options team (FDC)
- Rosmini Centre
- Salvation Army

Sub Regional Homelessness Strategy Group

Reporting to the Cambridgeshire Regional Housing Board, this partnership across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Suffolk meet monthly to work collaboratively on cross border issues. Their aims and objectives are to:

- Share good practice
- Explore opportunities for joint working across the sub-region. Developing opportunities for improving existing services and providing
- Jointly engage with other services to improve working practices affecting homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
- Monitor and provide input into linked groups and action plans i.e. the sub-regional housing priorities

The group also links with other statutory partners joint working protocols, including Criminal Justice and Housing protocol, Care leavers protocol, 16 & 17 year olds protocol, Mental Health, Housing and Substance Misuse protocol.

Cambridgeshire Homelessness Operational Group

The Cambridgeshire Homelessness Operational Group are responsible for taking forward operational tasks across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The group meets quarterly to ensure cohesive approach to recording data and improving effective ways of working to benefit our customers. There are links here to Home-Link, the county wide procured Choice Based lettings Scheme.

The Housing Board – Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Suffolk

The Housing Board is a senior officer group of local authorities, housing providers and partner agencies working collaboratively strategically and operationally. Since 2002 the Housing Board has worked collaboratively with partners to identify issues, gather data, explore solutions and implement change, sharing learning and experience across our housing market area around the Board's priorities.

Priorities for the board

Housing is key to everyone's health, well being and employment opportunities. Good quality housing is also vital for a thriving local economy. Across Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Peterborough, South Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk, the Housing Board works with partners to share learning and experience to:

- Deliver new homes and communities to support economic success
- Ensure homes and services support better health and well being
- Improve standards in existing homes and encourage best use of all homes
- Identify and meet housing need, extend housing choice and tackle homelessness
- Understand housing costs and the cost of living crisis in our area, and tackle the impact of both
- Support housing with a low impact on the environment, which is energy efficient and which limits our carbon footprint.

From 2022, these are the Housing Board's six priorities, all of which will only be achieved by working closely with our partners. Many issues are very local and are best addressed by district councils, housing partners and communities themselves – but some are shared across a wider area and this is where collaboration can really help. Some partners have a role and a business plan which covers a broad area and cuts across district boundaries.

More information on the board is available at: [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Housing & Planning – Housing priorities \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/Insight-Housing-Planning-Housing-priorities)

Fenland Supported Housing Forum

The Fenland Supported Housing Forum was established by Cambridge Housing Society (CHS Group) to pull together the organisations in Fenland who are providing housing support for people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, with the aim of working together to provide a more comprehensive, collaborate service. The terms of reference will identify the aims of the Fenland provider forum and record the basis on which the organisations will work together.

Membership

The organisations represented in the forum are:

- Fenland District Council
- CHS Group
- Longhurst Group
- Ferry Project
- YMCA
- Amicus Trust
- My Space Housing Solutions

Purpose

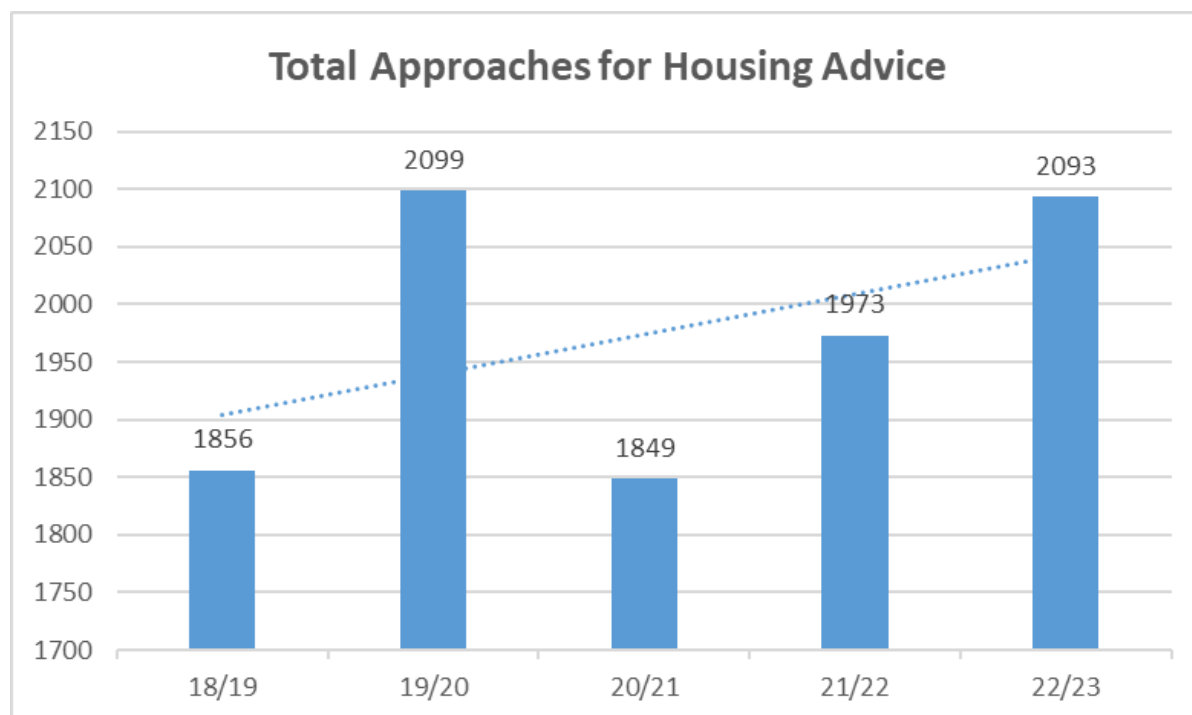
- Increase communication between members and other organisations to ensure service is delivered in the best interest of those using it
- Develop/ improve pathways both internal and external to ensure a better transition to those using the services
- Identify and work with other organisations (local authorities, health and voluntary organisations) to improve the resources / support available
- Work in partnership to support pathways for individuals maintaining accommodation to reduce the cycle of homelessness
- Identify any potential risk or issues that could impact the current services
- Identify any gaps in provision and work together to explore ways of addressing these
- Develop / Share best practice and resources to ensure a more cohesive approach
- Support a whole system approach to tackling homelessness

Strategic review and current context

Our homelessness and rough sleeper service has adapted to significant change over the past few years following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the pandemic and welfare reforms.

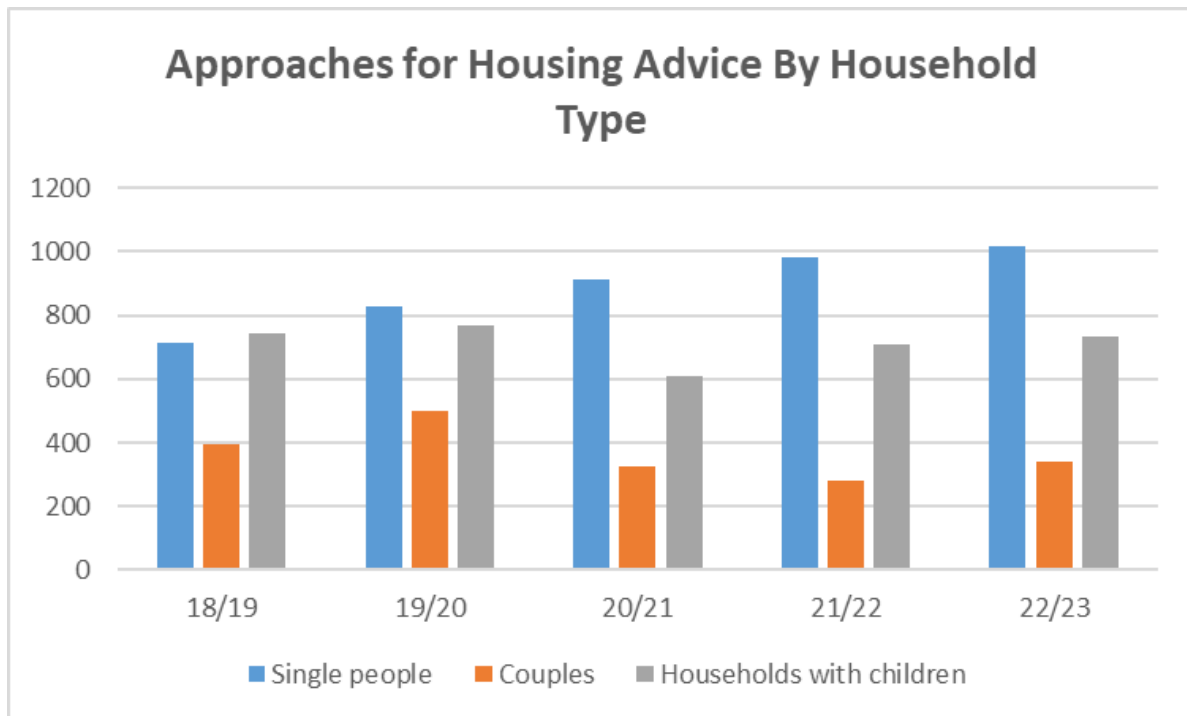
The number of approaches for housing advice has increased significantly since 2021/22 to 2022/23 as shown in the charts below.

The Local Context

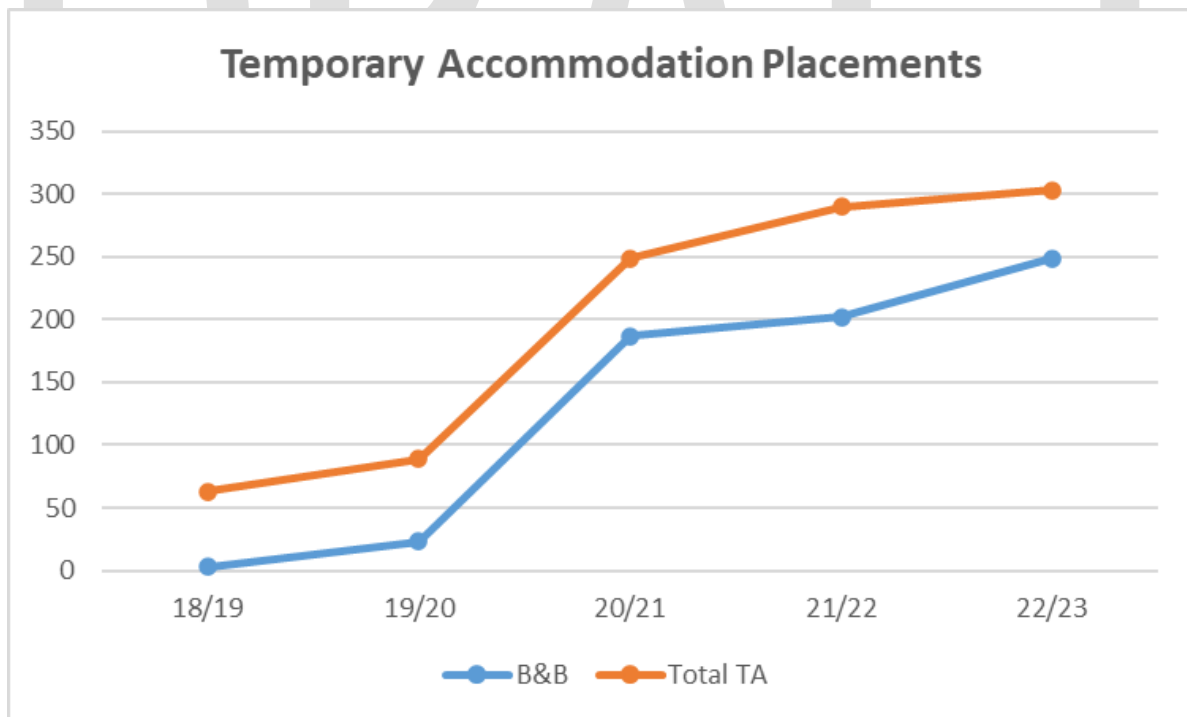


The graph above shows total number of approaches for housing advice have increased significantly by 12.77% since 2018 and particularly since the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic there has been an increase in approaches for housing advice from households with a family commitment by 20.49%.

This has had a significant impact on demand for emergency interim accommodation leading to more households not only requiring B&B as emergency interim accommodation but staying there longer than we would like before moving into other types of interim accommodation or permanent rehousing.



Data shown in chart: TBC



Data shown in Temporary Accommodation Placements chart: TBC

Main reasons for loss of settled accommodation

The reasons for homelessness are largely similar to recent years, however, increased in volume of presentations. In particular, most approaches coming from family no longer willing to accommodate up from 360 cases in 21/22 to 371 in 22/23.

All other areas are increased, including relationships ending (non-violent), ending of private rented accommodation up from 253 in 21/22 to 322 in 22/23 possibly due to landlords leaving the market, and a worrying increase in domestic abuse up from 106 in 21/22 to 148 in 22/23.

The only area to decrease slightly was ending of private rented tenancies (not assured shorthold tenancies). A possible reason for this was the legacy of restrictions on ending tenancies during Covid.

Table depicting main reasons for loss of settled accommodation

Reason	Year 2022/23	Year 2021/22	Year 2020/21
Family no longer willing to accommodate	371	360	350
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent)	281	275	234
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	322	253	145
Domestic abuse – victim	148	106	132
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold tenancy	136	148	75

Homeless prevention

The Council's Housing Options Team successfully prevented 275 households from becoming homeless in 22/23.

We successfully rehoused 98 households into the private rented sector in 22/23. The Council offers financial incentives to private sector landlords by way of deposits, enhanced deposits or rent in advance. In an ever-competitive market, it is important to adapt our services to meet the ever-changing climate.

The council provide funding to Cambridgeshire Rural CAB to provide advice and guidance to all residents of Fenland. Their expertise in debt advice and financial matters has made a very positive impact on individuals circumstances enabling them to maximise their income by carefully working through financial statements and negotiations with lenders.

The council is engaging in an Early Help Hub pilot. The council is receiving funding from the North Place Partnership Board to provide the triage administrative function for an Early Help Hub across the public sector system and Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS). The aspiration is to receive early up stream notifications of households and individuals in need who are either out of work or off work sick. Experience from a similar approach in South Norfolk shows how with a much broader range of partners across the public and VCS system, housing insecurity issues will become known to the Council earlier for example, a sofa surfer engaging with the GP, to enable support to be provided before that person loses accommodation and rough sleeps.

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team assist by ensuring properties are safe for clients to occupy before deposits or rent incentives are paid. The team also offer support and guidance to landlords and agents who require it and conduct a mandatory licencing scheme for house of multiple occupation (HMO).

Houses of Multiple Occupation

A House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' (e.g a family) but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen.

Anyone who owns or manages a HMO (including landlords and letting agents) in the Fenland district **must** have a licence from us if their property is occupied by 5 or more people, occupants form 2 or more households (a household are members of the same family living together) and occupants share 'basic amenities' (e.g kitchen, bathroom)

There is significant demand for well-managed, well maintained and safe HMO's in Fenland, particularly for those under 35 years of age where the Local Housing Allowance will often only cover the rent of a room in a shared house (HMO) as opposed to a one bedroom flat.

The council work closely in partnership with Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) who manage the Housing Benefit System on the Council's behalf. ARP also manage a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund, that has provided deposits, paid rent arrears, the total DHP spend in 2022/23 was £106,032.

Domestic abuse

The Housing Options team have seen an increase in cases over the past two years, (148 cases in 22/23). We work closely with the IDVAS (Independent domestic abuse advisors) via Cambridgeshire County Council along with specialist support organisations.

The Council is currently undertaking a Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA). This involves evidencing all of our work across the council relating to our response to domestic abuse and being externally assessed that we adequately meet the criteria. We have engaged with survivors with lived experience to help shape our procedures to benefit the needs of future clients through this process. We expect the assessment to be undertaken during 2025.

Case Study

B approached the Housing Options team for help. She was receiving assistance from Social Care who were involved with her young son following concerns about safety in the home.

B was being abused both physically and emotionally by her ex-husband, the abuse also involved stalking and being tracked by him.

B Had a tenancy outside of Fenland, it was in her name, the advice from the social worker was for B to move to another area.

The Housing Options team worked closely with B's Social Worker, a temporary move was arranged via extended family who could also provide support. the extended family were the temporary legal guardian of B's son.

The Housing Options team worked collaboratively with both B and her social worker, IDVA (independent Domestic Violence Advisor) and extended family to find a safe alternative property for B to live with her son independently.

Via the Homelessness route, B successfully bid for a new home via Home-Link and has settled safely with her son.

The Housing register: people waiting for rehousing

Year	People waiting for rehousing
2019/20	1066
2020/21	1359
2021/22	1435
2022/23	1744

For Clarion lets, in 2021/22 the number of people waiting was 315. In 2022/23 it was 247.

It is clear from the statistics that there is growing demand for social housing in Fenland.

The number of relets have decreased between 21/22 and 22/23. This has been due to an increase in checks and balances with Registered Providers (RP) tenants in response to the tragic circumstances around the death of Awaab Ishaks due to damp and mould impacts. This led in one RP circumstances an increase of repairs by one third from the previous year. Prioritising action in this area led to demands on maintenance teams and the ability to quickly do work on voids to make them available to relet. This caused a significant reduction in relets (by 115 from the previous year). This reduction has resulted in a silting up of temporary accommodation.

Void work timescales are now being addressed which will help assist moving homeless families into settled accommodation alongside an increase in new provision. In March 2024 there was an identified pipeline of circa 900 new affordable rented homes an additional 400 affordable ownership products and a further 536 affordable homes in negotiations. This pipeline is seen as essential in speeding the flow of presentation for homelessness.

Homes for Ukraine

The council has been operating a Homes for Ukraine Scheme since February 2022. Currently there are around 100 guests living with hosts in Fenland. The council has

worked hard to protect and support both hosts and guests through safety checks, welfare checks and administration of the scheme as a whole.

The focus of Phase 2 was to undertake a survey to ascertain the move on requirements of the current guests and support them with partners into alternative settled homes where this is requested. Our aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

As of March 2024, 9 families have become homeless due to being asked to leave by hosts, or families (under the Family scheme).

The costs of the scheme including temporary accommodation and funding for deposits is funded via Central Government. The same services are offered to all clients across our service.

Dispersal Accommodation for Asylum Seekers

As part of a national scheme, the Home Office are procuring temporary accommodation for asylum seekers whilst they wait for the outcome of their claims to remain in the UK. All council areas are part of the scheme and to enable the smooth running of the scheme within Fenland and to help maintain cohesion, the council has requested that areas such as Wisbech and the surrounding villages are not selected for this initiative.

Reducing the use of B&B and emergency accommodation

The council has a portfolio of temporary accommodation to provide emergency homes to our homeless clients.

We have a mix of accommodation from a hostel to a number of self-contained leased properties from our partners at Clarion Housing.

Demand for our service and therefore accommodation is increasing. The council accommodates individuals and families initially in bed and breakfast accommodation. We realise that this is both short term emergency accommodation and not suitable for families over a prolonged period, we took the decision to lease additional properties from Clarion Housing and to also look for additional units, taking a total to 56 by August 31st 2024.

To help get to 56 the council has successfully bid to central government under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). 33 properties have been purchased on the open market, 8 to provide temporary homes to rehouse Ukraine families, 5 for Afghan families and 20 for general needs. Once clients have moved on and there is no more demand for Ukrainian and Afghan families, these properties will revert to general needs use, and therefore significantly reducing bed and breakfast accommodation use.

Feasibility to provide better and more cost-effective solutions for single households and couples needing emergency interim accommodation is underway.

Health and wellbeing

Homelessness and rough sleeping can seriously impact on your health and wellbeing. According to the charity Crisis, the average life expectancy of a man is 47 and 43 years for women. This is compared to an average of 77 years in the general population with men living to around 74 years and women to 80 years. Life is cut short by almost 50%.

Historical rough sleeping

Many of our rough sleepers both currently and historically are migrants, mostly from Lithuania. Fenland has attracted migrant workers to the district since 2003/04, often coming to Fenland to take up agricultural work in the fields and also food processing in factories. The majority of Fenland's rough sleepers are male and aged between 25 and 65, a significant number being foreign nationals from Eastern Europe, Lithuania, Latvia and Bulgaria.

Frequently, accommodation (HMO's) is provided with work and when work dries up or workers are no longer needed this can result in homelessness and rough sleeping.

The council along with the Police established Operation Pheasant in 2012, a project to tackle human trafficking and exploitation and modern-day slavery, linked to the private rented sector in the town of Wisbech. The council's Private Sector Housing Team link in with Rough Sleeping and Housing Options Team, this approach ensures sharing of relevant intelligence and protects our clients.

The partnership has been cited nationally as best practice and has won three national awards.

Operation Luscombe

The Police in partnership with the council, launched Operation Luscombe in September 2022. The purpose of the initiative is to target street drinkers and people begging in Wisbech. There is cross over with the council's RSI project and the infrastructure we have created accommodated this new initiative.

The project involves a partnership response to street drinking and begging, with a suite of actions, but most importantly, linking individuals into the Hub and providing an opportunity to tackle some of the broader issues including housing, health, mental health and drug and alcohol advice. There are consequences for non-engagement including fines and Community Orders.

The persons referred are predominantly those engaged in anti-social street drinking and/or begging. They include a mixture of homeless persons and those that have their own accommodation.

The different stages are:

- Green – An informal warning and an invitation to attend the safeguarding hub

- Amber – A community protection warning (With suggested conditions) with an invitation to the safeguarding hub
- Red – A community protection notice (With enforceable conditions) with an invitation to the safeguarding hub
- Blue – Prosecution for breaching the CPN and an invitation to the hub

There are 65 persons on the Operation Luscombe cohort, the table below shows the breakdown as of 05.02.24:

Stage	Current Number	Total Number of hub appointments	Attended Hub	% Attended Hub
Blue	4	4	3	75%
Red	1	5	3	60%
Amber	7	12	4	33%
Green	53	65	9	14%
Totals	65	86	19	22%

The Hub

The Hub meets every second Monday at the Ferry Project. It is attended by the following partners:

- Ferry Project
- Housing first
- Fenland District Council (Homeless Outreach / community safety team)
- CPFT Mental health nurses (FALT team)
- CGL – Eastern European Outreach
- CGL – Drug and Alcohol misuse specialists
- Department of Work and Pensions enhanced support team.
- Counting Every Adult Team

Hub attendance by those who are referred sits at 22.89%. However, where safeguarding issues have been identified, the partnership will look to take action whether or not the referred individual attends – for example: home visits, appointments being made.

Enforcement

The Police have prosecuted four persons under the Luscombe process. A summary:

- One female persistent beggar was prosecuted for breaching a 'Red Ticket'. She was fined and issued with a Criminal Behaviour Order to curtail her begging (This female was unknown to services locally, she was given support and we also uncovered domestic abuse concerns that were dealt with.)

- One male persistent beggar was prosecuted for breaching a 'Red Ticket', he was fined and we also supported the Local Authority with evidence gather to secure a ASB injunction
- One female persistent beggar was prosecuted for breaching a 'Red Ticket', she was fined (£1000), we applied for a Criminal Behaviour Order but before this was issued she was imprisoned for three years for an unrelated matter
- One male drinker was fined after breaching the PSPO and becoming aggressive towards police when challenged. He has not been found drinking since and has been engaging with CGL

Successes

There are many individual success stories where we have worked together to prevent offending. A male on the cohort has been supported out of a shed in the town centre where he had lived for over a year. He engaged with services and is no longer sleeping rough.

Another recent proactive effort includes a homeless male with mental health concerns. He is very untrusting of services, and we have worked together to build his trust. The Ferry project have provided a wash kit and mental health have opened up their offices to allow the male to wash there. We are slowly making progress and he is starting to engage – hopefully in an effort to prevent future offending.

Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 (RSI5)

The Council has always been proactive in seeking additional resources to enable specialist services to be established in Fenland.

In 2022, the council was successful in a £1.186m fund from Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities over 3 years called Rough Sleeper Initiative 5. In partnership with Change Grow Live (CGL) and Ferry Project, the fund provides support workers, tenancy sustainment officers, a Hub, outreach workers and a coordinator to provide a holistic service to anyone at risk of rough sleeping or actually rough sleeping.

The Council formed and led a multi-agency group who meet weekly to carry out professional case reviews and next steps through individual pathways. The Council has supported key partners to increase supported pathways for our clients. This has included:

- 6 new units of modular accommodation at Jubilee Place
- 9 new units of emergency accommodation at Destiny Haven,
- 10 new purchase and repair units of affordable accommodation through Clarion investment which is match funded with the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP funding from DLUHC) with tenancy and support by the Ferry Project.
- 8 units providing homes for 63 individuals with supported units have been delivered by Amicus Trust, shared accommodation with support as part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP funding from DLUHC).

We have a partnership with YMCA and Cornerstone who have repurposed a 9-bedroom hostel owned by the council for homeless people requiring accommodation with low level support needs.

Ending rough sleeping and a housing-led approach

The council has a duty to conduct an annual rough sleeping count (usually in November). The count process is overseen by Homeless-Link and includes a verifier and an independent volunteer to ensure that the process and outcomes of the count are accurate.

The table below shows the Rough Sleeper official street count by year.

Year	Number of Rough Sleepers
2016	7
2017	9
2018	23
2019	11
2020	8
2021	9
2022	14
2023	10
2024	7

No recourse to public funds (Restricted Eligibility)

To date, the Council currently has 8 rough sleepers (as at 12.01.24). Historically and within the past year there has been up to 5 clients who have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they are not entitled to claim benefits to assist with their housing options without achieving Settled Status. These clients are effectively caught in a situation of rough sleeping being their only option. Currently (April 2024) there are no rough sleepers without recourse to public funds. This is due to effective joint working with our outreach team and partnership with Home Office.

The Council has sought support from Home Office for these clients and has also promoted the Home Office voluntary returns scheme (repatriation). For those clients wishing to return home who have Pre-Settled Status (and not eligible for the Home Office scheme) the council has introduced its own scheme and 2 individuals have successfully returned to their home land.

From 2022-2023 we supported 17 clients who had Restricted Eligibility (formerly known as no recourse to public funds):

- 12 were supported with either;
 - Reconnections to family or friends in the UK,
 - found private rented accommodation or supported in to work and accommodation.
 - 5 have become eligible and moved on via supported living routes or to alternative outcomes.

- As at January 2024 our rough sleeper cohort are all eligible for public funds which demonstrates a shift in the demographics among our rough sleeper population.

As of March 2024 we have no clients with Restricted eligibility.

FDC Voluntary Returns Scheme

Our experience is that there is a reluctance of many rough sleeping migrants to return home without money to enable their reintegration, in their words 'shameful' to return home without showing their time in the UK has been successful.

The scheme is designed for those who are rough sleeping and with pre or settled status (no status cases are progressed via Home Office).

The initiative effectively facilitates a sustainable return home. The cost of 3k is funded via the RSI 5 funding bid, and from that amount, costs for transport, passport replacement, bed and breakfast for a few days, other essentials is deducted. The remaining amount is sent to the client via money card once they have landed in their home country.

The scheme has been successful so far with two returns home, as shown by case studies in the next section.

Case Study: FDC's Enhanced Voluntary Repatriation Scheme

RS is a 30-year-old male from Lithuania. He became a client in March 2022. RS has been found sleeping rough in various places around town centre. He became homeless due to relationship breakdown with people who he was living with in an HMO in Wisbech. RS was placed in a hotel under Protect and Vaccinate during the pandemic.

RS had no Recourse to Public Funds; he had not applied for Settled Status. His passport has been held by Police while investigation and court proceedings were being carried out. All these factors had a huge impact on ways he could be supported out of homelessness.

RS was assessed and support plan was created. We informed the client that once he has his passport back our next step would be to apply for Settled Status and then either Universal Credit application would be completed, or he would be supported with job search. RS engaged well with support and kept CGL updated on his court case. RS shared homeless support details with his attorney who then updated the support worker. In one of the support sessions RS expressed willingness to go back to Lithuania.

RS met all criteria for repatriation under the Enhanced Voluntary Repatriation Scheme. When RS's court case was over and he received his passport back, CGL contacted the Probation Officer to confirm that RS can travel. CGL met with RS and we went through his travel options.

RS travelled back to Lithuania on 13th July 2022 where he was greeted by his parents. RS contacted CGL when landed to confirm that he is safe. The rest of money were transferred and CGL received a text message from RS:

“Hi I just wanna say something. I see cash on my bankcard and thank you so much for all help this time. I wish the best for you in all life 😊 Thank you again. Have a good weekend. R”

Responding to rough sleepers

We undertook an exercise with DLUHC to establish our response times, from first hearing intelligence about a rough sleeper to making face to face contact with them.

We established data between April 2022 to February 2023, our Outreach team attend within a maximum period of 48 hours. Most sites however are attended on the day of or the following day of the report depending on the time it comes in. This approach has been integral in early engagement and successful outcomes. If clients are present at the sleep site during the time of the visit, they are booked in for an assessment either the same day or the following day.

Observing the information over these timescales with time frames in mind, the breakdown is as follows:

We worked with 22 Clients between 1-100 days.

We worked with 17 Clients between 100-325 days.

This is our core group of rough sleepers where outcomes have been limited for them. As of Feb 23 we were working with 8 rough sleepers, some of whom have been ongoing throughout this timeframe.

Long term rough sleeper clients

Some of the reasons include:

- restricted eligibility which prevented their move on
- managing their alcohol use which prevented work outcomes.
- clients who have been previously evicted from accommodation or were non engaging due to drug/alcohol misuse.

DLUHC were interested to see that we had:

- “A relatively low number of new rough sleepers in the year”
- “A fairly even split between those who were supported relatively promptly into accommodation and those who have endured on the street.”
- “The main ‘gap’ being the length of time between verification and true engagement.”

This is difficult for the council to overcome as everyone will have their own challenges and some individuals take longer than others to want help.

Case Study: CGL

D is a 30 years old Polish male who was supported out of homelessness by CGL.

CGL received a report of a rough sleeper in December 2022. The report came from the Neighbourhood Policing Team as a part of an ongoing project Op Luscombe.

D was verified and assessed by CGL. During the assessment D disclosed that he does not have valid ID which made it impossible for him to access work. D had been invited to attend Op Luscombe where CGL were waiting for him with a mobile phone however D did not attend.

During this time, CGL adopted a multi- organisation approach, conducting numerous outreaches with colleagues from mental health team, DWP team and Neighbourhood Policing Team. D did not engage with any of these agencies. Despite this outreach continually visited his site to offer support.

A breakthrough in his engagement happened when D was met by CGL at the Salvation Army for food. CGL and D had a long and open conversation around support that is available and discussed his housing options. Following this D finally agreed to accept support.

He was provided with a mobile as well as support with booking an appointment with the Polish embassy for a new passport.

D was also supported with a Universal Credit application. DWP Enhanced Support service supported this application and made sure that the lack of ID would not be a barrier. D provided all documents, and the benefit application was successful. Following this intense period of support, CGL were able to complete and submit a referral to Amicus. D successfully moved in to Amicus 29.09.23 where he has settled well and is looking forward to the future.

RSI figures (April 2023 – January 2024)

The council worked with 75 clients in total. Of those 12 were placed in temporary accommodation and 15 were placed in off the street accommodation at the Ferry Project.

Of the 75 clients supported, 38 moved on successfully, 20 clients continue to be supported with their homelessness whilst the remaining 17 clients had an alternative outcome such as prison, hospital, or lost contact with support services.

This information is explained further in the tables below.

	EU	UK	Non-EU
Positive move on	24	14	0
Outcome ongoing	8	12	0
Other outcome	6	11	0

	EU	UK	Non-EU
Supported living	11	8	0
Modular home	1	0	0
Private rented	1	0	0
Family or friends	7	2	0
Reconnected	2	1	0
Work and accommodation	1	0	0
RSAP	1	0	0
Housing First	0	3	0

Of the total number of EU Nationals/Non-EU (38), the breakdown of eligibility is:

- 28 EU Nationals eligible
- 14 EU Nationals with restricted eligibility
- 1 unknown eligibility

[insert charts]

Rehousing options for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping

The Council and partners including Amicus, Clarion, Ferry Project, Places for People applied for funding to provide accommodation options. This included:

- 39 rooms across 7 sites with Amicus Trust under next Steps Accommodation Programme.
- 6 Modular Homes via Rough Sleeper Accommodation programme with Ferry Project and Places for people.
- 10 dispersed units of accommodation and support via Clarion Housing & Ferry project – Next Steps Accommodation programme
- 7 units via Housing First in partnership with Clarion and Longhurst

Ferry Project have replaced the night shelter provision with 9 units of self-contained accommodation.



Case Study: Ferry Project emergency accommodation – Destiny Haven

F is a male in his forties and became known to services via reports from the Public of a rough sleeper in the Fenland area.

Fenland District Council's Housing options team sent out an outreach team to urgently investigate and verify the report. The outreach team quickly located this gentleman and were able to gather an understanding of his circumstances.

F had become homeless following on from a relationship breakdown. Initially he had been able to stay in a garage adjoining his ex -mother in laws house. However, this arrangement had come to an end rendering him street homeless. F had worked in skilled positions prior to the breakup and had enjoyed success.

The impact of the separation had weighed heavily on him emotionally and had caused feelings of worthlessness leading to suicidal intent. During the periods of low mood, F had visited Beachy Head and been on railway tracks contemplating ending his life.

Through a quick analysis and appraisal, the Council's Housing Options team were able to arrange a same day assessment at The Ferry Project's Housing hub.

F was assessed by the Ferry Project team, who liaised with FDC to provide immediate accommodation for that evening and strategized longer-term outcomes around a bespoke plan tailored to F's needs.

F met with the RSI funded clinical health nurse to meet his most immediate emotional health needs. The plan put together to support F included his own assessment of need and gave him assurance of what support services would be able to provide.

F was then brought into Destiny Haven accommodation at the Ferry project in order that the delivery package from the plan could kick in.

F was supported with transferring his GP locally to Wisbech and the onsite clinic made available. Access to medication and therapeutic interventions were able to follow hand in hand. To underpin his emotional wellbeing, regular access to the Rough Sleeper team was maintained and weekly appointments set up for F's attendance scheduled in.

F also enrolled on to a wellbeing course available to residents at the Ferry Project. At a time of his choosing, F started to help with voluntary projects around the Ferry site through the internal volunteering programme which he identified as giving him purpose and an ability to use his time meaningfully. F recognised that he wanted to 'give back', as a way of repaying the help that he was receiving and was pivotal towards building up confidence and self-esteem.

F was supported with access to benefits, and claims. The portfolio of services enabled F to gain self-confidence, clarity and certainty about his future and the possibilities and opportunities that could hold.

Over a period of time through contacts, observations and key works it became evident that both staff and F were noticing a positive change, and he became ready for the next step of his journey. F was then successfully placed into semi-independent accommodation closer to his children allowing him to rebuild their relationship.

By his own recognition F was lost and struggling to know what to do prior to the wrap round support that he was now able to access through FDC and other partner agencies. The interventions prevented potential hospital admissions, Police call outs in addition to a worst-case scenario of end of life.

F continues to live currently in Semi Independent accommodation and relies less on support as he continues his journey into total independence and a home of his own. He states he is looking forward to a fulfilling life and returning to paid employment, in addition to meeting other goals and aspirations that he is setting himself.

Housing First

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), successfully bid for funding from DLUHC under RSI 5 for Housing First provision in Fenland along with Housing Related Support funding from Cambridgeshire County Council. Housing First is intensive 1 on 1 support with clients who have very high support needs. To date there are 7 units under this highly successful programme, working in conjunction with Clarion and CCC Housing First team. Often Housing First clients are either rough sleepers or those at risk of losing their home and sleeping rough and have multiple disadvantages, meaning that traditional housing options are not suitable to enable clients to thrive.

Case Study: Housing First

CC has a long history of poor mental health, having been sectioned several times under section 3 of the Mental Health Act. CC has a diagnosis of schizo-affective disorder with depression and has been taking prescribed medication for a long time to help her to cope with this. Following a relationship breakdown CC mental health deteriorated and became unwell and set fire to her property. Following this she had a period of sleeping in her car before being placed in temporary accommodation.

A referral to Housing First was made and support was given to CC at this stage whilst in temporary accommodation. CC was supported to engage with Fenland District Council Housing Options Team and work towards making a homeless application and eventually being offered move on accommodation. Housing First Navigators were building a relationship and support included taking her out for coffee, food shopping, and supporting her to plan ahead; think about where she would like to live. Housing First also supported the work being done by the Fenland Adult Locality Team around confidence and self-esteem.

Clarion Housing Association accepted CC as a potential tenant, despite her having a historical arson offence. Housing First were able to work with CC to explain that this incident was related to her worsening mental health and with the support in place, this should no longer be a concern. After a period in temporary accommodation, CC was offered a tenancy in a sheltered scheme. Housing First supported CC by purchasing the basics required in a home such as Carpets, fridge, freezer, lounge furniture, a vacuum cleaner and microwave, as well as other smaller items. Support was given to set up direct debits for household bills and changes to her benefit claims to Universal Credit, enabling her to access financial support for her rent. Support continues with phone or face to face contact at least twice a week.

CC has successfully moved into her own tenancy and is managing well. CC mental health has been relatively stable, with the FALT team also reporting positive changes. CC is in a settled environment that she enjoys. CC has started to think about possible charity work locally as well as interest in art therapy with the FALT team. CC has recently received new reading glasses and is also considering joining the library.

Changing Futures

At the end of 2020, the government invited expressions of interest from areas who wanted to take a new approach to tackling multiple disadvantage.

Multiple disadvantage is where people experience at least 3 of the following 5 situations are said to be multiply disadvantaged:

- Homelessness
- Substance misuse
- Mental health
- Domestic Abuse
- Criminal justice

A Cambridgeshire and Peterborough multi agency collaboration applied and were one of 21 areas shortlisted. We submitted a full bid focused on extending and enhancing the approach taken by Counting Every Adult across more organisations in our area, so we can work together more effectively as a system to help people make their way out of multiple disadvantage.

It seemed that different organisations might easily conflict, not take account of the effect of the person having more than one “issue” and might not be adequately trauma informed. In other words, each organisation aims to help people; but by taking issues “one at a time” often end up not tailoring the actions to that individual person. Like fitting a square peg into a round hole. It’s not surprising that some people fall through the gaps, or give up, and end up encountering more disadvantage than they started with.

Our bid focused on learning from the past and building on that learning in the future; evolving our systems to improve outcomes for people, and reducing the number of people who fall into multiple disadvantage in the first place. A key feature of this work is to co-produce better systems by people with lived experience being involved in every aspect of the work, at all levels.

We submitted our bid but unfortunately were not successful. However with support from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Service Board (CPSB) local partners have continued without government funding. Based on the evidence, energy and enthusiasm, leaders agreed to fund a “scaled back” Changing Futures Cambridgeshire & Peterborough programme.

There are four visions for the work:

- Embed the Trusted Person Model.
- Embed a trauma informed approach to support.
- Establish mechanisms to support shared learning and address identified barriers.
- Embed co-production and co design across the system.

We have engaged with individuals with lived experience and will continue to do so to enable services and processes to be designed to meet future clients’ needs. One of the first successful cases was a Fenland case. The case study below highlights the value of collaborative working to achieve a safe and positive outcome for the client under Changing Futures approach.

Case Study: Changing Futures

The team involved were:

- Trusted person: Probation Officer
- Fenland’s Rough Sleeper team
- Care-coordinator at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT)

- Changing Futures trusted person co-ordinators
- Mental Health social worker
- Fenland's dual diagnosis street team

Leon was rough sleeping in a public toilet in Whittlesey, which the council needed to close due to maintenance issues. Leon was not keen to move out but had no alternative accommodation.

Leon did not trust many people and avoided many appointments and interviews. He had a trusted person in his Probation Officer. This relationship helped access other support including arranging an interview with the GP in the toilet where Leon felt safe.

A mental health social worker became involved after requests were made to assist. This was a vital element of the success.

Missing an appointment led to a breach of Probation and then arrest. Arrest was planned out of Leon's familiar area, so likely to be more traumatic. He would not usually have a Trusted Person present. There was the risk that the location of police station used might not help link with relevant local services.

Police enabled his trusted person to be with Leon when he was arrested so it is less traumatic, ensuring he was taken to a local police station so he could be seen by the local Liaison and Diversion (LaDS) service. Police prioritised his arrest so he was somewhere safe and could start to get the support and help he needed.

During Christmas and a cold snap Leon agreed to engaged with Ferry Project for accommodation and support. Information relating to his support needs were shared quickly between the partnership. A mental health assessment was undertaken with his trusted person (Probation Officer) present.

Whilst assessments were undertaken to source suitable accommodation, the Council accommodated Leon in temporary accommodation. Despite this being offered numerous times, this time he accepted.

Due to Leon's anxiety, the first visit to specialist supported accommodation did not go well and he refused it. Temporary accommodation was extended by the council whilst alternative solutions were explored by the partnership.

Leon viewed the placement and described it as a posh hotel! He was very happy with it and happy to move into his new home.

Comments from partners involved include:

"Just to update you that Leon has moved to the placement as planned. He appeared cheerful and excited. Thank you all for the support you have provided to Leon over the months." Changing Futures Trusted Person Coordinator.

"Such fabulous news." Care Coordinator at the Mental Health Trust (CPFT)

“This is brilliant news! Glad he has somewhere to call home and wish him lots of luck.” Fenland Rough Sleeper Team.

“Oh fantastic news, has he got everything he needs? Thank you for all of your hard work, you have been amazing.” Probation Officer.

“Leon just popped to the probation office to see me of his own accord which was good of him. He seemed really well, is happy with the move and he was off to ASDA to buy some pots and a bit of food. We agreed to keep in contact weekly while he gets settled in. All seems to be well.” Probation Officer.

“Can I just thank everyone for the massive collaborative effort in pulling this person back from the brink and into suitable stable accommodation where they now have a fantastic opportunity to rebuild a life. Testament to the power of partnership working. An officer mentioned to me that Leon was the best that they had seen him yesterday. Well done all.” Fenland District Council.

Impact of the Covid Pandemic

The council were in a fortunate position that we were (with our partners), delivering Rough sleeper Initiative 4 (RSI 4). In effect, we already had an infrastructure in place with which to respond to the pandemic and our rough sleeper cohort. Our approach did however require new delivery methods and broader partnership work with Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health and various government departments who monitored our vaccination take up and number of rough sleepers brought in under an initiative called Everyone In.

Initially 57 rough sleepers were housed, this included the Ferry Project Night Shelter clients, most of the clients were accommodated in two locations within Fenland. Clients were provided with weekly food parcels, mobile phones, very regular contact from rough sleeper outreach who adapted their service to suit the new circumstances.

To encourage vaccination take up a partnership including Environmental Health Team, RSI 4 team, NHS and the Terence Higgins Trust, was developed including an event to screen for sexual health. Alongside this NHS vaccination staff were on hand to talk through vaccination hesitancy with our clients and offer the vaccination at that time if they wished to take it up. We offered £10 shopping vouchers for this purpose which was very successful.

In total, between 2020 – 2022, the RSI team rehoused 134 rough sleepers.

Key challenges arising from the strategy review

Current and future challenges

As an organisation we have been able to increase interim temporary accommodation that is not B&B. Not only do we have the usual mix of households approaching; with Homes for Ukraine sponsorship funding ceasing, we anticipate an increase in approaches from these households. The discontinuation of hotel accommodation for Afghan households is further demand identified. We are therefore currently investing in the purchase of 33 properties via two tranches of Local Authority Housing Fund, 20 for general needs homeless properties, 8 for Ukrainian households, 5 for Afghan households. The properties are spread across the whole of Fenland, with only a small number of general needs in the town of Wisbech where historically we have had the most provision. Once Ukrainian and Afghan cohorts are moved into permanent accommodation these units will become general needs.

Even with the Local Housing Allowance rate increasing from April 24 it is not keeping pace with market rates which is leading to more households facing affordability issues.

There is also an increase in landlords disposing of their portfolios as a result of economic challenges and increased regulation coming in the form of the Renters Reform Bill. This is decreasing the pool of private sector properties available which leads to further price inflation as competitiveness increases.

Agents and landlords are also able to be more selective over prospective tenants.

Key challenges

- Demand for service increasing – more people are contacting us for housing advice in the past 18 months (post covid).
- More clients with complex needs are contacting us for help, resulting in the need for the provision of homes with high support provision e.g. specialist drug and alcohol.
- A significant increase in cases of domestic abuse.
- Larger families - larger properties are needed to be built to prevent families spending longer time in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for a large enough property.
- Engaging with private rented sector (PRS)– to offer solution for customers, landlords selling up resulting in greater reliance on social tenancies.
- Reduction in social housing tenancies available – resulting to families/individuals spending longer in temporary accommodation.
- Reduce HB subsidy implications for the council to support the medium financial strategy.
- Cost of living crisis continue to have a HOT service that can respond to further pressures arising from the cost of living.

Core aims and commitments in the strategy

Links to Corporate Business Plan

The Council's Business Plan outlines our focus around communities 'we will use our housing powers to prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, meet housing needs, improve housing conditions and keep homes safe and accessible'.

Homelessness prevention

The ambition and focus for the council are to prevent homelessness wherever possible. This involves our teams being creative, flexible, and working together with partners to achieve this. The benefits to prevention are multiple, including the impacts on health and wellbeing, education and employment and mental health.

Reducing / stopping the cycle of homelessness and sustaining futures

We have invested part of our RSI5 funding into tenancy sustainment. These services are delivered by CGL and Ferry Project. We work hard together to find suitable pathways for our clients. This has been hugely successful thanks to NSAP & RSAP funding from DLUHC, working with Amicus & Ferry Project & Clarion to increase the number of supported placements within Fenland.

The transition from street to emergency accommodation can be daunting and very challenging for some clients. We have invested together with the Ferry Project for a temporary arrangement with Bunkabins (a temporary portable structure delivering a self-contained living unit with facilities to live independently). They enable the time for 'decompression', a safe place to be and transition from the street to a safe and supported space.

When moving on from Ferry Project's emergency accommodation (now known as Destiny Haven – 9 self-contained units) it's imperative that tenancy sustainment forms part of the move-on process. This has been integral to our RSI 5 work and has achieved 43 successful results since the start of the project. (June 2023 - March 2024).

Working together

We are incredibly fortunate to work collaboratively with ambitious and experienced partners who are an integral part of our quest to eliminate rough sleeping and homelessness in Fenland.

People who are homeless don't just lack a home, there are often many other contributing factors such as their health and wellbeing, finances, substance misuse, life choices and relationships. Homelessness impacts on virtually every element of our lives, our health, education, work and our ability to find work, personal safety etc.

Working together effectively as one team is the only way we can tackle these issues together in Fenland.

Delivery and monitoring

Action plan overview

The aims and commitments contained in the strategy have been captured in our action plan and forms part of the entire strategy document. The actions are clear and there is accountability for each one. Results from the consultation will be included.

Monitoring and review

We will review the plan regularly with partners to ensure that the actions stay on track, are progressed and remain current and relevant. We will do this through a review of the action plan each year as part of the Councils service planning process.

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APPENDIX B - FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL – HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2024/29

Intervention	Task	Intended Outcome	Resources & Timescale	Progress	Lead
Objective 1. Prevention of homelessness and housing options					
1.0 Develop protocols, work force development and case work to prevent early signs of homelessness	- Develop the following protocols and implement: - Hospital Discharge with Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kings Lynn, Peterborough City Hospital, Hinchbrook Hospital Huntingdon & Addenbrooks Hospital Cambridge Workforce development with partners e.g. registered providers Link in with Transfer of Care Hub (TOCH) for Peterborough Hospitals and Queen Elizabeth Hospital	Customers prevented from becoming homeless	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Sub regional Homelessness strategy group

Intervention	Task	Intended Outcome	Resources & Timescale	Progress	Lead
1.2 Carry out a review of prevention techniques and options	Review undertaken and changes made to respond to the needs of our clients	Prevention service that meets the needs of Fenland's customers	Existing resources and DLUHC grant funding Citizens Advice Rural Cambs		Housing & Communities Manager & Housing Options Team Leader Private Sector Housing Officer
1.3 Addressing housing options for complex needs cases	Membership of the Changing Futures programme to work together to find housing solutions for clients in complex needs	Better outcomes for vulnerable clients	Changing Futures funding		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Rough Sleeper Co Ordinator
1.4 Provision of specialist accommodation units for those with high dependency on substances	Carry out a feasibility into the provision of specialist units for clients who are homeless and have drug and or alcohol dependency	Better outcomes for those with drug and or alcohol dependency	To be sought		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager
1.5 Tackle rogue landlord activity in Fenland	Link in with Operation Pheasant to gather intelligence via Private Sector Housing team linking with Housing Options Continue to serve enforcement notices on poor quality properties	Improved management and condition of the private rented sector	Existing resources Serious & Organised Crime (SOC) - Fusion		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Private Sector Housing Officers

Intervention	Task	Intended Outcome	Resources & Timescale	Progress	Lead
					Operation Pheasant partnership Community Safety Partnership
1.6 Housing sub-region - Housing Allocations Review	Review the policy to update following Homelessness Reduction Act and to ensure clarity in where policy sits in relation to local lettings policies (Registered Providers)	Making affordable housing as accessible as possible to our customers	Existing resources When required		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Housing Options Team Leader Senior Community Support Officer
1.7 Work in partnership with Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) to promote the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme to prevent homelessness	Ensure links to ARP are taken up together with partners	Homelessness prevented	Government Grant		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader

Intervention	Task	Intended Outcome	Resources & Timescale	Progress	Lead
1.8 Prevention of homelessness for large families 4 bedrooms +	Work with development partners to acquire affordable homes with 4+ bedrooms Increase capacity to manage extra demand for Housing Options teams services through management of temporary accommodation through Community Support Team, implementation of new technology e.g. Docusign and transformation review of service	Reduction in temporary accommodation for larger families	Central Government Grant Existing resources		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Senior Community Support Officer Housing Options Team Leader Transformation team
1.9 Formation of an Early Help Hub	Establishment of a triage administrative function across triage administrative function for an Early Help Hub across the public sector system and Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) .	More upstream early notification s of those threatened with homelessness to enable prevention	North Place Partnership Board		Assistant Director

Objective 2 – Eliminate rough sleeping in Fenland

Intervention	Task	Intended outcome	Resources & Timescale	Progress	Lead
2.0 Continue to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers each year	Deliver the Rough Sleeping Initiative (5) • Mental Health nurse • Continue delivery of the Day Hub – deliver housing solutions for all rough sleepers to meet their needs • Outreach Service x 3 workers • Night shelter support provision (2.5 FTE) • Bespoke intervention funds for CGL outreach and Ferry Project Hub • Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator • Conduct bi monthly rough sleeper counts • Submit monthly monitoring under DELTA system	Reduced numbers of rough sleepers	Successful DLUHC Bid £1.186m April 2022-25		Housing & Communities Manager CGL & Ferry Project Rough Sleeper Co Ordinator
		Monitoring the impact of funding	Bi Monthly May, July, Sept, Nov (main count below), Jan & March Monthly		Outreach Team & FDC
	Establish an operational monitoring group and a strategic group to monitor and maximise outcomes for our clients	Monitoring the impact of funding	Fortnightly		Housing & Communities Manager CGL & Ferry Project Rough Sleeper Coordinator

	Conduct annual rough sleeper count (verified)		November Existing resources plus CGL		FDC CGL – Homeless Link
2.1 Carry out review of Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)	Review of procedures undertaken to ensure procedure meets the legislative requirements of SWEP and awareness to partners and teams and website	Fulfil statutory duties to rough sleepers during severe weather conditions efficiently and effectively	Homeless prevention grant September		Housing Options Team Leader Rough sleeper Co ordinator Ferry Project
2.2 Enable development of Housing First	Deliver additional units of Housing First accommodation model	Meet the need of vulnerable homeless people requiring support	Exiting Resources CCC RSI Bid Partner resources		Housing & Communities Manager Cambridgeshire County Council Ferry Project Support providers

2.3 Reduce the number of rough sleepers	Monitor the Next Steps Accommodation programme	Rough sleepers rehoused with support	Successful DLUHC Bid £820,650 + £579,880 match funding from Clarion £55k Amicus set up costs £123,530 Ferry support to Clarion 10 £444,120 10 properties with Clarion plus £579,880 match funding £216k deposits £176,440 B&B for NRPF		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Amicus Trust Clarion Housing Ferry Project

Objective 3. Temporary Accommodation, supported homes and supply of private rented homes

3.0 Undertake review and provision of temporary accommodation	Enable partners to and directly provide additional supported accommodation, emergency interim accommodation and temporary accommodation within Fenland	Homeless customers facilitated to remain in temporary	Existing resources, Grant funding, Capital funding and loans		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager and

	including provision across the whole area.	accommodation during case decision making process and minimise the use of B&B			Housing Options Team Leader
3.1 Enable additional provision of supported accommodation	Work together with key partners to expand provision of supported accommodation	Meet the needs of our vulnerable customers and prevent homelessness	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader
3.2 Provision of supported accommodation for care leavers	Deliver additional units of accommodation for care leavers Subject to identified need to be confirmed	Meet the need of care leavers	TBC		Assistant Director Break Charity
3.3 Work with Landlords to maintain existing stock	Supporting compliant Landlords with early intervention with potential tenant issues such as rent arrears to prevent homelessness via the Landlord Rent Solutions Service	Meeting the needs of our customers	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Private Sector Housing Team
3.4 Bring empty properties back into use	Continue to work with ARP & community to increase the number of empty homes coming back into use	Provide additional homes for rent	Existing resources		FDC Empty Homes Officer

Objective 4. Resources and training

4.0 Establish private Sector Landlord engagement	Contacts established in Fenland with Private Sector landlords Facilitate landlord and agent events in Fenland Include partners to assist with support and advice for landlords and agents	Increase in quality of private sector accommodation to meet the needs of customers	Homeless Prevention grant		Private Sector Housing team
4.1 Ensure specialist homelessness and linked training is identified for staff as part of the Council's appraisal programme (springboard).	Yearly review of training and development needs for all staff	Staff enabled to perform more effectively to meet the demands of the service in a customer focussed and efficient way.	Homeless prevention grant		Housing & Communities Manager & Housing Options Team Leader
4.2 Respond to external funding opportunities to	Seek funding opportunities to assist in the delivery of support and	Improved opportunities and outcomes for our customers			Housing & Communities Manager Partners

assist in delivery of the strategy	provision of services in Fenland Establish opportunities for joint bids with other relevant partners				
4.3 Increase knowledge and awareness of our services with others	Undertake shared training opportunities with statutory and voluntary organisations	Improved knowledge of staff and working relationships to benefit our customers	Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader
4.4 Achieve external accreditation for delivering of domestic abuse services to our customers	Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing alliance (DAHA) accreditation	Improved service to domestic abuse survivors	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Housing Options Officer (DAHA Operational Lead)

Objective 5. Reaching our customers

5.0 Ensure access and information about our service is up to date and broadly accessible to our customers and partners	Housing Options information is reviewed with our customers Produce a fact sheet to be shared at triage stage including information required, estimated time scales, temporary accommodation etc My Fenland Team trained Continue to use language Line translation service for our non English speaking customers Street Link service publicised	Clear accessible information for our customers about our services	Existing resources Quarterly updates Existing resources Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader Link with social Prescriber post Housing Options Team leader Comms Team

	Comms Team action plan to highlight progress with the strategy and action plan with the community Communications via community social media sites (including EU languages and sites) to encourage engagement in rough sleeper prevention services at an early stage		Existing resources		Ferry Project & FDC

Objective 6. Accessibility and standards

6.0 Ensure compliance with Customer Service Excellence	Corporate Customer Service Excellence achieved	Increased standard of customer service	Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader

					Private Sector Housing
6.1 Achieve the Silver Standard of service for Veterans across the council	Undertake evidence based assessment of services to meet the criteria	Increased standard of customer service for Veterans	Existing resources		Senior Community Support Officer Head of HR
6.2 Good practice Safeguarding policy	Undertake the implementation plan as approved by cabinet for Adults Children and adults at risk of harm policy	Compliance with relevant legislation on safeguarding	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager

Objective 7. Diversity & Cohesion

7.0 Ensure that the Housing Options Team contribute to maintaining the Council's responsibility towards equality and diversity	Responsibilities met within Equality Act 2010	A service accessible to all in Fenland who needs it.	Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader
7.1 Ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are up to date	Review EIA's annually	Service is accessible to our customers	Existing resources Annually April		Housing Options Team Leader
7.2 Ensure homelessness advice services are fit for purpose in relation to	Monitor the impact of non English speaking customers – feed in to the Council's Diverse Communities	Advice services are fit for purpose	Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader

non English speaking customers	Forum and tension monitoring groups – all communities				
7.3 Manage the Homes for Ukraine project	Deliver services to Ukraine refugees Ensure smooth transition into move on temporary accommodation and permanent homes Provide effective housing advice to non priority need clients	Enable rehousing options (both statutory and non statutory) for clients under HFU scheme	existing resources CCC grant from central government		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Homes For Ukraine Co ordinator Community Support Officer
7.4 Manage the homelessness process for refugees who arrive in the Fenland area	Deliver the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement programme relating to Fenland	Implement the homelessness process linked to Ukrainian and Afghan refugees	Ukraine Funding Afghan Resettlement funding LAHF funding Existing resources		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Senior Community Support Officer Community Support Officer
7.5 Manage the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)	Conclude the purchase of 33 properties on the open market to increase provision of temporary accommodation instead of using Bed and breakfast accommodation	Discharge our duty into self contained accommodation	Government grant scheme LAHF scheme		Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Assets and Projects team

Objective 8. Partnership working

8.0 Ensure that Fenland remains a partner in the Cambridge sub Regional Homelessness Strategy Group & Cambridgeshire Operational group	Full contribution to Homelessness county wide group including reviews of Sub Regional Lettings Policy Opportunities for sub regional projects to impact positively on fenland homeless applicants	Establish good practice and where possible opportunities for sub-regional projects	DLUHC grant funding		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader
8.1 Work in partnership with registered providers and local 3 rd sector organisations operating in Fenland to help prevent homelessness	Work in partnership with registered providers and third sector to prevent homelessness by joint visits & initiatives etc. Support third sector to access external funding to tackle homelessness	Improved partnership working with Registered Providers and 3 rd Sector in tackling homelessness	Existing resources Ongoing		Housing & Communities Manager & Housing Options Team Leader

8.2 Development of the Fenland Supported Housing Forum	Assist in the development of the scheme to ensuring the most impactful allocation of supported accommodation for our clients	Co ordinated approach to allocating supported accommodation in Fenland			Cambridge Housing Society (CHS) Assistant Director Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader
8.3 Enabling new affordable housing with registered provider partners	Engage with registered providers to develop new affordable homes	Affordable homes provided to our customers	Registered Providers Central Government Grant		Assistant Director Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer
8.4 Ensure that supported housing in Fenland meets with government standards	Supported Housing Act 2023 implementation	Develop systems and processes for meeting the requirements of the new act including licensing and standards of support and strategic supported housing plans including relevant actions from the	TBC		TBC

		Supported Housing Act			
8.5 Ensure Fenland teams remain an integral partner in Operation Pheasant and associated operations	Take a proactive approach to tackling poor housing conditions and treatment of tenants (including migrant population – exploitation and modern slavery) within the private rented sector. Establish co ordinated approach around Child Sexual exploitation including training Publicise our success Link with serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Fusion county wide work Consider the implementation of an Additional Licensing Scheme for Wisbech to tackle poorly managed HMO's	Reducing migrant exploitation within the housing sector including planning, Private Sector Housing & Housing Options	Existing resources Ongoing existing resources Serious & organised Crime (SOC) Fusion		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Housing Compliance Manager
8.6 Tackling rogue landlords	Take a proactive approach to tackling rogue landlords including action to prosecution where appropriate. Areas of work include prosecution where appropriate	Private sector housing market in Fenland free from exploitation, decent standard, well managed and safe homes	Existing resources paid for by fine income		Housing & Communities Manager Private Sector Housing Officers Housing Options Team Leader Operation Pheasant

					Anglia Revenues Partnership – Fraud Team
8.7 Co ordinate partners to share intelligence around rough sleepers to tackle the issue (See 2.0)	• Share intelligence between FDC Housing Options Team and partners (Police, Social Care, Ferry Project, Rosmini, Inclusion etc) • Joint partnership outreach work with Migrant Outreach Worker and CGL drug and alcohol services • Support for night shelter development via Rough Sleeper Co ordiantor post • Map all reports of rough sleepers as part of RSI bid return • Promote Street-Link with members and the community • Explore the concept of a whole community response to homelessness and rough sleeping	A co ordinated and effective approach to tackling rough sleepers	DLUHC prevention grant		Housing & Communities Manager Housing Options Team Leader Rough Sleeper Co ordinator Ferry Project CGL Statutory & third sector partners Op Luscombe
8.8 Develop protocols with partners to develop improved	Develop the following protocols across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:	Timely response to housing and support	Existing resources		Housing & Communities Manager

services for our customers (See 1.0)	• Hospital Discharge and Housing • Substance misuse protocol • Criminal justice and housing – explore ways in which 3rd sector can assist with rehousing pathways	solutions for our customers			Housing Options Team Leader Statutory Partners
8.9 Build continued awareness of Early Help and Adult Early Help and safeguarding services	Continue with training and awareness of safeguarding	Appropriate multi agency approach to customers needs	Cambridgeshire County Council		All Staff Safeguarding leads Members Contractors Volunteers
8.10 Deliver Changing Future programme Including	Training of frontline staff in understanding new systems and processes linked to a much quicker and better response in complex cases through the Changing Future programme learning co production trusted person model Trauma Informed practice Increase the involvement of people with lived experience in shaping processes and procedures for our future clients	Increased confidence of Front Line staff to make the best case for appropriate Mental Health treatment	Existing resources		Assistant Director H&CM HO TL RS Co ordinator

8.11 Develop a clear process for supporting residents in supported housing in higher costs accommodation with transition into work, in a way that does not build up housing debts	No financial barriers to getting work when living in supported housing	Improved service to our customers	Anglia Revenues Partnership		ARP HOTL Clarion Housing

Objective 9. Consultation

9.0 Provide comprehensive accessible consultation opportunities to customers and key stakeholders regarding policies and procedures and accessibility of our services	Capture feedback of Housing Options service on regular basis Review comments compliments and complaints received – both informal or formal Include opportunities to engage with people with lived experience to shape our services	Apply Customer Service Excellence approach to consultation	Existing resources		Housing Options Team Leader

9.1 Ensure that Private Sector Landlords are kept informed of changes in legislation and best practice	Work with Private Sector Landlords to ensure they are up to date with changes in legislation and best practice e.g. Damp and mould Develop website and press coverage to showcase advice to landlords Engagement with private sector landlords to continue a good supply of well managed and maintained safe private rented homes to meet out housing objectives	Improved service to customers and quality of private rented accommodation increased	Existing resources		Housing Compliance Manager

APPENDIX C

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY CONSULTATION – LIVED EXPERIENCE

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me, I'm Sarah Gove and I work for the council. I've written a document about how we help people who are homeless/rough sleeping and want to get your views as you have experienced local services and are best placed to give me your opinion and ideas

I've got 4 questions, if there's anything you don't understand or don't wish to answer, that's fine but I'm grateful for anything you do tell me and I will not share your identity in this process. Your comments will be fed into the final consultation ending on 15 September and considered as part of the final 5 year plan

Question No.	Question	Answer	Response
1	Looking back, when you were homeless, what would have made the biggest different to you (and your family) when you approached the council / Ferry project/ local services? Why do you say that?	1 – 4.9.24 If you are homeless and not engaging with any services, sometimes it is difficult to engage with support as they felt 'freedom' when on their own. (Q What made you engage?) Outreach said let's go to Ferry Project (FP) will help you to understand, support to getting benefits, sort my life out, hygiene, food, somewhere to stay, fresh clothes and shower. Not able to work, pleased did engage. Very happy and thankful for FP and R 2 – 4.9.24 Engaged with CEEHP and Ferry Project, very helpful with engagement, know	Thank you for your comment – ADD TO ACTION PLAN SECTION 5.0 Highlight support available to rough sleepers (and those at risk of) via Ferry Project - communication - what is on offer Thank you for your comment

		where to go and to get help, Pre Covid was homeless in the White Lion, I got help 3 -4.9.24 Very grateful and happy to be offered a place to live (Q anything that could be done to make it easier to engage?) Quickly received help, girlfriend had help and I followed 4 – 4.9.24 It was all my fault – alcohol that is why I was homeless for 2 months. Had to stop work due to illness. Went to QMC, benefits advice, Ferry Project accommodation at Bunkabin 3-4 days (Q Anything that could better the process?) All was very good when approached Ferry Project, perfect 5 -4.9.24 Support with documents, benefits, passport and GP appointments and provided accommodation. (Q – anything that could be better in that process) It's more about the individual if they know they need help and accept it. I got support in a very good way. Some will decline help (Q Why?) Emotional, ashamed about situation, ashamed to	Thank you for your comment Word of mouth Thank you for your comment ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment Comms approach via FDC and Ferry Project

		speak to support as felt they will judge me, but no , (I was not judged) 6 -5.9.24 There were lots of unknowns going into the service - I have a large family and couldn't access the private rented sector as I am a student . At the start, It would have been helpful to understand the whole process , B&B, temporary accommodation and waiting times, lots of unknowns especially where we could end up with such a large family. 7-5.9.24 Sheila approachable, did not judge. Happy with process - Temporary accommodation in Fenland not Peterborough would have made the biggest difference	ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage Thank you for your comment Placing out of Fenland is the exception, this is only normally due to specific types of accommodation that are not available locally at that time. The council has taken on additional properties to assist with this issue and have drastically reduce the use of bed and breakfast for families as a result

		8-5.9.24 First point of contact was excellent, Sheila has been brilliant can't fault it. – TA in Hunts was not great, got moved back to March and much happier 9-6.9.24 More social housing properties are needed – I had to access the private rented sector	Thank you for your comment Placing out of Fenland is the exception, this is only normally due to specific types of accommodation that are not available locally at that time. The council has taken on additional properties to assist with this issue and have drastically reduce the use of bed and breakfast for families as a result Thank you for your comment The council recognises that demand for accommodation nationally outweighs supply, We have however since 2006 we have delivered with partners around 1000 new affordable properties and forecast to deliver more in 25/26
2	Looking forward, what can the council and partners do to help people who are about to be homeless or actually homeless in the future and why?	1-4.9.24 Not everyone will engage, it's difficult, some have dependencies, some people don't understand support and decline it, If a person doesn't realise they need support they won't engage. They need to be ready for support and accept help. I would tell them, stop drinking, and get volunteering and engage, your own flat, I	Thank you for your comment

		have been sober for 4 months. Took time to accept support, hospital, seizures and listened to advice 2-4.9.24 Contact earlier – tell people about Ferry Project, I did not know what to do, I was a binge drinker. My mind was not straight and I lost my home, I did not know the consequences 3-4.9.24 Understanding and knowing to approach before homeless. Go to Ferry for information and advice – use social media Facebook Lithuanians in Wisbech – Polish in Wisbech, Facebook Wisbech discussion Facebook, adverts, support in different languages – word of mouth	Thank you for your comment The council and partners work to engage early with anyone at risk of rough sleeping and those who are sleeping rough. We also undertake tenancy sustainment work to ensure we prevent homelessness where possible. ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment We will link the council and Ferry Project's Communications Teams as you suggest thank you

		4-4.9.24 Didn't know about Ferry Project, adverts needed , got sent to Ferry Project by Access, language support	ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment We will link the council and Ferry Project's Communications Teams as you suggest thank you
		5-4.9.24 Word of mouth, my friend had no money, language barrier and divorced, felt shame about situation, hairdresser knew many people, I told her to go to Ferry Project - use Facebook, adverts, leaflets in the town	ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment We will link the council and Ferry Project's Communications Teams as you suggest thank you
		6-5.9.24 No idea of timescales , frustrating - have B&B's in Fenland not KL, singles and families together is not great	ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage . The council is committed to reducing the amount of bed and breakfast

			placements and has secured properties within the district to assist with this. We are currently planning additional units for single people as emergency temporary accommodation
		7-5.9.24 Rent increases in Private Rented is becoming unaffordable, what can the council do? It means more homeless people	Thank you for your comment - the council engages with private sector landlords both around property conditions and quality of service via our landlords forum and ongoing support from our Private Sector Housing Team- Unfortunately we have no legislation to enforce around costs of rents in the private sector
		8-5.9.24 Accommodation in Hunts B&B was not good – should not mix families and singles – drinking etc No communal space, no garden just a car park	Thank you for your comment – We have reduced the amount of families drastically in bed and breakfast and following your comment have stopped using the location your mention for families

3	If you could give one piece of advice to people who are about to be homeless, what would it be and why?	9-6.9.24 Need more info out there that we can help with a deposit, can't thank you enough for helping me, needed help to physically find it. People need to know about support and how to access it – never been homeless before, very scared , high house prices, needed a guarantor when I had a good job to rent 1-4.9.24 Look at me, look where I am now, I was in a worse place , no home, you can do this, everyone can do it 2- 4.9.24 To approach support services like Ferry Project like I did, and engage early, don't become homeless 3 – 4.9.24 Come and see Renata 4-4.9.24 Go to Ferry Project, I don't know of any other ways to get help, always suggesting to friends to go to Ferry Project for help	Thank you for your comment We have recently updated our website and included the information you have suggested Thank you for your comment Thank you for your comment Thank you for your comment Thank you for your help

		5-4.9.24 Don't be afraid to approach services, go forward and ask Don't feel ashamed You need mental and emotional help CGL (drug and alcohol) there are language barriers in group sessions, 1-1 is good but group session is not good 6-5.9.24 Go with the flow and manage expectations Don't expect quick action, there is a process others have been waiting for some time , it will not happen tomorrow 7- 5.9.24 Don't worry, the council have got your back Look at the Fenland website Approach FDC	ACTION Thank you for your comment We have passed on your comment to CGL Thank you for your comment Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage . Thank you for your comment

		8-5.9.24 Get all of the applications done urgently, Home-Link, have your documents ready, you need to prepare for temporary accommodation 9-6.9.24 The council need to be honest with how long it will take. You need to manage expectations around timescales. Have a plan, local knowledge of the process. Need to explain what happens at the triage stage Ask questions, get informed about what will happen Try and help yourself, you just need knowledge	Thank you for your comment Thank you for your comment Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage .

4	Do you have any other thoughts or comments on what the council and partners can do to prevent homelessness?	1 -4.9.24 Can't think of anything else to add to what support I had, food, housing benefit, safety, shower . to anyone on the streets, they need adverts, leaflets about support, I did not know about support, posters, adverts to help Ferry Project are fantastic	ADD TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment We will link the council and Ferry Project's Communications Teams as you suggest thank you

		2-4.9.24 Support organisations all work well Do not drink and think what you are doing, Ferry Project does engagement right	Thank you for your comment
		3-4.9.24 If you are missing ½ a day in work, you are easily sacked or struggling to pay rent. Zero hours contracts do not help, ‘you get told there is no work’ if you can’t work for a day or 2	Thank you for your comment. We would encourage anyone in that situation to contact the Council at the earliest opportunity to see what we can do to support the accommodation issues.
		4-4.9.24 Ferry Project does everything! If I have a problem, I go to Ferry Project for help, John, Steve and Renata	Thank you for your comment
		5-4.9.24 More outreach people, one to one chats and start approaching about support	ACTION Thank you we will pass your comments onto CGL

		Drug and alcohol services need to be more accessible, and approachable for EU speaking people 6-5.9.24 Problems with landlords and agents, landlords look at regular income rather than pay packet -- demand outstrips the supply 7-5.9.24 Be proactive 8-5.9.24 The process is long winded to get up and running, lots of information is needed There is no affordable private rented homes I am at University, private landlords won't take me on as I am a full time student There needs to be a scheme in place to make private rented accessible for working people. Housing benefit doesn't cover all of the rent	Thank you for your comment We agree with your comments, unfortunately, as you say, supply outstrips demand. The council is always available to assist with incentives for landlords and agents to assist Thank you for your comment ADDED TO ACTION PLAN AT SECTION 5.0 Thank you for your comment Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage . unfortunately, demand for private rented accommodation is very high (nationally including Fenland) the council does offer incentives to landlords to assist with accessing private rented but

		9-6.9.24 Take the social housing back Build more homes – they do not seem to build homes Landlords want their homes back, not the fault of tenants More information needed at triage stage, how long will this take so I could self help All good with Caroline, great comms fast deposit Suggest a pack at triage stage, spell out the process, manage expectations and help to self help	we recognise that demand far outweighs supply and work to encourage new affordable housing in the district. Thank you for your comment The council transferred it's housing stock in 2007, since then circa 1000 affordable housing properties have been built in Fenland. We recognise that demand for private rented accommodation far outweighs supply. Whilst it is difficult to estimate the timescales involved as everyone's situation and circumstances will be unique, your comments are helpful in that we can produce a fact sheet based on the areas you mention to accompany our triage stage .

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK TABLE

DATE RECEIVED	COMMENT	BY WHOM RESIDENT, PARTNER- OTHER	RESPONSE
24 .05.24	Preventing care leavers from homelessness	DLUHC & DFE	ADDED TO ACTION PLAN SECTION 3.2 Reference to the approach amended in strategy action plan
10.09.24	There is good in the report and action plan. Very nice to read the case studies which outline the success of a Housing First approach However, the action plan does not appear to contain any specific dated targets. For example, the word develop is used numerous times. By when and specifically by who? In places it reads, consequently, as a wish list.	Unknown	Thank you for your comment The strategy action plan is a 5 year plan, many of the actions are dependant upon government funding. The council has been successful in bidding for external funding for several years, however, without this, many projects will not able to progress. This has been noted in the resources and timescale section along with project leads are noted in the action plan. The action plan also interfaces with our service plan which is reviewed each year.

	It is not clear as to whether the White Lion will continue to be used. I cannot see it mentioned at all in the report or action plan. Do the 33 properties that are being purchased on the open market replace this? What monitoring systems are in place for the service provided in the White Lion?		The council has a statutory duty to provide emergency temporary accommodation to qualifying customers depending on their circumstances. The council recently undertook a procurement exercise, a number of premises are used for this purpose. Our aim is to minimise the use of B&B for Emergency Interim Accommodation over the next 2 years through alternative provision of properties. The new properties purchased by the council has reduced significantly the need to use Bed & Breakfast accommodation as emergency temporary accommodation for families. Our commitment is to dramatically reduce the use of emergency temporary accommodation and only use it during out of office hours where possible. As per the tender process, all providers of emergency temporary accommodation are required to meet a set criteria including an inspection to ensure all meet Housing Health and Safety Rating Standards. We welcome feedback from our customers, some recent feedback has been included in the Lived Experience consultation results.

	What support do individuals get there. The client group there seems to have a make up of people "just off the streets" and people who have been evicted If the xx hotel is to be continued to be used there has to be a clear and transparent plan for how it integrates in the overall strategy and plan. This is not a criticism of anyone working in the system but, unless things are happening I don't know about, I believe the systems is flawed and underfunded. If the xx hotel is no-longer going to be used then say it explicitly. If it is going to be used then i`s use is key to helping tackle the issue of homelessness and rough sleeping.		If clients require support, this is sought from individual support providers e.g. P3. If the clients were rough sleepers appropriate support would be given by a local provider e.g. Ferry Project . The aim through the development of alternative emergency interim accommodation is to provide a funded support and management service. From late January 2025 we will be increasing support for residents in B&B The council has a statutory duty to provide emergency temporary accommodation to clients who fit the criteria as set by government. The council is currently working on alternative provision for emergency temporary accommodation as part of its housing enabling role with a move away from Bed & Breakfast provision

	What happens to individuals who are too high needs (so have been evicted sometimes numerous times)? The report isn't clear. My perception is that there is a funding issue with this. Currently, there appears to be an influx of "homeless from other areas". This does not appear to be mentioned in the action plan. And by "from outside the area" I do not just mean people from outside the UK. It appears to be that people from other council areas are coming to Fenland. This needs to be openly discussed and considered.		The council works in partnership with the Ferry Project and has enable inward investment from central government over the years to provide specialist support and accommodation for people with medium to high support needs. Case studies are included in the strategy to explain the services and outcomes The council is also part of Changing Futures (referenced in the strategy) which pulls together professionals from multiple agencies where clients have multiple disadvantage to find solutions. Alongside this the Council working with Cambridgeshire County Council have 7 number of Housing First properties where a homeless person with complex needs is provided a home with a multi agency support plan put in place to understand and address the root cause to the reason for being homeless Any council can legally place clients into temporary accommodation in other areas, there is a statutory reporting mechanism for this. . This is monitored, as are clients the council places out of area when all accommodation is full in Fenland and moved back when a placement is available .

05.09.24	Citizens Advice is under-funded and under-resourced. Too high timescales for them to get back to people. The criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments appears to have tightened. This could be a key safety net but could also assist with those wishing to progress (and as they cannot progress they bed block). There is no mention specifically of the support provided once someone is reported as homeless. What support do they get? Do they get clothing and bedding until housed?		The council provides core funding for Cambs Rural CAB . monitoring feedback shows 5610 issues in Quarter 1 of 2024/25 The criteria is set by Department for Work and Pensions. The fund does assist many clients (117 in 2024) Ferry Project are a support provider for rough sleepers and homeless single people - Cambridgeshire County Council provide a contract for Floating support, currently undertaken by P3. Support is provided by a range of providers in Fenland under Housing Related Support, a Cambridgeshire County Council function. This could be young people , support provision at Foyer, adults, Ferry Project CLG drug and alcohol support etc.

3.9.24	CGL do a great job. But are they resourced for the need in Fenland? I don't think they are. The "key challenges" section is quite worrying -- and it's not clear how the provisions of the strategy are going to keep pace with increasing demand. It would be nice to see more about supporting rough sleepers while they're on the streets and awaiting a placement in a hostel		This is good to hear. CGL are funded by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide a drug and alcohol treatment service Thank you for your comments. The challenges are significant in Fenland however our plan is detailed in the action plan. The council has been successful for several years in bidding for government funding to help tackle rough sleeping and supporting partners to provide specialist accommodation/services. Subject to funding, this work will continue as it relies on bidding for funding from central government. The section on Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 explains the service provided in the document

30.08.24	Understanding of what homeless people need, when you're in that situation you are in survival mode only you can't think about anything else		Thank you for your comment. We have had some valuable feedback through some additional consultation we have undertaken with people with lived experience. We are fortunate to have specialist providers and services in Fenland who work via a trauma informed person centred approach including employees with lived experience to help shape policies and procedures which have been well received and successfully implemented to help our clients

28.08.24	I think sterling work is being done. It can only be a good thing that EU nationals are helped to return home if they desire it. There are more than enough empty properties in Wisbech to ensure that *nobody* is homeless. Troughton way for example where dozens of empty, unused units sit there boarded up and have done for years. Owned, I believe, by FDC.		Thank you for your comments. The council has an Empty Homes Officer who's role is to identify empty homes and get them back into use. I believe that you are referring to Roman Court which is Clarion owned and was a supported living facility for the elderly. The properties were no longer fit for purpose and required too much work at too high a cost for them to be refurbished. Clarion are exploring what to do with the empty properties.

30.07.24	I think there is an opportunity to partner with local health services more here and offer physical health checks as well as mental health e.g. replicate the mobile van Light Project Peterborough in Fenland		Thank you for your comments. Ferry Project have a weekly GP visit the scheme, etc All clients are registered with a GP as [part of the support service. As part of our Rough Sleeper Initiative bid we have a Dual Diagnosis Community Psychiatric Nurse who works directly with our clients.

29.07.24	It would be helpful to include more around the increasing complexity of needs and the pressure this is placing on existing services. It would also be useful to understand who/which partners fund the various interventions e.g. TA, supported accommodation etc This will help give a better sense of the wider partnership and inter relationships between funders and service deliverers		Thank you for your comments. This issue is detailed in the Purpose and Summary section and Rough Sleeper Initiative sections of the strategy document. Increasing demands on services are documented in the Local Context section and Key challenges. Funding comes from a variety of sources, temporary accommodation via Housing Benefits, support functions under Housing Related Support, Cambs County Council contracts, Rough Sleeper Initiative funding via central Government Grant and Housing Prevention grant from central government allocated to all local authorities and Fenland District Council's core budget.

05.09.24	Having lived on the streets of Wisbech myself I think what would have helped me would have been a halfway house where I could get meals a shower a bed and support throughout the day from people that understand		Thank you for your comments. We work closely with Ferry Project who offer a range of accommodation pathways from those who have been rough sleeping and require initial intensive support, moving through to light touch support before moving not settled homes The Hub operates a service for people at the start of engagement and does offer a range of lighter touch support including fresh clothes, shower, food, advice and support

11.07.24	The draft documents need to be more reader friendly. [Not exactly easy on the eye.]		I am sorry to hear that you could not easily read the documents. It is compliant with plain English format, the council offer a range of formats should you require assistance.

11.07.24	The numbers needing help appear to be increasing more than available accommodation		Thank you for your comment. Yes, sadly due to many factors including the cost of living issues, homelessness and rough sleeping is increasing nationally including in Fenland. However we have a programme to increase the number of new affordable homes and temporary accommodation to help meet that demand.

10.07.24	The report states that there are currently 8 rough sleepers. I do not believe that this is true		At the time of writing the document 8 was the correct number. The council has just completed it's External verification for 2024 via Homeless-Link which included an independent volunteer and independent verifier from Homeless-Link, our annual count figure is 7 (November 2024) However, if you have any concerns about anyone, please report via the following link https://thetreetlink.org.uk/ or call 01354 654321

10.09.24	Areas the Ferry Project would like to feedback on: 1. Thank you to everyone involved in preparing the strategy. I can see the work that has gone into the draft and we appreciate the clear concept of partnership working and feel the case studies help bring out the various issues and solutions 2. We would like to suggest that the strategy would be a good place to explore and develop a whole community response to homelessness. This could be based on the ITAC (It takes a city) model in Cambridge or the Andy Burham model in Manchester. In both cases the community came together to agree that it is the whole community's responsibility to help prevent and if needed support homeless people. The current draft effectively takes this responsibility onto the district council and partners and does not encourage others to get involved in a structured way. Examples could be that Homelessness organisation could work with school to teach children about what to do if there are housing problems, where to go for help etc. Businesses are very generous and we could work together to	Partner	Many thanks for your comments and for your positive feedback ADDED TO ACTION PLAN SECTION 8.7 Thank you, this is something that we will consider as the strategy action plan develops

	join us any support that is available, any community groups wanting to help could come into the group and learn about the issue in depth and then contribute in a joined up way. There is much more but I hope this gives an idea. 3. Women's services – I think the strategy could include a review of current services to ensure that there is no indirect discrimination due to the way services are operated, or the accommodation is supplied. In our discussion I gave an example of the way people are verified as rough sleepers and the fact that research done in Islington found that most street homeless women slept during the day and walked around at night as a way of keeping safe. So the current way of counting people as rough sleepers would not count these individuals and as a result they could not receive RSI services. There is much more that could be done. This check would ensure that everyone was getting a service appropriate to their needs.		Thank you for your comments and ideas As discussed, the counting of rough sleepers is undertaken by the council and partners, including the annual count by external verification and independent volunteer following statutory guidance issued by Homeless-Link. However we acknowledge that currently we are working with a number of clients and we encourage the community to report any potential rough sleeper sighting via tps://thestreetlink.org.uk/ Or call 01354 654321 We have not heard of any evidence locally of the issues in Islington but of course we would look to investigate if we get such reports. Currently the broader partnership includes non housing links, e.g. Police (Op Luscombe) Community Safety partnership (and team) other accommodation initiatives such as Rough Sleeper Accommodation programme and Next Steps accommodation programme, both of which have facilitated housing pathways for those at risk of rough sleeping as well as rough sleepers.

09.09.24	4. Criminal Justice system referrals – I am unsure if this needs a specific mention or just working in our partnerships we should discuss this. But I think we should ensure that the pathways for people coming out of prison in Fenland are clear and well understood by everyone. I hope this is helpful. The overall aim is to develop a highly effective partnership further and to be clearly a leader in preventing and helping homeless people. The items above would make clear to everyone that we are looking as a partnership to develop further. Keith Smith Joint CEO of The Ferry Project		ADD TO ACTION PLAN SECTION 8.8 Thanks for your comment – The council is part of a county wide criminal Justice and Housing Protocol ,(this is mentioned on Page 13) however this is via the statutory Duty to Refer route between Criminal justice and local authorities – we will explore further how this can be developed to find housing solutions for clients

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

APPENDIX E

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 reminded all public authorities of their duty to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The protected groups (previously known as equality strands) are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnerships (eliminate unlawful discrimination only)

Other legislation and practice has determined that we extend this to cover:

- Human Rights
- Socio Economic factors

The duty reminds us of the need to analyse the effect of existing and new policies and practices on equality.

The equality analysis should be proportionate and relevant – not just a tick box exercise. In some cases the written record will be a quick set of bullet points or notes under each heading. Others will need a more detailed explanation.

However, legal case law makes it clear that we must carry out the analysis **before making the relevant policy decision**.

A meaningful equality analysis will help the Council make the best decisions or formulate a policy which best meets our customers needs.

Once a Customer Impact Assessment (replacing our existing Equality Impact Assessment) has been completed there is no need to automatically carry out a new assessment each year. A review assessment has been put in place, and can be completed if there has been no change to the original policy, the way it's implemented and its customer impact.

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO ASSESSING EQUALITY

What is Customer Impact Assessment (CIA)?

- CIA is the act of systematically assessing the likely (or actual) effects of policies or services on people based on the following:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage and civil partnerships
 - Human Rights
 - Socio Economic factors

This means considering the above, as set out in the table below, in relation to a policy, practice or service, before a decision is made.

PLEASE SEE EXPLANATIONS BELOW

	Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups	Fostering good relations between different groups
Disability			
Age			
Pregnancy/ maternity/ paternity			
Race			
Religion or belief			
Sex/ Gender			
Gender reassignment/ Transgender			
Sexual orientation			
Human Rights			
Socio Economic Factors			

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

Marriage and civil partnerships			

- You are looking for opportunities to promote equality, and good relations between all groups as well as removing or mitigating negative or adverse impacts.
- Remember it might not be possible to remove all barriers to service or your policy or practice may have a negative impact on certain groups ... please note anything of this nature

Why is it important?

- Assessing equality issues helps us understand the needs of our customers, ensures our decisions meet those needs, and are also cost effective, and demonstratable.
- As a public authority we also have a **legal** duty to show “*due regard*” for equality in decision making and the way services are provided
- To be able us to show “*due regard*”, we need to show that consideration of [possible impact to the groups mentioned have taken place **prior** to a decision being made; that equality issues were considered, and that this consideration was rigorous, open minded, and involved thinking about the three arms of the Equality Act as part of this process, and that potential adverse impacts were either removed or reduced, and that all our decisions can be defended if challenged.
- Documenting our equality analysis enables the Council show it has had “*due regard*” for equality if decisions are challenged. If “*due regard*” for equality can not be shown, decisions may be overturned at judicial review. This could result in lost time, money and negative publicity.
- The sooner equality is considered in a process; the more efficiently that process can be carried out.

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

How can equality be assessed?

1. Gather information This can be consulting with relevant groups, using a previous EqlA as a starting point, consultations carried out by other services, details of the service 'hard to reach groups', customer satisfaction surveys, MOASIC data, consider relevance to equality



2. Assess impact Could different groups be affected differently? Is this difference positive or negative? Consider the three arms of the Equality Act in relation to all the protected groups as per the table. NOTE: The quality of the assessment will depend on the quality of the information gathered



3. Take action This could be to reduce negative or increase positive impact. Produce an action plan where appropriate; make actions SMART. Unlawful discrimination MUST be actioned immediately



4. Summarise your findings on the EqlA form. Where it is clear from initial information gathering that a policy will not have any effect on equality, this may simply be a sentence recording this; the greater the relevance to equality, the greater the level of detail required. Publish your findings



5. Monitor the on-going effects of the policy on equality. This is usually in the form of the annual review carried out in October of each year, to fit in with the service planning cycle. The Equality Act is a **continuing** duty!

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

Customer Impact Assessment

Name and brief description of policy being analysed

Briefly summarise the policy including any key information such as aims, context etc; note timescales and milestones for new policies; use plain language – NO JARGON; refer to other documents if required

The Homelessness and rough Sleeping strategy and action plan is a 5 year plan of how the council, along with partners will respond to need within the district of both homelessness and rough sleeping. it is a statutory function and will be monitored by DLUHC

Information used for customer analysis

Note relevant consultation; who took part and key findings; refer to, or attach other documents if needed; include dates where possible

The strategy and action plan have consulted on for the statutory 10 weeks consultation process – the responses have been captured in a table and relevant feedback has been captured and incorporated within the strategy and action plan.

Potential cultural barriers have been addressed e.g. Modern slavery under the Cambridgeshire County Council's statutory duty

	Could particularly benefit	Neutral	May adversely impact	Explanations	Is action possible or required?	Details of actions or explanations if actions are not possible Please note details of any actions to be placed in your Service Plan
Race	☐	X	☐	Women are more likely to suffer domestic abuse than men. The strategy and action plan are particularly concerned with safeguarding vulnerable adults whose definition includes those	N	
Sex	X	☐	☐		N	

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

				who are victims of domestic abuse		
Gender reassignment/ Transgender	☐	X	☐		N	
Disability- physical	☐	X	☐		N	
Age 60+		X	☐		N	
Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)		X			N	
Sexual orientation	☐	X	☐		N	
Religion or belief	☐	X	☐		N	
Pregnancy, maternity and paternity	☐	X	☐		N	
Marriage & civil partnership	☐	X	☐		N	

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

Human Rights	☐	X	☐		N	
Socio Economic	☐	X	☐		N	
Multiple/ Cross Cutting	☐	X	☐		N	
Outcome(s) of customer analysis						
a) Will the policy/ procedure impact on the whole population of Fenland and/ or identified groups within the population; negative ☐ neutral ☐ positive ☒						
No major change needed ☒ Adjust the policy ☐ Adverse impact but continue ☐ Stop and remove / reconsider policy ☐						
Arrangements for future monitoring: Note when analysis will be reviewed; include any equality indicators and performance against those indicators 2029						
Details of any data/ Research used (both FDC & Partners):						
The strategy and action plan have both been consulted on, partners, member, the wider public						
The statistical information comes from data submitted to central government via the DELTA system						
Completed by:						
Name: Sarah Gove						
Position: Housing & Communities Manager						
Approved by (manager signature):				Date published: This should be the date the analysis was published on the intranet		
Details of any Committee approved by (if applicable):				Date endorsed by Members if applicable:		

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Agenda Item No:	10	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	24 High Street, Wisbech - Update	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:
 - Ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
 - Work regarding 11-12 High Street, Wisbech will now be covered in other reports from this point forwards.
- 1.2 To highlight additional costs incurred for the construction of 24 High Street, as detailed in the January 2025 Cabinet report and to seek formal approval from Cabinet for this additional funding.

2 Key Issues

3 24 High Street

- 3.1 Etec, FDC's main contractor, continues with the construction work on 24 High Street, Wisbech. Internal works are proceeding at a pace. The expected completion date is currently 25 April 2025 - just 8 weeks away - following recent negotiations with the contractor.
- 3.2 Now that the shell of the building has been mostly completed, the number of potential issues should be reduced. That said, the project team still expects minor issues to arise as we approach completion.
- 3.3 As highlighted in previous Cabinet reports over the past few months, the contractor has asked for extensions of time (EoT) for several issues that have become apparent throughout the build, namely;
 - Piling works
 - Additional slab works to ensure the building fits into the space required and the delays caused by the necessary design for this work
 - Additional materials not included on the original bill of quantities (BoQ) and the time taken to fit these materials
 - Changes necessary to the steels for the front of the building
- 3.4 The project team rejected the claim for piling works as this is a contractor item.
- 3.5 The total EoT requested by the contractor for the additional items was 22 weeks. Discussions regarding these items has been underway for several months and was resolved in early January. Whilst both parties highlight that the issues are a combination of factors due to a complex site, the best

compromise possible, to ensure progress with the build continued, was to settle at 15 weeks EoT. This has a cost of approximately **£162,000**.

3.6 Whilst the cost has been settled at 15 weeks EoT, the contractor still requires the 22 weeks of time to complete the project, meaning that completion is currently likely in April 2025. The Council will not be charged for the additional preliminaries cost of the extra 7 weeks.

3.7 Additional costs, directed to be instigated by Etec as a client (i.e FDC) instruction, have also been incurred throughout the build, with significant items being:

- The adjustment of the scaffolding at 11-12 High Street (£25,000) to ensure it was not in the footpath creating a safety issue as the same was required at 24 High Street for the works opposite.
- LABC Structural warranty – initially £78,000, but recently a switch in supplier may reduce this cost
- Insurance costs (£17,500)
- Movement monitoring systems to assess movement in the buildings adjacent to number 24 (£27,500) to ensure ongoing safety of the site and the adjacent buildings

3.8 The current construction works financial situation is as follows:

Original Etec construction cost:	£2.829m
Client instruction costs added to date:	<u>£0.246m</u>
Revised cost, pending other issues:	£3.075m
Additional costs incl. EoT 2/3/4 below:	<u>£0.189m</u>
Current best cost estimate:	£3.264m

3.9 In 2022 when Council approved the project, the construction cost was capped at £3m due to the procurement framework used. The agreement regarding EoT claims from the contractor now put the current best cost estimate at £3.264m.

4 Recommendations

4.1 That Cabinet delegates authority to the S151 officer, working in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to fund the additional **£265,000** identified as necessary, at this time, to complete the construction of 24 High Street. This cost is a contractual obligation as part of building work.

4.2 That Cabinet notes that until the building is completed there may be other additional costs, albeit these are anticipated to be more minor in nature, as the complex part of the building works are completed. It is anticipated that further costs will be addressed by way of a Portfolio or Officer Decision Notice.

Wards Affected	Medworth ward	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY21APR22/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Seaton Cllr Ian Benney Cllr Chris Boden	Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Originator	Phil Hughes	Head of Service
Contact Officers	Phil Hughes Paul Medd Peter Catchpole	Head of Service Chief Executive Corporate Director and S151 Officer
Background Papers	Previous monthly Cabinet reports regarding Wisbech High Street July 2022 Cabinet and Council reports regarding 24 High Street, Wisbech	

Report:

1 SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION

Original Etec construction cost:	£2.829m
Client instruction costs added to date:	<u>£0.246m</u>
Revised cost, pending other issues:	£3.075m
Additional costs incl. EoT 2/3/4 below:	<u>£0.189m</u>
Current best cost estimate:	<u>£3.264m</u>

2 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 2.1 Cabinet receives a monthly report regarding Wisbech High Street and in the past few months the prospect of additional costs has been made clear. In the past month the actual figures have now been agreed – by way of a compromise – between both parties.
- 2.2 This report provides Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:
 - Ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
- 2.3 To highlight additional costs incurred for the construction of 24 High Street and to seek formal approval for this additional funding.

3 ADDITIONAL COST DETAILS

Detailed information regarding Extensions of Time (EoT) requests regarding EoT 2/3/4 - the additional cost of £189k highlighted in the financial summary above.

- 3.1 As highlighted in recent Cabinet reports, the project team has been discussing three Extension of Time (EoT) requests with our contractor, Etec. There was also another initial EoT (EoT 1) claim regarding piling works. The Council rejected this claim as piling works were within the purview of the contractor, so any issues / delays with the method used has fallen for the contractor to address and pay for.
- 3.2 The weekly cost to the Council in terms of Etec's preliminary costs is approximately £11,000.
- 3.3 Etec has claimed 22 weeks EoT across the three recent claims. The council's project management team has asked Etec for further information and there has been an ongoing dialogue regarding EoT 2 (setting out of the building) and EoT 3 (materials and the bill of quantities (BoQ) and labour requirements for the changed BoQ).
- 3.4 Resolving a mutually agreeable sum for both EoT 2 and EoT 3 has not been possible over the period of the past three months.
- 3.5 This is a complex project and the Council's team does agree that Etec are owed some EoT to complete works, but both parties disagree on the extent of time.

EoT 2 (12 week claim)

- 3.6 The Council sought legal advice regarding the setting out issues that precipitated EoT 2. The advice received was that Etec should be able to rely on drawings provided to them by the client (i.e. the Council), despite the project team being clear that a good contractor would have used best endeavours to deliver the project on time by checking in advance that there were no laying out issues – and if there were to then advise the client in advance to ensure a prompt adjustment if necessary. Both parties are fixed on final figures that are 4 weeks apart. EoT 3 (6 week claim).
- 3.7 The BoQ and additional materials and changed materials has been resolved in terms of materials and their cost (a reduction in excess of £100,000 on Etec's original claim). However, both sides cannot agree regarding the extension of time required to fit the revised materials and quantities.

EoT 4 (4 week claim)

- 3.8 This is a claim due to a cost regarding a delay to the front of the building and the building steels and adjustments and time required to ensure these fitted in place in terms of the buildings either side of the new build at 24 High Street.

EoT Resolution

- 3.9 On 20 December 2024 Etec made an offer to resolve all three EoT's. This offer consisted of Etec still requiring the 22 weeks additional time added to the project timetable to complete the works, but being 'reluctantly prepared to accept' a cost of only 15 weeks. In effect this is discounting their preliminary costs.
- 3.10 After careful consideration, and in the best interests of the project and the expected completion in spring this year, the Council's project management team has decided to accept this cost and time, whilst stating that we do not agree that a 22 week delay is attributable to the employer and commenting

that the progress on site and site management remains disappointing. Additionally, ongoing weekly progress meetings are to be instigated to mitigate any further delays.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Council is in a contract with Etec to build 24 High Street. Throughout any building contract there will arise issues that add cost into a project as well as options that the client (i.e. the Council) may wish to implement as the build progresses.
- 4.2 Whilst 24 High Street is a difficult site on which to deliver the building, progress has continued at a reasonable pace. The initial piling and then slab works were difficult with ground conditions terrible, but the team has moved beyond this phase and the building shell is mostly complete.
- 4.3 The recommendations to Cabinet are necessary to increase the budget for the project from the originally agreed sum, due to issues on the build. The recommendations address the financial governance of the project and are necessary given the contractual position of the Council for this build.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 N/A

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 The Council is in a legal contract with Etec Limited to build 24 High Street. No alternative options are available given the contractual position of the Council.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Implications

- 7.2 A review of the governance regarding the authority to approve the additional costs for the project has concluded that Cabinet is the correct body to consider and approve these costs.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.4 As highlighted, the cost of the build for 24 High Street has increased. Fortunately, the project is in the final stages and the chance of further increases remain real, but those increases, if they do occur, are expected to be more minor in nature.

7.5 Equality Implications

- 7.6 N/A

7.7 Any Other Relevant Implications

7.8 N/A

DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN – Updated 13 February 2025



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

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
24 Mar 2025	1. Investment Board Update & Review of the Commercial & Investment Strategy	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Tierney
	2. Review of 2 Air Quality Management Areas for Wisbech	Cllr Wallwork
	3. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	4. Update of the Council's corporate complaints policy (3C's) and associated procedures	Cllr Tierney
	5. Purchase of 33 flats and 2 shops in Wisbech to support meeting our housing duties	Cllr Hoy
	6. Accommodation Review	Cllr Boden
	7. Port Repairs & Investment	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney
	8. Port Fees & Charges	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney
	9. County-wide Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy	Cllr Hoy
	10. Food Waste Container Purchase	Cllr Murphy Cllr Tierney
	11. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	12. Approval of award of Legal Services contract (confidential)	Cllr Boden
28 Apr 2025	1. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	2. Wisbech Town Board, 10-Year Vision Document and 3-Year Investment Plan	Cllr Boden Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney Cllr Wallwork
	3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
TBC May 2025	1. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
	2. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
TBC June 2025	1. Annual Report 2024-25	Cllr Boden
	2. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
TBC July 2025	1. Appointment to Outside Bodies	Cllr Boden
	2. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden

TBC = To be confirmed

Agenda Item No:	13	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24.02.25	
Report Title:	Transfer Station Tender	

Appendix 1 of this report is NOT FOR PUBLICATION in accordance with Paragraph 3, of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 in that it contains information relating to financial and business affairs of Fenland District Council and 3rd party organisations.

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To approve the procurement of a replacement provider for the bulking and transfer of Fenland's domestic and commercial mixed dry recycling.
- 1.2 To delegate this procurement, with portfolio holder oversight, to the relevant director through a local tender process.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 A previous tender process resulted in a short-term direct award to Mick George at their Algores Way site in Wisbech.
- 2.2 This site will be included within the Medworth Energy from Waste Plant and as such there is a 6-month notice period to the agreement.
- 2.3 We understand that works are likely to commence in the summer of 2025 and given the value of this work a formal tender process is therefore required.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 To commit to the procurement and appointment of one or more Contractors, to deliver services for bulking and transfer of Fenland's collected municipal mixed dry recycling materials;
- 3.2 To delegate to the Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer for the authorisation of the final Invitation to Tender (ITT), and to award the contract, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, after considering possible sharing of facilities and/or contractors with neighbouring Councils which are likely to form part of the same Unitary Authority in Fenland after Local Government Reorganisation;
- 3.3 To allow authority for the Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, in tandem with the tender process to explore the provision of this contract through agreement with the County Council at their March Transfer Station, operated by Thalia, where this is financially advantageous and contractually practicable.
- 3.4 To note that should a suitable contractor and/or facilities not be forthcoming, then it may be necessary for the Council to pursue the construction of a suitable solution for our own operation, or to discuss possible sharing of facilities with neighbouring

Councils which are likely to form part of the same Unitary Authority in Fenland after Local Government Reorganisation.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/30JAN25/02
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader and Finance Portfolio Holder Cllr Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Communications, Transformation, Climate Change & Strategic Refuse Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Refuse & Cleansing, Parks and Open Space.
Report Originator(s)	Mark Mathews Head of Environmental Services
Contact Officer(s)	Carol Pilson Director and Monitoring Officer Peter Catchpole Director and S151 Officer
Background Papers	Previous tender approval December 2023: Recap Dry Recycling Contract Tender for Bulking, Transportation, Sorting and Sale of Recycling Materials Extended Producer Responsibilities

Report:

1 Reasons for Exemption

- 1.1 Appendix 1 of this report is NOT FOR PUBLICATION in accordance with Paragraph 3, of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 in that it contains information relating to financial and business affairs of Fenland District Council and 3rd party organisations. The public interest test has been applied to the information contained within this exempt report and it is considered that the need to retain the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

2 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 Fenland is fortunate to currently have in place arrangements with Mick George for the bulking and transfer of the 9,500 tonnes of blue bin materials that are collected each year.
- 1.2 At present Fenland's blue bin collection crews tip all Dry Mixed Recycling materials collected from domestic and commercial premises at the Mick George site.
- 1.3 Members should note that as a result of the Partnering Agreement, all other domestic waste is contracted through the County Council's PFI and is transported to the March Transfer Station in Melbourne Avenue. The blue bin

materials are not part of this Partnering Agreement, or the PFI, and as a result the County Council contributes Recycling Credits for their collection, transfer, transport and sorting.

- 1.4 The Mick George site in Algores Way, Wisbech is part of the construction site for the Medworth Energy from Waste site and as such we do not expect the current arrangement to continue beyond the summer of 2025.
- 1.5 With notice expected soon, there is a need to urgently return to the market and seek an alternative provider, or providers.
- 1.6 From the Environment Agency's information, there are only a small number of suitably licensed transfer station sites in or around Fenland.
- 1.7 One of these sites, in Melbourne Avenue, March, is owned by the County Council and operated by Thalia through the County Council's PFI Agreement.
- 1.8 The procurement exercise will include a market consultation process to ensure that all viable parties are aware of the contract.
- 1.9 The tendered lots will be set up to allow for the materials to be taken to more than one location within or close to Fenland's borders.
- 1.10 As set out in Appendix 1, we understand that current market rates for this service a tonne are dependent upon the site and location. Subject to market feedback, a 5-year contract is expected to be offered for all lots, with options for suitable extension.
- 1.11 The County Council already having a suitable asset within March makes exploration of possible joint working or contractual arrangements a potential solution that should be explored and ruled out in parallel to the tender process.
- 1.12 Members should note that given the lack of suitable facilities at a previous tender process, there is the risk that Fenland will be left without suitable facilities and or contractor. As such the only remaining option would be to purchase or construct temporary or permanent facilities to allow for the continued transfer of these materials.
- 1.13 Should the only available site be outside of the Fenland boundary, then members should note that there is the risk of increased costs as a result of increased journey times to the tipping point.
- 1.14 Members should note that more than half of the blue bin material collected by Fenland are subject to [Extended Producer Responsibility Payments](#) (EPR) expected to total £1 million of income in 2025/26.
- 1.15 Whilst we expect that this EPR income will replace some existing grant funding, and the detail has yet to be clarified, a proportion of this income is expected to be new money to reduce the overall costs of providing the collection of EPR materials within the blue bin waste collected. This new payment does include costs for bulking and transport of materials.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Fenland currently has a legal duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, to collect 5 recycling materials [paper, card, glass, plastics and metals] from all properties. Fenland elects to collect these materials combined together in a comingled collection.
- 3.2 Fenland has a contract in place for these comingled materials to be sorted for onward sale and recycling via Biffa's Edmonton facility in North London. As such the Council requires a suitable facility to have these 9,500 tonnes of mixed dry recycling bulked and transferred to larger transport vehicles to fulfil this contract.
- 3.3 The current facilities in Algores Way, Wisbech are likely to soon be decommissioned and therefore we urgently seek approval to determine a suitable alternative.
- 3.4 Given that the County Council have in place a suitable licensed facility via their PFI agreement with Thalia, it seems only sensible to explore whatever options might be practicable for both parties whilst also extending the offer to the market should an inter-authority solution not be feasible.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 N/A

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 To seek permissions and quotes to develop our own bulking facility. This remains an option, although costly and potentially difficult within the anticipated timescale.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal Implications

- 6.1.1 As a result of Section 45A of The Environmental Protection Act 1990 English Waste Collection authorities, such as Fenland, have a legal duty to collect recyclable household waste.
- 6.1.2 During the anticipated life of the resulting contract there will be changes in legislation that might impact this contract.
- From October 2027 the Government anticipates commencing a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers and bottles which could see a reduction in the tonnage of dry mixed recycling collected.
 - Additionally, Simpler Recycling will see plastic film added to the materials that local authorities are responsible for accepting from April 2027.
 - The Government has suggested a review of Recycling Credits once Extended Producer Responsibility payments are established, perhaps as early as 2027.

6.2 Financial Implications

- 6.2.1 There remains the risk that market prices exceed the current budget allocation for this work.
- 6.2.2 Fenland has appealed the initial EPR payment amount of almost £1 million and awaits confirmation of this, along with what the net impact of this new income will be on the overall medium term budget situation.

6.3 Equality Implications

- 6.4 N/A

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

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Agenda Item No:	14	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	Article 4 Direction – Houses of Multiple Occupation in Wisbech	

This item comprises EXEMPT INFORMATION contained in SCHEDULE 5 which is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the making of Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions in Wisbech which will give the Local Planning Authority (LPA) the ability to properly consider the implications of all new HMOs that are created, avoid excessive concentrations of HMOs in particular areas and continue to monitor their distribution and effects on the wider area.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 HMOs play an important role in the local housing market in Fenland, offering a flexible form of accommodation that is often cheaper than self-contained housing within the same area. However, it is important that when HMOs do come forward the Council can strike the right balance between facilitating new homes but also ensuring they are in the right places and designed appropriately.
- 2.2 Small Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are those HMOs of up to 6, unrelated residents. This use is classed as C4 within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Conversion of houses to small HMOs do not normally require a planning application to be submitted to the District Council. Whereas Houses in Multiple Occupation which have more than 6 occupants are a Sui Generis use class and planning permission for this use is required, HMOs need to be licensed when 5 or more occupants form 2 or more households (a household are members of the same family living together).
- 2.3 The Council has reviewed a range of information relating to housing pressures, anti-social behaviour, local heritage assets and infrastructure pressures and concluded that the overconcentration of HMOs in Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South is having a detrimental effect on the amenity of the area.
- 2.4 Several different options have been considered and it was determined that introducing an Immediate Article 4 Direction for central Wisbech (Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South) and a Non-Immediate Article 4 for the remaining wards in Wisbech would be the most appropriate route forward.

This will help to protect the character and amenity of Wisbech, ensure that HMOs are still able to come forward where they are designed well and do not negatively impact upon character and amenity and fulfil the legal requirements for introducing Article 4 Directions specifically the points regarding proportionality.

- 2.5 Introducing an Immediate Article 4 Direction for central Wisbech does pose additional financial risks compared with a Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction. Potential developers can make compensation claims as the 12 months' notice for a Non-Immediate Article 4 would remove the right to make a claim. It should however be noted that the London Borough of Merton, the London Borough of Bromley and Trafford all introduced Immediate Article 4 Directions to control small HMOs and did not receive a single compensation claim. These points are explored more in the financial implications section of this report.
- 2.6 Implications relating to equality and diversity matters are inconclusive at this point as there is no statistical data indicating the profile of HMO residents by age, sex or ethnicity. However, the demographic make-up of the wards within Wisbech indicates a younger and more ethnically diverse population. We will be preparing an Equality Impact Assessment after the consultation period has ended and this will be considered alongside any representations received during the consultation to determine if the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions should be confirmed.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet recommend to Council that they:
- Approve the making of a direction under article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) having non-immediate effect for Wisbech Town apart from the excluded areas (the excluded areas being Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South wards) withdrawing the permitted development right to change use from a dwelling house (Class C3) to a small HMO (Class C4) use as set out in Schedule 1.
 - Approve the making of a direction under article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) having immediate effect for the area of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South wards withdrawing the permitted development right to change use from a dwelling house (Class C3) to a small HMO (Class C4) use as set out in Schedule 2.
 - Delegate the implementation of the consultation process and final approval of the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions to the Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding
- 3.2 Endorse the production of additional guidance to ensure the planning policy approach for assessing planning applications from Class C3 to C4 is clearly set out.

Wards Affected	Wisbech Town, including: Wisbech North; Wisbech Riverside; Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees; Wisbech South; and Leverington and Wisbech Rural.
Forward Plan Reference	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Samantha Hoy – Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing Councillor Dee Laws - Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding
Report Originator(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director
Contact Officer(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director dhorn@fenland.gov.uk Matthew Leigh – Head of Planning mleigh@fenland.gov.uk Kirsty Paul – Planning Policy Manager kpaul@fenland.gov.uk Sarah Gove – Housing and Communities Manager sgove@fenland.gov.uk Carol Pilson – Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer cpilson@fenland.gov.uk
Background Papers	None.

1 REASONS FOR EXEMPTION

- 1.1 Schedule 5 of this Report is NOT FOR PUBLICATION in accordance with paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 in that it contains information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings. The public interest test has been applied to the information contained within this exempt report and it is considered that the need to retain the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.**

2 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 2.1 A HMO, is defined as a property rented to at least three people who are not from one 'household' (e.g. a family) but share facilities such as a bathroom and kitchen. Examples include bedsits, shared houses, lodgings, accommodation for workers/ employees and refugees. Planning use classes distinguish between 'small' HMOs of up to six people (C4 use class), and 'large' HMOs of seven or more occupants which are sui generis.
- 2.2 The national planning system contains a range of nationally prescribed 'permitted development rights', which are set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Current permitted development rights mean that, a dwelling house (use class C3) can be changed to a small house in multiple occupation (HMO) for 3 to 6 residents (use class C4) without the need for planning permission.
- 2.3 Where a Council considers it necessary, it can make an Article 4 Direction to override national permitted development allowances, so that a planning application must be made and approved for certain types of development. The introduction of an Article 4 Direction does not mean that planning applications for the type(s) of development would be refused. It simply establishes a need to apply for planning permission.
- 2.4 This paper seeks approval to introduce an Immediate Article 4 Direction for central Wisbech (Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South) and a Non-Immediate Article 4 for the remaining wards. Approving the making/implementation of these Directions would help protect the character and amenity of Wisbech, as all proposals for all new HMOs regardless of scale would be required to obtain planning permission prior to conversion. The Article 4 Direction would not apply retrospectively, therefore existing HMOs falling within use class C4 would be unaffected by this proposal.
- 2.5 Alongside these Directions there will be a need to produce additional planning guidance to help support the assessment of planning applications and provide much needed guidance to landlords looking to convert a dwelling house into an HMO – ensuring that new HMOs are of a high quality and do not impact negatively on existing communities and the character/amenity of the area. Schedule 3 sets out a short interim guidance note that will be made available initially. Additional more prescriptive guidance looking at design/development standards will be produced in the coming months.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 HMOs play an important role in the local housing market in Fenland, offering a flexible form of accommodation that is often cheaper than self-contained housing within the same area, so the Council considers there is a place for HMOs in district to help meet the diverse needs of residents. However, it is important that when HMOs do come forward the Council can strike the right balance between facilitating new homes but also ensuring they are in the right places and designed appropriately.
- 3.2 However, high concentrations of HMOs can cause negative impacts on local communities, for example more frequent noise nuisance, increased pressure on parking due to higher population densities, increased pressure on community and health facilities, and higher levels of population transience leading to a possible longer-term breakdown of community cohesion.
- 3.3 Larger HMOs are likely to have a proportionately greater impacts on surrounding occupants and neighbourhoods as each additional resident will increase the level of activity, for example through more frequent comings and goings, different patterns of behaviour and consequential noise and disturbance. A property occupied by a group of unconnected adults is likely to have a greater impact than a typical family home with a similar number of occupants as lifestyles and movement patterns will be less connected. It is also considered that individual unconnected occupants are more likely to generate additional refuse and parking pressures than a typical family home.
- 3.4 Equally, the cumulative effect of incremental intensification in an area caused by numerous changes of use from family housing to small HMOs can be significant, affecting both immediate neighbours and the wider area.
- 3.5 Increasingly there has been concern about the number of both large and small HMOs in the district – specifically within central Wisbech. Concerns are centred around the loss of family sized housing, pressure on existing infrastructure, and the potential impact on the character and feel of an area – bins, car parking, etc.
- 3.6 The Council has reviewed a range of information relating to housing pressures, anti-social behaviour, local heritage assets and infrastructure pressures and concluded that the overconcentration of HMOs in Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South is having a detrimental effect on the amenity of the area. The information used to assess the impact of HMOs within Wisbech is set out in Schedule 4.
- 3.7 Planning officers have also expressed concern that tightening the planning powers for these Wards may result in increased pressure within other wards in Wisbech which is why this report recommends introducing two Article 4 Directions – one Immediate and one Non-Immediate.
- 3.8 Introducing an Immediate Article 4 Direction for central Wisbech and a Non-Immediate Article 4 for the remaining wards would help protect the character and amenity of Wisbech, by requiring all proposals for all new HMOs to obtain planning permission. The Article 4 Direction would not apply retrospectively, therefore existing HMOs falling within use class C4 would be unaffected by this proposal.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The procedures for the making of an Article 4 Direction are set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.
- 4.2 If Full Council accept the recommendations of this report, then the Council will seek to commence a consultation on the Directions within 5 working days. We will use site notices, and a local press notice to advertise the consultation. Social media will also be utilised, and any other means that can be identified to advertise the notice.
- 4.3 Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 states under paragraph 2(b) that individual notice to property owners and occupiers is not necessary where “the number of owners or occupiers within the area to which the direction relates makes individual service impractical.” Data from the Local Land and Property Gazetteer demonstrates that the number of residential notifications across the proposed area would total approximately 11,450 making a mail out to all residential dwellings impractical and cost prohibitive.
- 4.4 Representations to the notice must be invited for a minimum of 21 days. Following the end of the notification period, officers will review any representations received and report these to the Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer, the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding
- 4.5 The Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding must then decide whether to confirm the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative Option 1 - Do-nothing

- 5.1 As mentioned previously, the Council has reviewed a range of information relating to housing pressures, anti-social behaviour, local heritage assets and infrastructure pressures and concluded that the overconcentration of HMOs in Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South is having a detrimental effect on the character and amenity of the area. A do-nothing approach would result in further erosion of the historic character and amenity of the area to an unacceptable level. As such, this option is not considered to be an appropriate way forward.

Alternative Option 2 - Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction for Wisbech Town

- 5.2 As with the do-nothing approach there is a concern that delaying the implementation of the Direction in Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South for a period of 12 months would result in further erosion of the historic character

and amenity of the area to unacceptable level. As such, this option is not considered to be an appropriate way forward.

Alternative Option 3 - Immediate Article 4 Direction for Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South without the introduction of a Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction in the remaining wards of Wisbech

- 5.3 The evidence collated thus far indicates that there is a substantial number of HMOs across Wisbech – with the largest concentration found within the wards of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South. If the Council only serves an Immediate Article 4 Direction for Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South without the introduction of a Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction in the remaining wards of Wisbech there is a high risk that the remaining wards within Wisbech specifically the parts directly adjacent to Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South will see a dramatic increase in permitted development conversions from a dwelling house to a small house in multiple occupation. A Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction gives the Council time to monitor and manage the situation during the notice period and if required implement the Direction at the end of the notice period. If the Council chooses not to endorse a Non-Immediate Direction and there is an issue in the short/medium term, then we could end up needing to issue a further Immediate Direction in the future which would increase the risk of compensation claims. As such, this option is not considered to be an appropriate way forward.

Variation with regards to starting points

- 5.4 There are options to set the Article 4 Directions at a different starting point, for example houses or flats with four people (e.g. two couples; a couple and two friends; two single parents and children etc) not to require planning permission but require five people or more sharing to require planning permission, i.e. setting the Article 4 Directions at 5 people or more.
- 5.5 This option has not been taken forward at this time as it is considered more effective to include all potential HMOs in the Article 4 Directions to improve the wellbeing of the area as part of the public consultation. There is not clear evidence that setting the Article 4 Directions at a different level of occupancy would address the harm to local amenity or improve the wellbeing of the area.

6 IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

- 6.1 An Article 4 Direction is a direction under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order which enables local planning authorities to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area.
- 6.2 The statutory procedure for making Article 4(1) Directions is set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Once the direction has been proposed to be made by the Local Planning Authority, it shall give notice of the Article 4 Direction:
- by local advertisement in at least one newspaper in the local area (as defined in article 1(2) of the GPDO)

- by site display at no fewer than two locations on site for a period of at least 21 days.
 - on the same day that the notice of an Article 4 Direction is first published or displayed locally, the local planning authority shall notify the Secretary of State.
 - specify the date on which the proposed direction comes into force (which must be at least 28 days from the end of the specified date of consultation period but no longer than 2 years from the end of that specified date)
- 6.3 The local planning authority cannot confirm the direction until after the expiration of either a period of at least 28 days following the latest date on which any notice relating to the direction was served or published, and no longer than 2 years or such longer period as may be specified by the Secretary of State (after having been notified by the local planning authority of making a direction). The approval of the Secretary of State is not required.
- 6.4 The Secretary of State has the power to modify or cancel an Article 4 Direction at any time before or after it is made. The Secretary of State will not exercise this power unless there are clear reasons why intervention is necessary, such as non-compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.5 Paragraph 54 of the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework states that:
- The use of Article 4 directions to remove national permitted development rights should...
 - b) in other cases, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area...
 - c) in all cases, be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible.

Approval of an Article 4 Direction

- 6.6 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 states that approval to make an Article 4 Direction is not a Cabinet function and therefore should be made by resolution of full Council.
- 6.7 A confidential schedule 5 sets out the legal advice the Council has received in relation to the proposal

Financial Implications

Liability for Compensation Claims

- 6.8 Immediate Article 4 Directions forego the usual 12-month notice period of commencement and as such they give rise to the authority being liable for claims for compensation where someone can show they incurred abortive expenditure or otherwise suffered loss or damage because of the Direction (i.e., conversion costs, business losses etc).
- 6.9 Claims could cover such matters as:

- Expenditure in carrying out work which is rendered abortive i.e., costs of then seeking permission
 - Loss/damage attributable to removal of Permitted Development (PD) rights i.e., difference between price paid for building with existing use compared with open market value of building with prior approval
 - Reduction in profit in carrying out 'lesser' development where permission refused
 - Cost of complying with Conditions
- 6.10 Claims would be made to Council and if not agreed, would be determined by the Upper Tribunal of the Land Chamber. It is important to note that the claimant would need to show a loss which needs to crystallise i.e., by sale or redevelopment.
- 6.11 To qualify for compensation there needs to be a refusal of a planning application for development that would have been PD but for the Direction. The refusal also needs to be not more than 12 months from the date that the Direction comes into operation (in effect when the Notice is published).
- 6.12 It is not possible to quantify the claims that the Council might receive. The typical cost of converting a family home to a small HMO could be anywhere between £10,000 to £30,000. All works undertaken and their cost would have to be fully evidenced. Only the work undertaken by the time the Notice is given is likely to be able to be claimed, as work once the Notice is served (at the start of the consultation) it could be argued is undertaken at risk.
- 6.13 The number of small HMOs that are set up per annum in each of the priority wards is not known.
- 6.14 Claims could also potentially be made for the loss of value of a property should it not gain planning consent; and it then be sold as a family home instead of an HMO. It has not been possible to identify the difference in value between a small 6 person HMO as opposed to a family home.
- 6.15 Any compensation claims that may be submitted because of introducing an Immediate Article 4 Direction are deemed to be capital expenditure and no provision exists in the capital programme for these.
- 6.16 It is important to note that most local authorities introduce a Non-Immediate Article 4 – so giving 12 months' notice of its intention. This means that no claims can be made. There are, however, some exceptions to this – for instance the London Borough of Merton, the London Borough of Bromley and Trafford all introduced Immediate Article 4 Directions to control small HMOs and did not receive a single compensation claim.
- 6.17 The introduction of an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for the change of use from dwelling houses (Use Class C3) to smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (Use Class C4) will have significant implications for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in terms of resource allocation and operational capacity.
- 6.18 Requiring planning permission for smaller HMOs will introduce a formal application process for property owners, which includes a mandatory planning fee. While these fees contribute to the operational costs of processing applications, it is widely acknowledged that planning fees are insufficient to

cover the full cost of officer time required for thorough assessment and determination. Consequently, there will be an additional financial burden on the Council to absorb the shortfall.

- 6.19 The introduction of this requirement may lead to instances where new small HMOs operate without the necessary planning permission, resulting in a breach of planning control. When such breaches are reported or identified, the Council will need to investigate these cases. Currently, the Planning Enforcement Team operates with limited resources and is already managing a significant caseload. The additional workload created by an Article 4 Direction is likely to exacerbate the pressure on this finite resource, potentially delaying resolution times and straining the team's capacity to handle other planning enforcement matters.
- 6.20 Where planning permission for a small HMO is refused or an enforcement notice is served on an unauthorised HMO, the property owner has the right to appeal. Appeals can be time-consuming and resource-intensive for the LPA, requiring officers to prepare detailed submissions and potentially engage in hearings or inquiries. The additional workload associated with defending Council decisions in such cases represents another source of pressure on the LPA's resources.
- 6.21 While the Article 4 Direction seeks to provide greater control over the proliferation of small HMOs, its implementation will require the Council to address the associated administrative and enforcement burdens. Adequate resourcing of planning and enforcement teams will be critical to effectively manage the anticipated increase in applications, investigations, and appeals.

Equality Implications

- 6.22 For an Article 4 Direction, whilst there is no statistical data indicating the profile of HMO residents by age, sex or ethnicity, there may be a potential adverse impact towards people of specific ages, genders or ethnicities if the future growth of HMOs is restricted. The demographic make-up of the wards within Wisbech indicates a younger and more ethnically diverse population. Dialogue with council officers indicates that in officer's experience more men live in HMOs, although we don't have robust statistical data on this.
- 6.23 Whilst this adverse impact is not proven, it also cannot be wholly discounted due to an absence of accurate equality profiling data. We will continue to keep this under review.
- 6.24 Consulting on an Article 4 Direction to require HMOs (shared homes of more than two people) to require planning permission would improve equality of opportunity, resulting in higher standards of HMO accommodation within the area as new HMOs will be determined against planning policies and potentially reduce overcrowding in below standard HMOs. It should also improve and foster good relations between people who will occupy HMOs and those who occupy properties close to them, especially as the latter will have opportunity to engage with and enjoy rights of representation within the statutory planning process to improve the quality of accommodation.

- 6.25 We will be preparing an Equality Impact Assessment after the consultation period has ended and this will be considered alongside any representations received by the Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding to determine if the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions should be confirmed.

Any Other Relevant Implications

Crime and Disorder

- 6.26 There are no direct crime and disorder implications in relation to the introduction of an Article 4 Direction although the requirement to seek planning consent could lead to an improvement through greater awareness and controls.
- 6.27 The area for the Immediate Article 4 Direction has been subject to Safer Streets Funding recognising the crime and disorder profile for the area. Only one other area in Peterborough was able to secure such funding.

Heritage Assets

- 6.28 There are two conservation areas within the proposed area for the Immediate Article 4 - Bowthorpe Conservation Areas and Wisbech Conservation Area.
- 6.29 Wisbech Conservation Area (Wisbech CA) was designated in March 1971. Within Wisbech CA there are 227 listed buildings. The whole of the Wisbech CA is listed on the Heritage at Risk Register.
- 6.30 Over the last few years several buildings with Wisbech CA have been turned into HMOs. Many of these buildings are sold at auction and are quickly stripped out inside/carved up and turned into HMO's. Specifically in relation to listed buildings, this is often carried out without lawful consent, and this often happens without our knowledge and comes to light after a protracted timescale. The requirement for planning permission under the direction of the Article 4 would not entirely solve this issue of unauthorised works occurring by landlords, but it would provide a second tier of restriction for which is likely to reduce unlawful works to listed buildings.

7 SCHEDULES

Schedule 1 - Non-Immediate Article 4 Direction - HMO Wisbech

Schedule 2 - Immediate Article 4 Direction - HMO Wisbech Central

Schedule 3 - Small HMOs Article 4 Direction - Interim Guidance Note (Draft)

Schedule 4 - Technical Evidence Paper - Houses of Multiple Occupation in Wisbech

Schedule 5 – CONFIDENTIAL – Legal advice for Cabinet

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 (as amended)

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION 2025

DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4 (1) TO WHICH PARAGRAPH 1 OF SCHEDULE 3 APPLIES
(DIRECTION WITHOUT IMMEDIATE EFFECT)

WHEREAS Fenland District Council being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of Article 4 (5) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in the Schedule below should not be carried out on the land shown in red on the attached plan and known as the wards of Wisbech North, Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees, and Leverington and Wisbech Rural, in Fenland District Council, unless planning person is granted on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

NOW THEREFORE the said Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended, hereby direct that the permission granted by article 3 of the said Order shall not now apply to development on the said land of the description set out in the Schedule below.

SCHEDULE

Class L. Development consisting of a change of use of a building –

- (a) from a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the schedule to the Use Classes Order, to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of that Schedule.
- (b) from a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of the schedule to the Use Classes Order, to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

This Direction shall come into effect on 25 February 2026.

Made under the Common Seal of Fenland District Council

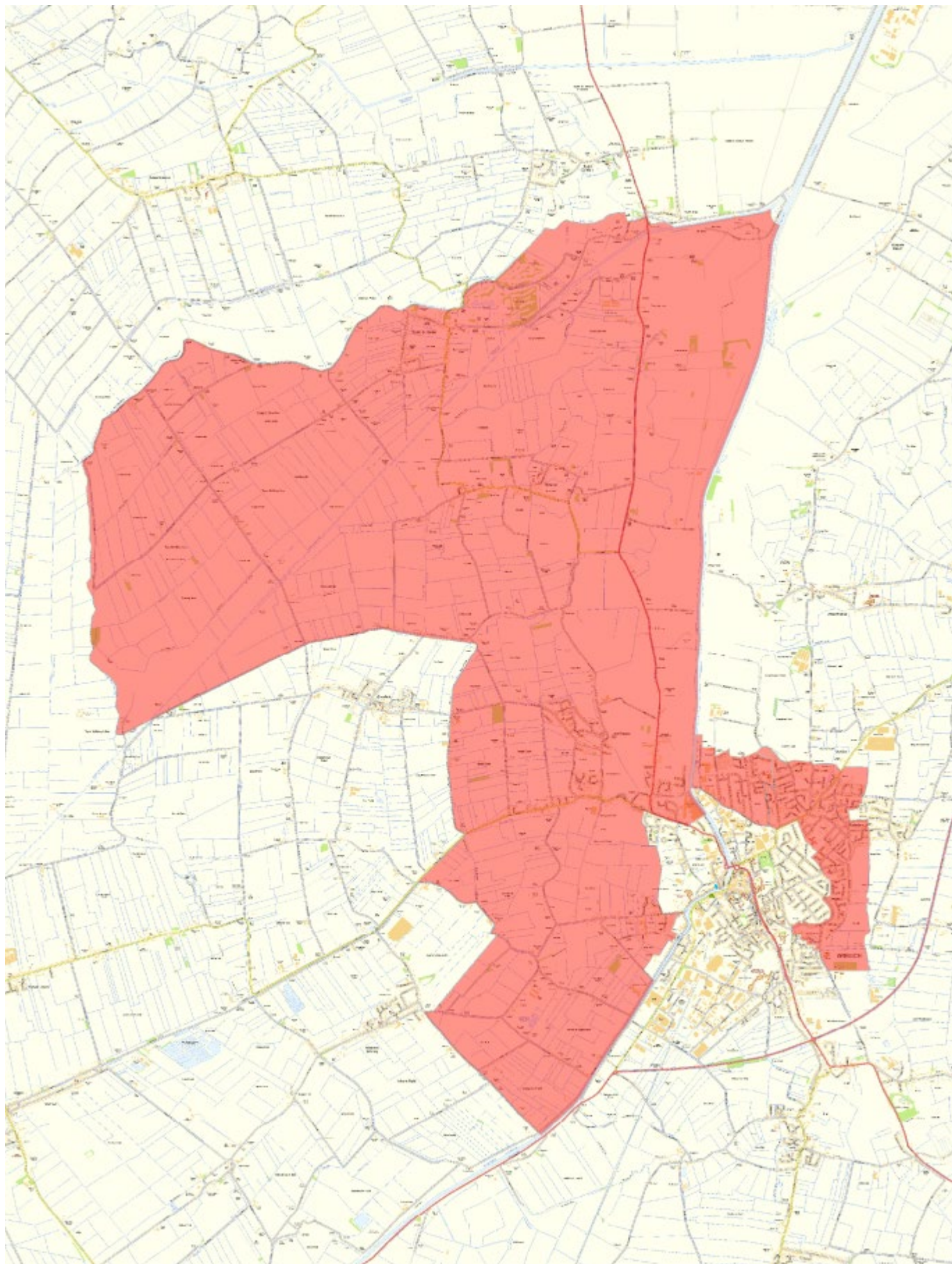
25 February 2025

<INSERT SIGNATURE AND STAMP>

Confirmed under the Common Seal of Fenland District Council

25 February 2026

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION 2025 (DIRECTION WITHOUT IMMEDIATE EFFECT) - Wards of Wisbech North, Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees, and Leverington and Wisbech Rural, in Fenland District Council



IMMEDIATE ORDER

25 /03 /2025

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 (as amended)**

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION 2025

DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4 (1)

WHEREAS Fenland District Council being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of Article 4 (5) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in the Schedule below should not be carried out on the land shown in red on the attached plan and known as the wards of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South, in Fenland District Council, unless planning person is granted on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

NOW THEREFORE the said Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended, hereby direct that the permission granted by article 3 of the said Order shall not now apply to development on the said land of the description set out in the Schedule below.

THIS DIRECTION is made under article 4(1) of the said Order and shall remain in force until 25 August 2025 (being six months from the date of this direction) and shall expire unless it has been confirmed by the appropriate local planning authority before the end of the six-month period.

SCHEDULE

Class L. Development consisting of a change of use of a building –

- (a) from a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the schedule to the Use Classes Order, to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of that Schedule.
- (b) from a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of the schedule to the Use Classes Order, to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

Given under the Common Seal of Fenland District Council

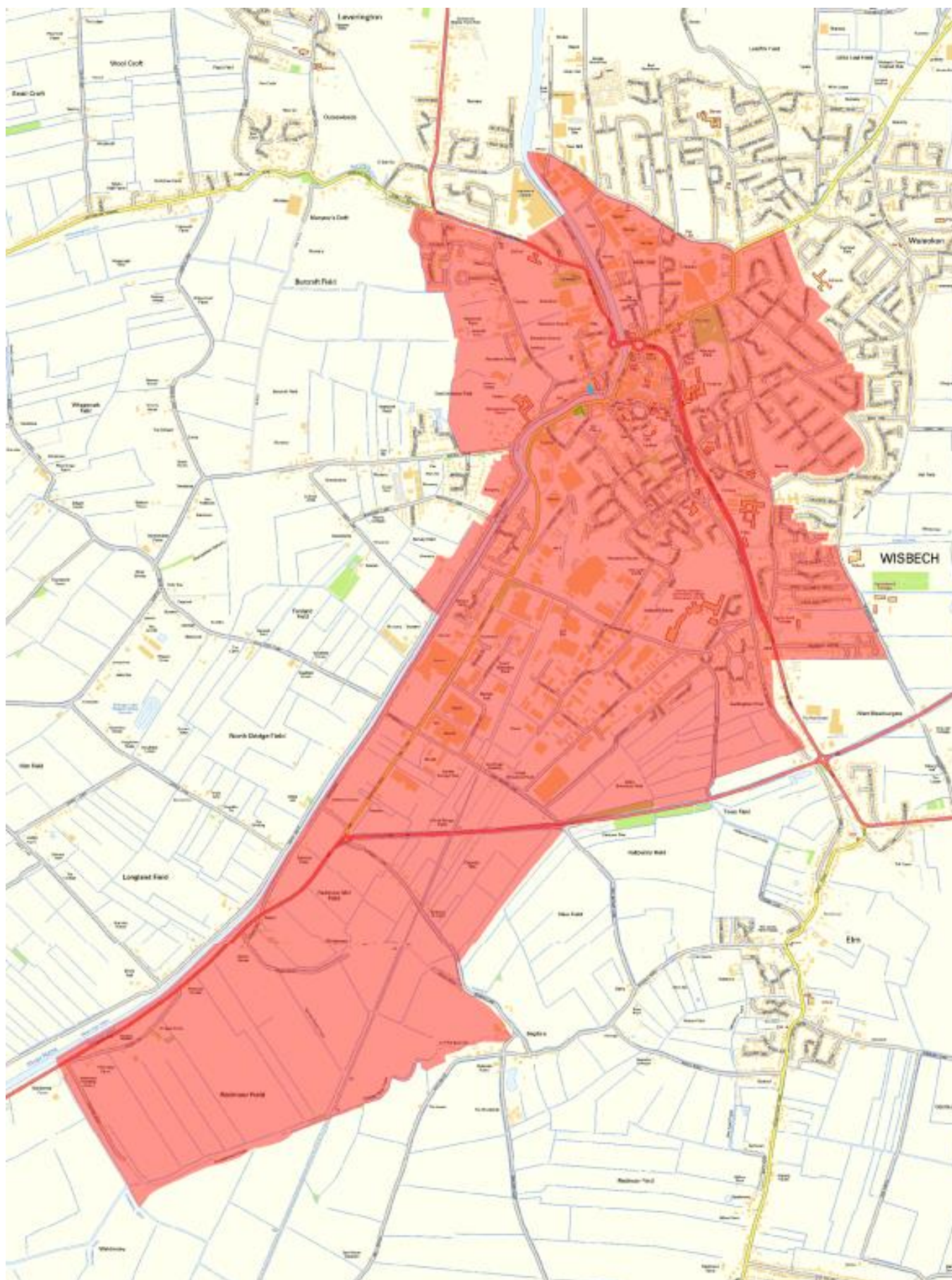
25 February 2025

<INSERT SIGNATURE AND STAMP>

Confirmed under the Common Seal of Fenland District Council

25 August 2025

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION 2025 (IMMEDIATE EFFECT) - Wards of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South, in Fenland District Council



Small HMOs Article 4 Direction: Interim Guidance Note

What is happening?

The Council is introducing a new planning tool called an 'Article 4 Direction' affecting small Homes in Multiple Occupation in Wisbech.

Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are properties that are occupied by three or more unrelated people, who have shared amenities at the property. Small HMOs are properties which are occupied by between 3 and 6 separate households – if the property is occupied by more than 6 separate households, it is classed as a Large HMO.

What does this mean?

Currently, family-sized houses can be converted into small Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) without planning permission, if they are intended to be for between 3 and 6 separate households.

What about conversions for more than six separate households?

Conversions for more than six separate households already require planning permission, and this situation is not changing.

When is this happening?

The wards of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South will be subject to this change with immediate effect, changes to planning rules in Wisbech North; Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees; and Leverington and Wisbech Rural wards are intended to come into effect in February 2026.

Why have the Council decided to do this? What consultation has been carried out?

In January 2025, Cabinet decided to adopt both the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions after determining that there was evidence that the level of HMO conversions has reached the point where it is causing detrimental impact on local amenity and wellbeing. A consultation on both the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions was launched in early February and is due to end on Monday 24th March. The findings from this consultation will be used by the Council to determine whether it should amend and/or potentially revoke its decision on the Article 4 Directions for Wisbech.

I am a prospective landlord/property owner. Does this change mean that I will not be able to carry out a conversion to a Small HMO?

No, not necessarily – the change simply means that you will require planning permission. So, it doesn't mean that your planning application will necessarily be refused, just that it will be assessed against adopted planning policies, guidance and other material considerations.

The Council acknowledges that HMOs are an important source of affordable housing for those who may be on a low income and aren't eligible for housing by the Council. So, this decision is not about introducing a blanket ban on HMOs, but more to make sure the impact of such

conversions can be assessed against key criteria, to ensure they do not have an unacceptable impact on local amenity/character and other planning considerations.

I am in the process of having a property converted to a Small HMO. What will trigger a planning application being required on the implementation date?

Your property being newly occupied as a small HMO. In other words, when three or more households occupy your property. If there are three or more households occupying your property before the implementation date, you will not require planning permission.

However, if construction work has started before the implementation date, this does not mean that you will not require planning permission. It is only if the property is occupied by three or more households before the implementation date that you will not require planning permission. If the occupation of the property as a small HMO is taking place after the implementation date, then planning permission would be required.

I am a landlord/property owner of an existing small HMO. This hasn't received planning permission, but will I need to obtain permission or a Certificate of lawful Use now?

You can do this if you wish but there is no requirement to. Up to the implementation date, conversions of dwellinghouses to small HMOs do not require planning permission. We will not enforce against existing HMOs after the implementation date, or against HMOs that completed conversion lawfully prior to the implementation date. We will only enforce in cases where a conversion was carried out after the implementation date without planning permission.

If I, as a landlord/property owner, was to submit a lawful development certificate application prior to the implementation date, will the application require full planning permission if the decision is being issued after the implementation date?

As stated above, landlords and property owners have the option to apply for a lawful development certificate for their small HMOs. If the submission for the certificate takes place before the implementation date, the decision will be made based on this date (rather than the date the decision on the certificate is made).

What information will I need to provide as part of my planning application? How much will it cost, and how long will it take to decide on the application?

There is a range of information which all planning applications are required to submit, including site plans and application forms. This list can be viewed on our website, via the following link: www.fenland.gov.uk/planningforms

There is also a list setting out the range of information which all applications for certificates of lawfulness are required to submit, including site plans and application forms. This list is also on our website, via the same link.

In relation to applications for HMO conversions, a management statement should be submitted setting out how the property will be managed to address the various criteria. This statement is also required for the HMO license application.

The cost of submitting a planning application is currently £578. The Council will aim to make a decision on planning applications for Small HMOs within 8 weeks.

Should I get pre-application advice from the Council?

The Council offers a formal application advice service where we will give you site-specific advice about the proposal and the likelihood of you being successful. There is a fee for this advice.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this service to establish areas of concern prior to the submission of a scheme. Failure to obtain advice prior to the submission of an application increases the chance of refusal and often results in frustration and an unnecessary waste of time and expense for an applicant.

If the Council refuses my application, what can I do?

As with any other refused planning application, you would be able to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. One of their planning inspectors would then look at the case again and issue a determination.

What happens if, on the date of implementation, the conversion works have already started at my property, but I haven't had any occupiers yet?

You will need to apply for planning permission once three or more households are occupying the property. As stated above, if there are three or more households occupying your property before the implementation date, you will not require planning permission.

Will I still have to apply for a HMO licence, as well as applying for planning permission?

Potentially – In Fenland Anyone who owns or manages a HMO (including landlords and letting agents) in the Fenland district **must** have a licence from us if:

- their property is occupied by 5 or more people
- occupants form 2 or more households (a household are members of the same family living together)
- occupants share 'basic amenities' (e.g. kitchen, bathroom)

On what basis will a HMO licence be granted? What criteria will my application be assessed against?

An HMO licence will be granted if:

- the HMO is reasonably suitable for occupation by the number of people allowed under the licence
- the proposed licence holder is a "fit and proper person"
- the licence holder is 18 years or older
- the proposed licence holder is the most appropriate person to hold the licence
- the proposed manager (if there is one) is a "fit and proper person"
- the proposed management arrangements are satisfactory
- the person involved in the management of the HMO is competent

On what basis will a planning application be granted? What criteria will my application be assessed against?

The application will be assessed against a range of criteria, including:

- Accessibility of location
- Floor area of original dwelling and sizes of rooms
- Impact on amenity, including:
 - Impact on vehicle and cycle parking
 - Provision of appropriate facilities for residents
- Layout, design and condition of property
- Layout of the property
- Impact on neighbour amenity and on the locality, including cumulative impact
- Provision of waste/recycling facilities
- Impact on the street scene

Additional criteria would apply where your property is in a conservation area or is a listed building. Where the latter is the case, listed building consent will also be required for internal subdivision.

Conditions are likely to apply to HMO permissions to manage the impact of conversions on issues such as parking, amenity space and other facilities. A section 106 agreement may also be considered necessary to secure any measures required to mitigate the impacts of the development that are not appropriate to be secured as conditions.

If I apply for an HMO licence before the implementation date, will it still be granted even if I am intending to bring in the HMO before the implementation date (and therefore avoid the need for planning permission)?

Where planning permission is required, the Council's position is that we will expect you to have applied for planning permission before applying for a HMO licence, and that the Council will consider the planning status of the HMO as part of the licence application process. We already advise that any unauthorised use is likely to be reflected in a decision to grant a licence by either limiting the number of persons allowed to occupy, or by granting a reduced term, usually for a period of one year to enable you to regularise your planning status.

However, in situations where planning permission is not currently required (or not yet required), the fact that you are planning to introduce the HMO before the implementation date, thus avoiding the need for planning permission, will not of itself have a bearing either way on your application for a HMO licence. However, where the planning status of the property (i.e. its lack of permission for an HMO) affects consideration of the criteria against which HMO licences are assessed (such as whether the house can be made suitable for multiple occupation, or whether the management arrangements are satisfactory), this may be a relevant consideration.

I have an HMO established near my home which I believe is causing harm to local amenity. Will this change mean that the planning department will start enforcement procedures against this HMO from the implementation date?

Provided the HMO has been established prior to the implementation date and does not exceed 6 persons it would be lawful and not require formal planning permission.

What should I do if am worried about an HMO near my home which I believe is causing harm to local amenity?

In the first instance residents should provide details of the HMO to privatesectorhousing@fenland.gov.uk

Will there be a threshold put in place above which new HMOs will not be permitted in a certain area?

The cumulative impact of the proposal together with other similar developments in the surrounding area upon residential amenity and character is a material consideration. The Council will consider any known issues within an area which a HMO is proposed, such as enforcement cases or known cases of disturbance in an area. We will monitor the number and location of HMOs and will consider introducing a threshold for a locality above which the number of such uses cannot exceed to prevent over-concentrations from occurring through the emerging Local Plan, if felt necessary.

As a tenant, I am worried that I will be displaced from the HMO I currently live in, due to this new policy coming in. What can the Council do to protect me from eviction?

Your landlord must follow strict procedures if they want you to leave their property, depending on the type of tenancy agreement you have and the terms of it. If they do not, they may be guilty of illegally evicting or harassing you. See link to the government's website for guidance <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting-evictions>.

If your landlord is not following the correct procedure or you are at risk of becoming homeless the council may be able to offer:

- assistance with keeping your home. For example, we can help mediate with your landlord or your family members
- help to prevent you from becoming homeless
- support to help you move into privately rented home
- advice to help you if you need supported housing
- advice to help you join the Housing Register help to move you into a new home

Technical Evidence Paper
Houses of Multiple Occupation in Wisbech

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this paper is to provide supporting evidence to determine whether the Council should introduce an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of family homes into small houses in multiple occupation (HMO).

The paper also considers whether a district-wide or a more localised Article 4 direction would be the most appropriate course of action, considering the provision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

What is a House in Multiple Occupation?

The definition of an HMO is set out in the Housing Act 2004 (as amended) and can summarised as:

- a house (or flat) which is let to three or more people, who form two or more households, and who share a basic amenity, such as a bathroom, toilet, or cooking facilities.
- a building which has been converted entirely into bedsits, or other non-self-contained accommodation, and is let to three, or more, people who form two, or more, households and who share a basic amenity e.g. a bathroom, toilet, or cooking facilities.
- a converted house which contains one, or more flats, which are not self-contained (i.e. the flat does not contain within it a kitchen, bathroom, or toilet and which is occupied by three or more tenants who form 2 or more households.
- a building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats and the standard conversion does not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations, and more than one third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies.

This definition is separate to the planning definition of an HMO and is used to grant and manage licences for HMOs. This legislation forms part of the control of an HMO once it is established and does not provide permission for the conversion of a dwellinghouse to a small HMO.

In addition, since October 2018, HMOs now have minimum room size requirements of 4.64sqm and sizes based on a person's age:

- 6.51 square metres for rooms used to sleep one person over 10 years.
- 10.22 square metres for rooms used to sleep two persons over 10 years.

Planning Definition of an HMO

The planning definition of HMOs differs from the Housing Act definition set out above. In town planning terms, distinct types of properties are identified as different Use Classes. These are defined in the Planning Use Class Order (2010), which identify two distinct types of HMO.

Firstly, there are HMOs that fall within the Use Class 'C4'. These are generally 'smaller' HMOs and are defined as the use of "a single-family dwelling by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom." Currently changes of use between single-family dwelling houses (Planning Use Class C3) and 'small' HMOs (Planning Use Class C4) do not need planning permission as this is 'permitted development'. This does not cover properties of up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care (e.g. supported housing schemes such as those for people with learning disabilities or mental health challenges), which falls within the Planning Use Class C3(b).

Secondly, there are larger HMOs that fall within the Use Class 'Sui Generis' (SG). These are properties where there are seven or more occupants. However, changes of use from single family dwelling houses (Planning Use Class C3) to a 'large' HMO's (Planning Use Class Sui Generis) do need planning permission.

Other HMO Agencies

The legislation above sets out the statutory definition, however in practical terms HMO can come about by the way in which a landowner manages a property. For example, a landlord may purchase a large family home and let it to individuals on a single room letting basis, and if there are three or more unrelated people, the dwelling is classed as an HMO. There is no planning control over the conversion of the property as this is allowed as permitted development.

HMOs, once established, are recognised, and regulated through both formal regulation and informal means by the Council to meet their obligations as a statutory part of its role as a local authority. HMOs with five or more occupants, through the Housing Act 2004, require licences and regular monitoring which is a role undertaken through the Council's Private Sector Housing Team. Additional ways in which HMOs are controlled is through Planning Enforcement and Environmental Nuisance legislation.

HMOs in Fenland

HMOs are an important part of the private rental sector (PRS), providing accommodation for groups that cannot afford to buy or rent their own home. Nationally they make up sizeable proportion of the private rental economy and can provide a good standard of affordable accommodation for people, such as those on low incomes, students and those seeking temporary accommodation.

However, HMOs can also have a negative impact on the community and the local environment where they are not controlled or properly managed. The Communities and Local Government Report on 'Evidence Gathering - Houses in Multiple Occupation and Possible Planning Responses' identified several negative impacts of HMOs, which include:

- anti-social behaviour
- noise
- litter and management of refuse.
- excessive parking
- cramped living conditions
- unkempt premises
- overcrowding

The Government has given local authorities the power to remove permitted development rights for small HMOs using Article 4 directions, where there is sufficient evidence to support it. A sound evidence base must be submitted to Secretary of State detailing why the removal of permitted development rights is required. It should be noted that although the Secretary of State does not approve an Article 4 direction, they do have the right to modify or cancel one.

IMPACT ON THE SUPPLY OF FAMILY SIZED HOUSING

The information collected below shows that the housing/population profile of Wisbech is notably different from Fenland as a whole. It indicates that the reduced availability of affordable family sized housing is resulting in less families staying within or moving to the area - this reduction fundamentally changes a places character and may result in social infrastructure such as schools, nurseries, play groups receiving reduced patronage which could in turn result in them closing which would make the area even less suitable to families in the future.

Census Data (ONS – Census 2021)

	Fenland	Wisbech Town	Wisbech Riverside	Wisbech South
Population	102,500	24,800	4,600	8,800
Number of households	44,100	10,500	2,000	3,900
Household size (1)	29%	30.6%	33.3%	34.4%
Household size (2)	38.2%	34%	31.8%	33.2%
Household size (3+)	32.7%	35.4%	34.8%	32.4%
Household composition (single person)	29%	30.6%	33.5%	34.4%
Household composition (single family)	64.8%	60.2%	56.3%	56.4%
Household composition (other)	6.2%	9.3%	10.2%	9.2%
Tenure (owns outright or with mortgage)	67.3%	52.2%	43%	50.6%
Tenure (social rented)	12.7%	19.4%	20.3%	17.7%
Tenure (private rented)	20%	28.4%	36.7%	31.7%

Number of people waiting for family accommodation in Wisbech (2021-2025) – data from Clarion Housing

Date	Total	Two beds	Three beds	4+beds
January 2021	406	212	158	36
January 2022	482 (+76)	252	182	48
January 2023	557 (+75)	293	208	56
January 2024	616 (+59)	345	209	62
January 2025	568 (-48)	300	207	61
Since 2021 there are an extra 162 households on the waiting list looking for family sized housing in Wisbech.				

Number of lets of family accommodation in Wisbech (2019/20 – 2023/24) – data from Clarion Housing

Year	Total	Two beds	Three beds	4+beds
2019/20	49	38	10	1
2020/21	41	34	17	0
2021/22	49	43	14	1
2022/23	44	31	12	1
2023/24	41	27	13	1
Since 2019 the number of homes being let within the area has consistently fallen short of meeting our need for family sized housing within the area.				

Properties to Rent Data (www.zoopla.com 29/1/2025)

Wisbech

- Seventeen homes available to rent that have two or more bedrooms.
- Thirteen homes available to rent that have less than 2 bedrooms.
- Sixteen rooms available to rent in HMOs/House Shares
- 1 HMO (9 bedrooms) available as a single let.

March

- Twenty-eight homes available to rent that have two or more bedrooms.
- Eight homes available to rent that have less than 2 bedrooms.
- Zero rooms available to rent in HMOs/House Shares

Whittlesey

- Eight homes available to rent that have two or more bedrooms.
- One homes available to rent that have less than 2 bedrooms.
- One rooms available to rent in HMOs/House Shares

IMPACT ON SINGLE PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

As mentioned previously HMOs are an important part of the private rental sector (PRS), providing accommodation for groups that cannot afford to buy or rent their own home – specifically single people who are seeking to form their own household.

The demand for shared accommodation within Wisbech has significantly increased since 2011, due to the influx of the migrant population moving to the area to work in the food production industry and who are seeking affordable accommodation. Within the Riverside and Wisbech South wards the PRS accounts for 36.7% and 31.8%, respectively of all tenures; a third more than the national average of 20% and more than double that of the district figure of 18%.

Census Data 2021- Tenure

	Social Housing	Private Rented Sector
Wisbech Riverside	20.4%	36.7%
Wisbech South	17.6%	31.8%
England	17.1%	20.5%

Despite the 2021 Census showing the majority of household sizes being between 1-3 persons (see table above), it cannot be assumed that these properties are occupied by small families; in fact, the recorded data from the Private Sector Housing team evidences the highest number of reported and investigated HMOs are located within the 2 constituent wards of Riverside and Wisbech South.

HMO service request and enforcement case data

Area	Service Requests Received (% of total cases) (% of Wisbech cases)	Enforcement Cases (% of total cases) (% of Wisbech cases)
All Fenland DC area	657	254
Wisbech	306 (46.6%)	189 (74.4%)
2 Wards (Riverside & Wisbech South)	180 (27.4%) (58.8%)	157 (61.8%) (83%)

In addition to these two wards being subject to a higher number of complaints relating to HMO activity, 79% of licensed HMO's (those occupied by five or more occupants and sharing facilities) are in these areas. This may be due to investors being attracted by lower house prices, making them ripe for conversion.

Information from the Homelessness Team

Over the last few years Fenland's Homeless Team have had to respond to 184 requests from people who were living in HMOs within Wisbech that have been made homeless –

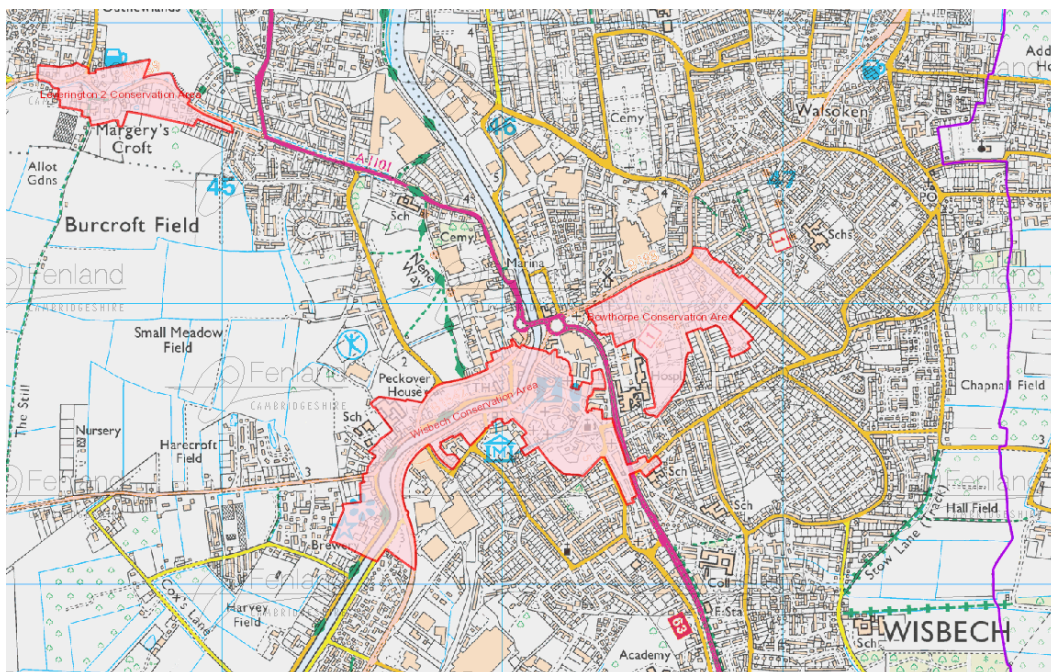
almost two thirds of these requests were within the wards of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South. There are a number of reasons for people losing their settled home including property disrepair and risk of violence/harassment but the largest reason was end of private tenancy (not assured shorthold tenancy).

Having an Article 4 Direction in place would help ensure that all HMOs including Small HMOs are appropriately designed and managed which will in turn provide better more secure living conditions for people who rely on HMOs to access the housing market.

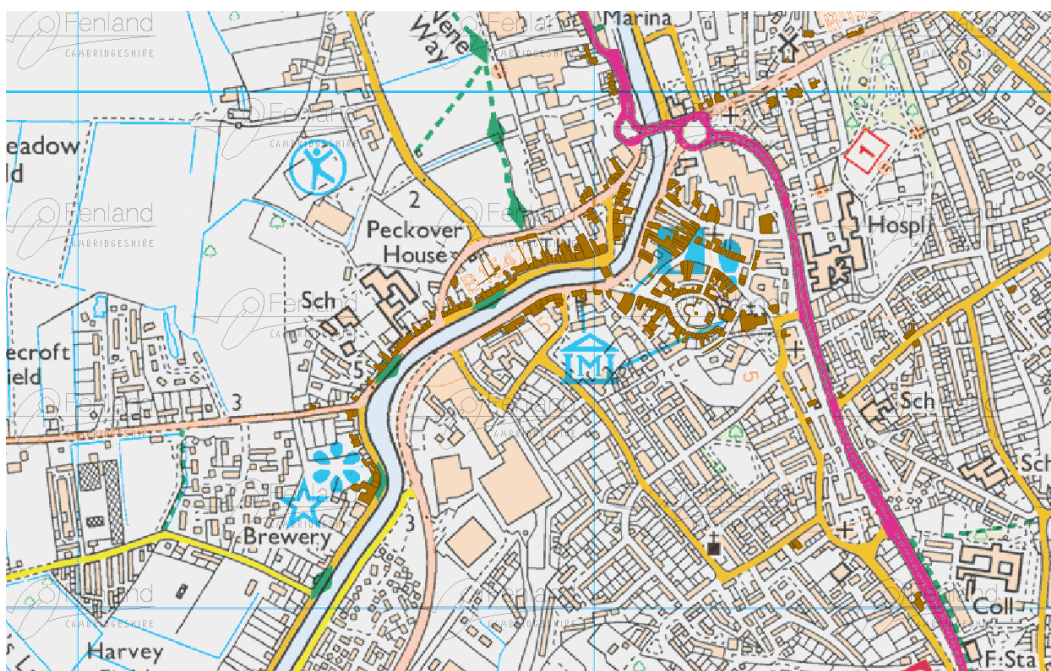
IMPACT ON HISTORIC CHARACTER

Comments from FDC's Principal Conservation Officer

There are two conservation areas within the proposed area for the Immediate Article 4 - Bowthorpe Conservation Area and Wisbech Conservation Area.



Wisbech Conservation Area (Wisbech CA) was designated in March 1971. Within Wisbech CA there are 227 listed buildings.



The whole of the Wisbech CA is listed on the Heritage at Risk Register. Historic England note in their assessment that the condition of Wisbech CA is “very bad” and that the trend is “deteriorating.”

Over the last few years several buildings with Wisbech CA have been turned into HMOs. Many of these buildings are sold at auction and are quickly stripped out inside/carved up and turned into HMO’s. Specifically in relation to listed buildings, this is often carried out without lawful consent, and this often happens without our knowledge and comes to light after a protracted timescale. The requirement for planning permission under the direction of the Article 4 would not entirely solve this issue of unauthorised works occurring by landlords, but it would provide a second tier of restriction for which it is likely to reduce unlawful works to listed buildings.

IMPACT ON AMENITY

Domestic Noise Service Requests (information from FDC Environmental Health)

279 Domestic Noise Complaints over last 5 years across Fenland - 19% were within Wisbech South and Wisbech Riverside

Although the data does not breakdown to HMO or not HMO when you compare the Census data for household composition and tenure it is reasonable to assume that the higher concentration of private rented properties and 'other' household composition types are likely to be a contributing factor.

When looking at the other wards in Wisbech: Wisbech Walsoken; and Waterlees and Leverington South Wisbech (the area for a non-immediate Article 4 direction) the total of all Domestic Noise service requests to environmental health is 37% of the total complaints.

Nuisance Reporting (information from FDC Environmental Health)

Since October 2019 there have been thirty complaints raised against licensed HMOs in the District - 29 of them were in Wisbech.

The nature and amount of the incidents indicate that the overconcentration of HMOs in Wisbech (specifically Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South) is having a negative impact on residential and visitor amenity within the area.

Refuse Considerations

The refuse team have reviewed records for the 153 registered HMOs in Wisbech for 2024. Looking at the records they have been able to establish that:

- Sixty percent (92 properties) of HMOs in Wisbech had no incidents of contamination
- Thirty percent (46 properties) had 1 or 2 incidents of contamination
- Ten percent (15 properties) had three or more incidents of contamination, I would classify this group as problematic with 3% (5 properties) having seven or more incidents,

We do not hold address data for Small HMOs but refuse officers working within the area have noted that the amount of waste has increased in recent years, and this is potentially because of properties being over occupied – i.e. no longer occupied by families.

INFORMATION ON OPERATION PHEASANT AND CONTROLLING MIGRATION FUND - MIGRANT EXPLOITATION IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR OF WISBECH

The Council has been working in partnership on a multi-agency project called Operation Pheasant since September 2012. The purpose of the project is to tackle migrant exploitation within the private rented sector.

The project was formed between Cambs Police and FDC in response to increases in rough sleeping and theft of food. The link was migrant workers being exploited in the private rented sector by rogue landlords and unlicensed gangmasters.

A task force was formed in January 2013 Gangmaster Licensing Authority, Cambs Fire and Rescue, HM Revenues & Customs & Immigration Enforcement

Wisbech is a hub for agricultural work which in turn provides opportunities for migrant workers to gain work here. Unfortunately, exploitation of vulnerable people is commonplace, we have seen 105 cases of human trafficking since Operation Pheasant started in September 2012.

The partnership approach is so vital because of the extent of the issues locally. Issues including sham marriage, prostitution, overcrowded properties, squalid and unsafe private rented accommodation are common. The partnership approach is vital to ensure that we take a no-nonsense approach to tackling the issues together to increase the impact and outcomes.

The Operation Pheasant Task Force group met monthly (between 2013-2020) and works to a task log which is jointly owned by the Task Force. The meeting is attended by both local and national statutory agencies. Key highlights from first 2 years:

- More than 180 people were rescued from illegal housing and 51 were helped to return home.
- Five buildings were prohibited from occupation and one outbuilding was demolished as a result of the operation.
- The number of cases of gangmaster activity linked to the private rented addresses was 206 and the operation has also raised awareness of tenants' rights by helping 1,083 people understand landlords' responsibilities.
- The Council secured £178,600 of government funding from the Rogue Landlord Fund run by the Department for Communities and Local Government for the on-going operation in January this year, the funding is over two years and ran until March 2015
- The Council then secured Controlling Migration Funding to continue the work of enforcement in Wisbech Private Rented Housing.

- Subsequently since April 2020 the Council embedded the approach as a core service utilising new powers with the vast majority of enforcement work centred in Wisbech as set out earlier in this report
- The work of Operation Pheasant has been recognised nationally and has influenced the Modern Day Slavery Act now in operation.
- A spin off Operation Endeavour took place in 2013. The Council in partnership with the Police team led the running of the reception centre which looked after and assisted 82 vulnerable migrant workers for 3 days. This took significant planning and effective partnership work to ensure that the complex needs of the individuals were met. 39 were referred into the National Referral Mechanism for modern day slavery

Since the launch of Operation Pheasant in 2012, much has been achieved to tackle rogue landlord activity linked to HMO's, with a number of agencies and landlords no longer operational. The landscape in Wisbech and more broadly across Fenland has improved significantly. However, issues remain, and the work of Operation Pheasant continues to this day as a partnership with the Private Sector Housing team working in Wisbech HMOs - sharing intelligence and acting with Police and other statutory agencies on a day-to-day basis. The Council regularly speak with other local authorities about our approach to tackling modern slavery and exploitation, most recently in January 2025.

INFORMATION ON ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

Policy Requirements and Guidance

An Article 4 direction is made under article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and in accordance with Schedule 3 of that order to restrict Class L(b), dwelling house to HMO. The making of an order must be in accord with the NPPF and Departmental guidance.

Paragraph 54 of the NPPF states that the use of Article 4 directions to remove national permitted development rights should...

- b) in other cases, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area...

- c) in all cases, be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible.

The terms 'local amenity' and the 'well-being' as referred to above are not defined in the NPPF and can have different meanings depending on context. For example, visual amenity could be used in the context of appearance of an area, whilst residential amenity may refer to living conditions within a property. The Planning Portal defines amenity as 'a positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area.'

The local planning authority must notify the Secretary of State when introducing an Article 4 Direction. Whilst the Secretary of State is not required to approve it, they can revoke or amend it, so it is imperative that the evidence supporting the making of an Article 4 Direction is robust.

When introducing an Article 4 Direction, there are two types of Direction under the GPDO: non-immediate directions and directions with immediate effect. An immediate direction can withdraw permitted development rights straight away; however, they must be confirmed by the local planning authority within 6 months of coming into effect to remain in force. A non-immediate direction does not take effect until consultation and subsequent confirmation by the Local Planning Authority, giving usually at 12 months' notice of the direction taking effect.

In accordance with Sections 107 and 108 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and The Town and Country Planning (Compensation) (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended), compensation provisions apply to directions with immediate effect, whereas non-immediate directions may be served, giving at least 12 months' notice (and not more than 2 years) of the intent to enforce a direction, without the need to grant any subsequent compensation.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item No:	15	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 February 2025	
Report Title:	11 & 12 High Street, Wisbech – Options Update	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This report is presented to allow members to consider and review the options available for the future of the property located at 11 & 12 High Street, Wisbech and to provide officers with instructions on the preferred course of action

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Members will recall that the approval for the acquisition of the site was granted by Cabinet in 2018 (CAB19/18 refers) as the condition was deteriorating and presenting a risk to public health and safety.
- 2.2 Following the transfer the existing building was demolished and replaced by a complex scaffold and steel support structure shortly after the sites acquisition.
- 2.3 The site is now secured and the structures monitored on regular basis to ensure ongoing stability

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are requested to.
- 1) Note the contents of the report now presented
 - 2) Agree that officers progress with Option 2 as detailed herein up to and including the grant of planning consent and tender return and the expenditure of £75,000 of capital monies to deliver this work is also approved.
 - 3) That upon completion of the tender return the matter be brought back before Cabinet for approval prior to any commitment to the project commencing.

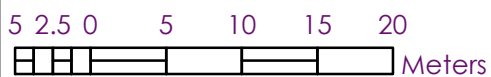
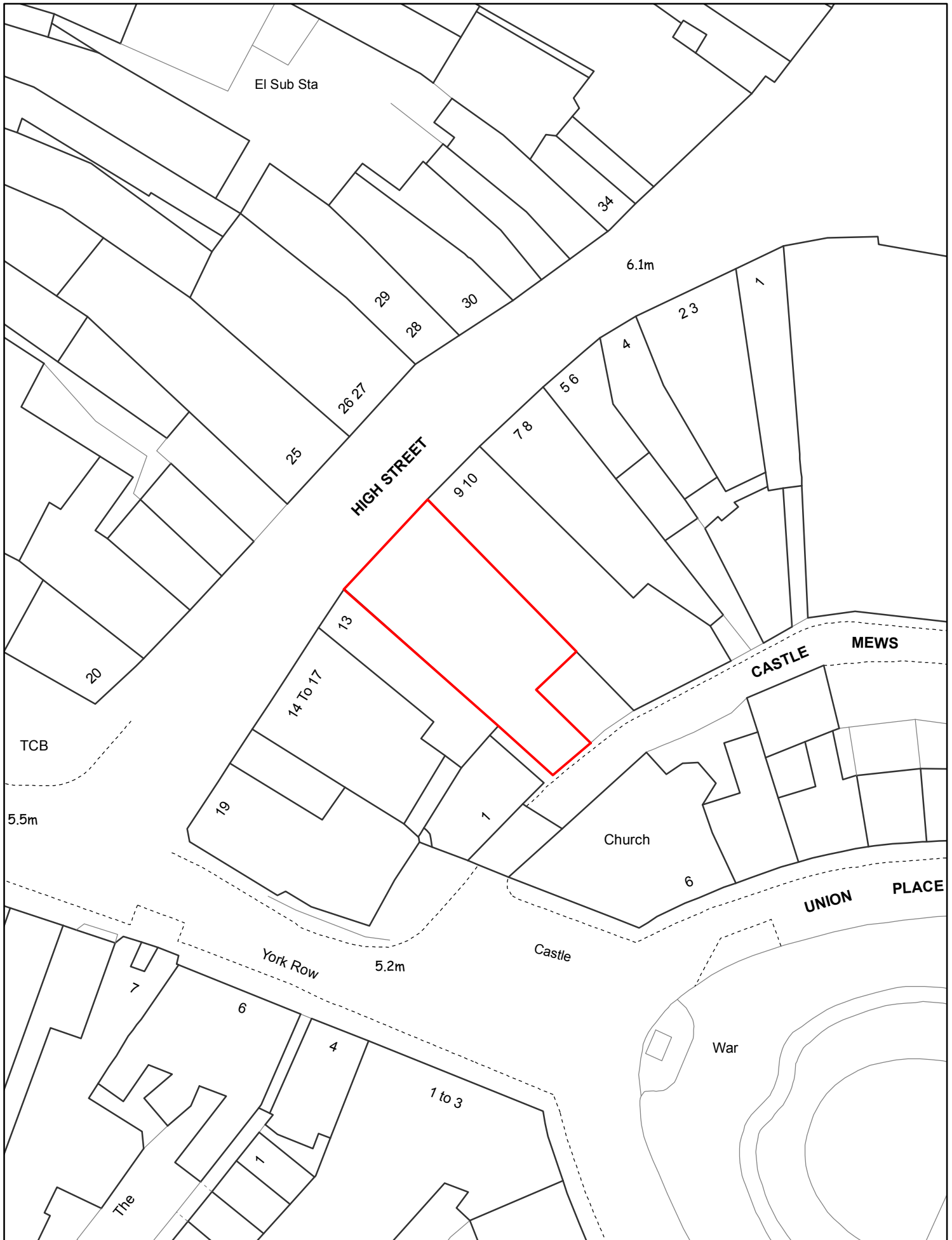
Wards Affected	All Wisbech wards	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/22JAN25/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Boden Cllr Ian Benney Cllr Chris Seaton	Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder
Report Originator	Mark Greenwood	Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects

Contact Officers	Mark Greenwood	Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects
	Phil Hughes	Head of Leisure and Open Spaces
Background Papers		

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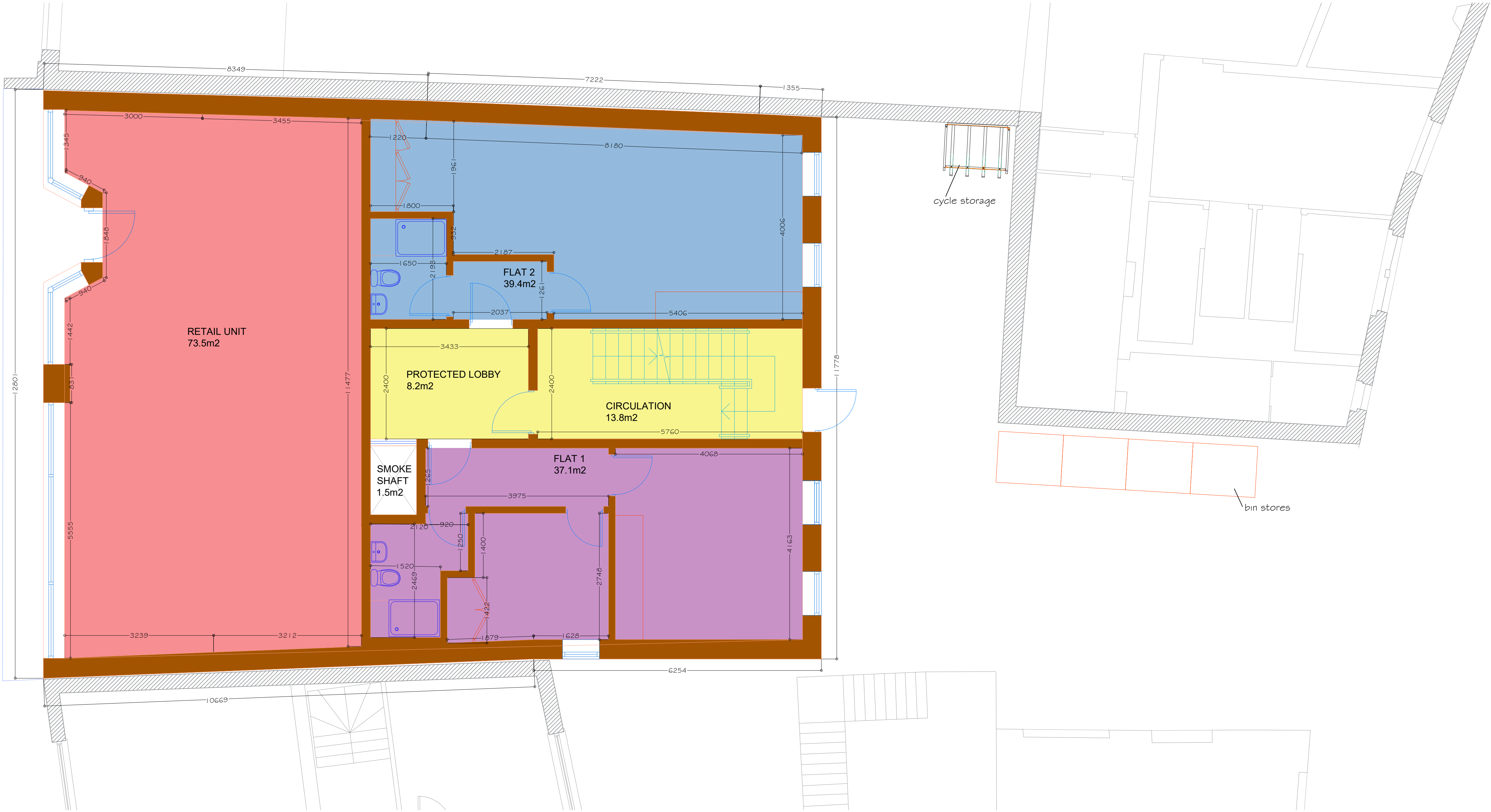


11/12 High Street, Wisbech
Cambridgeshire, PE13 1DB



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FEASIBILITY

REDEVELOPMENT OF
11-12 HIGH STREET,
WISBECH, PE13 1DB

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

OPTION 4
PROPOSED GROUND
FLOOR PLAN

RIBA
Chartered Practice

RICS

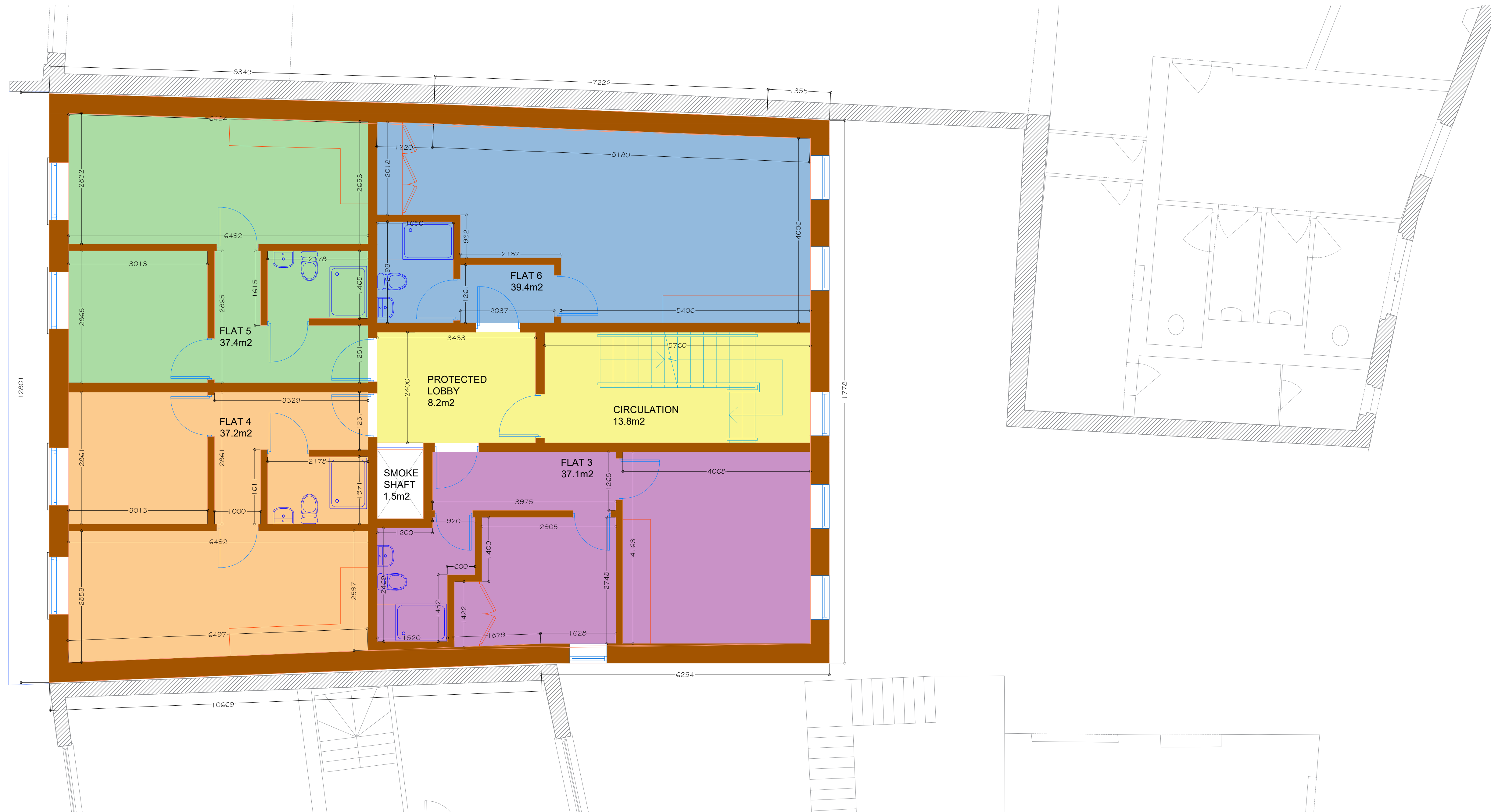
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REDEVELOPMENT OF
11-12 HIGH STREET,
WISBECH, PE13 1DB

OPTION 4 PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLANS



Chartered Practice

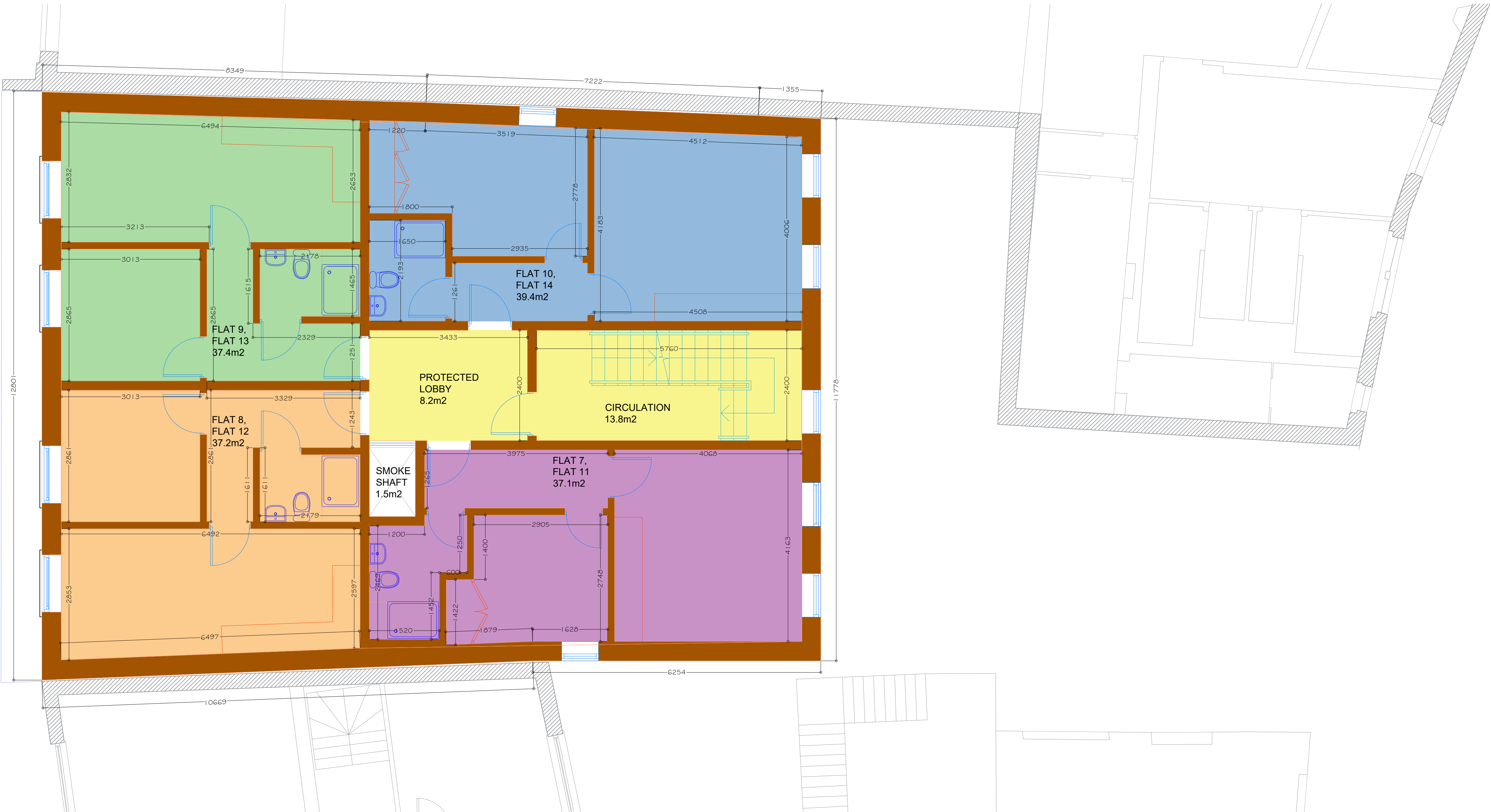




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FEASIBILITY

REDEVELOPMENT OF
11-12 HIGH STREET,
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FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

OPTION 4
PROPOSED SECOND & THIRD
FLOOR PLANS

RIBA

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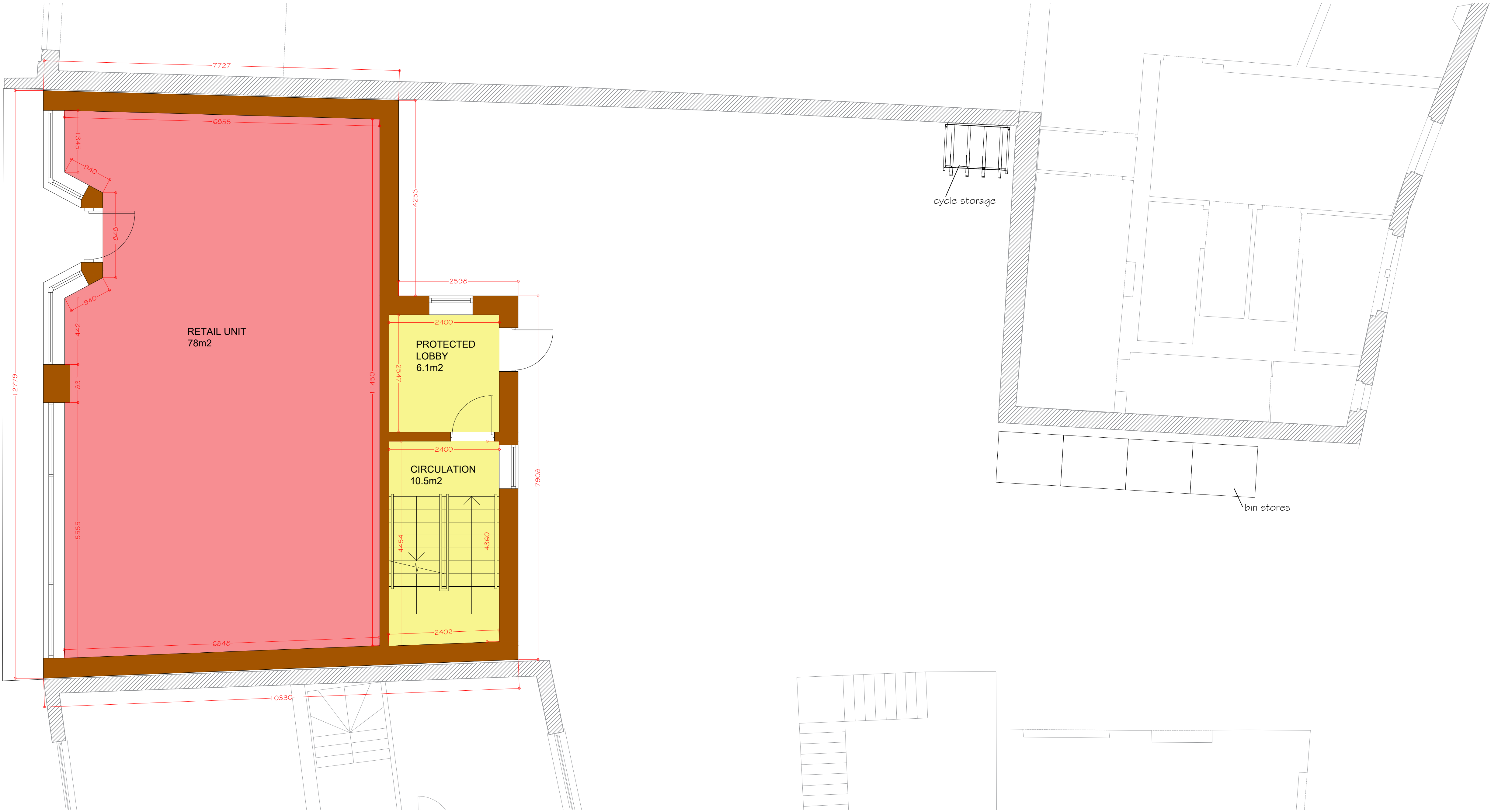
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FEASIBILITY

REDEVELOPMENT OF
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OPTION 5
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
AS PROPOSED

RIBA

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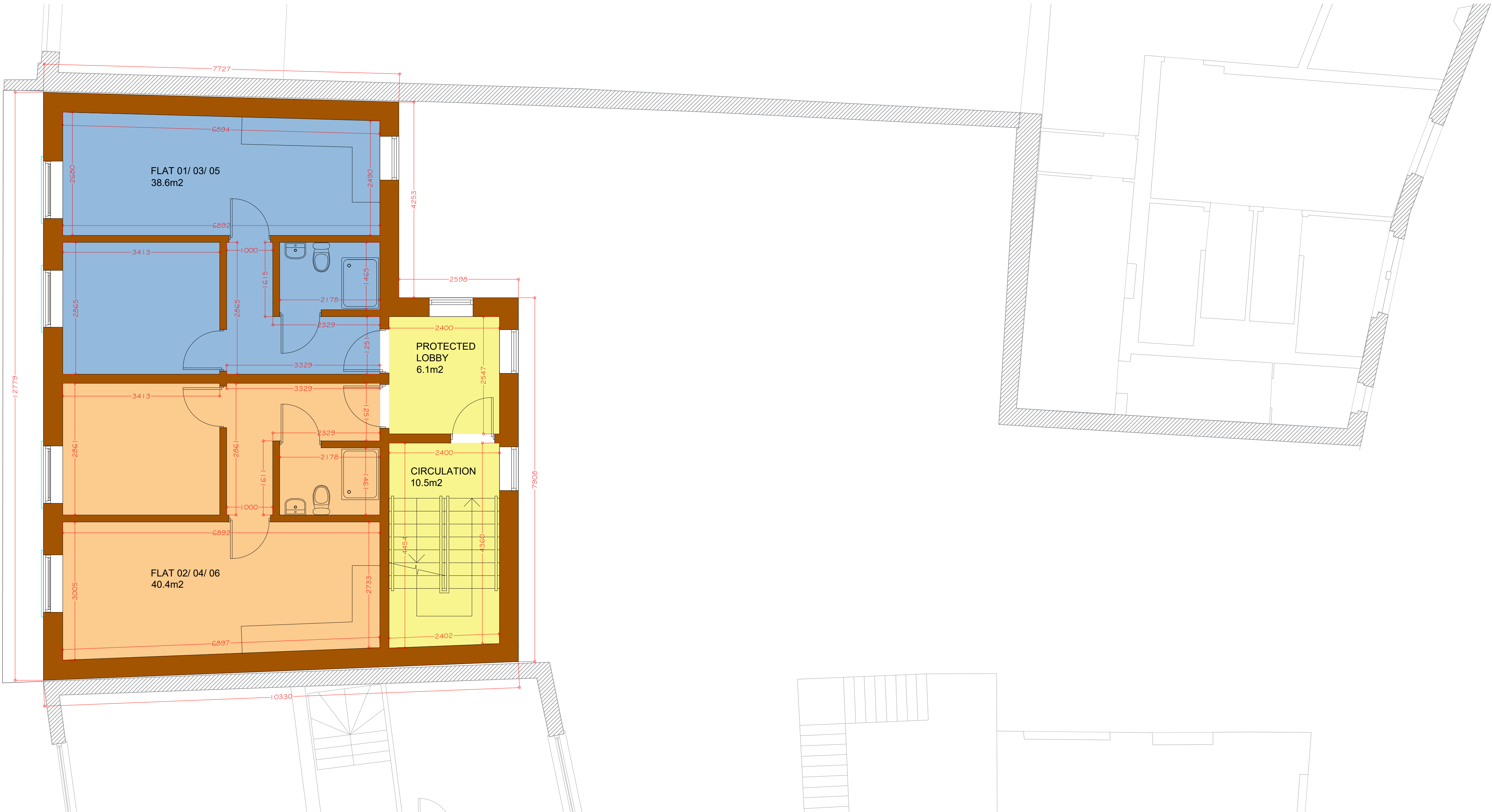
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FEASIBILITY

REDEVELOPMENT OF
11-12 HIGH STREET,
WISBECH, PE13 1DB

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

OPTION 4
FIRST, SECOND & THIRD
FLOOR PLANS
AS PROPOSED


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Planning & Heritage options appraisal

11/12 High St, Wisbech

November 2023

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5.	Impact of various options on the character and appearance of the conservation area.	12
6.	Summary Analysis	17

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Client
Turley

Our reference
FENC3000

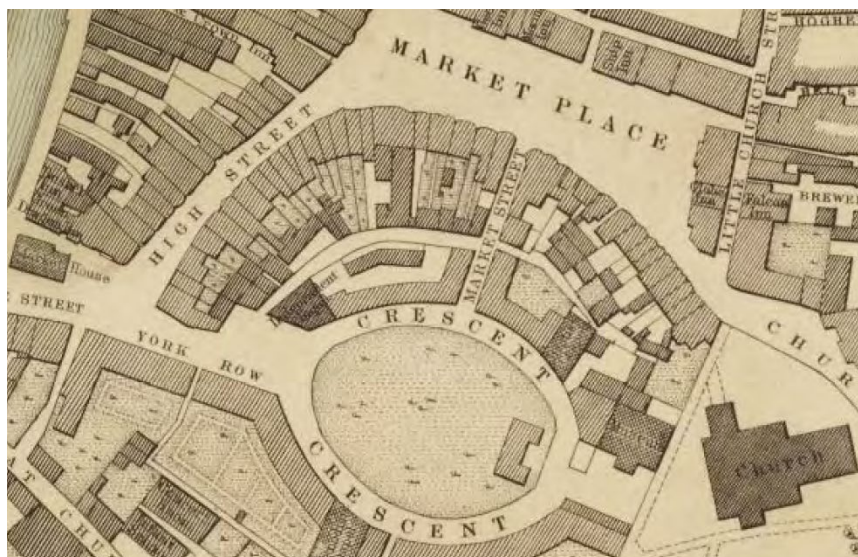
8 Nov 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been produced by Turley at the request of Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure and Open Spaces at Fenland District Council (FDC). Turley were appointed in November 2023.
- 1.2 Nos. 11/12 High Street in Wisbech now forms a 'gap site' in an otherwise continuously-built frontage. The street is identified in the Fenland Local Plan 2014 as being part of the primary shopping area within the Town Centre.
- 1.3 The properties were demolished in 2019 for safety reasons after many years of dereliction. Planning permission and listed building consent were approved (application nos. 19/0509/F and 19/0510/LB respectively) and the building demolished. However, despite the granting of planning permission, the replacement scheme is no longer financially viable (despite the potential for grant assistance).
- 1.4 FDC have been working with National Lottery Heritage Fund who have assisted with schemes (including No.24 which is almost opposite) as part of their 'high streets' funding. They are keen to help with Nos. 11/12 too but have requested an independent assessment of potential options from a planning and heritage perspective to understand the implications of different approaches to the site. This will then help them to justify maintaining an appropriate level of funding for the site. It is understood that the original funding package for the previous scheme expired at the end of March 2023.
- 1.5 This report considers how the plot might be developed and what are the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. It does not seek to offer advice on the financial or any other form of viability of any option, this would need to be sourced from others if required.
- 1.6 Preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is a statutory duty under S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is therefore a matter which attracts 'great weight' in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.7 This duty is reflected in Policies LP 18 and LP 16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014. The latter is supported by the 'Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland' SPD.
- 1.8 The contents of this report have been discussed with both the Fenland DC Conservation Officer and Historic England.

2. Brief History of the site

- 2.1 The list description suggests that No. 12 was built in the late C18 / early C19 as a four storey brown brick shop with accommodation over. The windows had cambered brick arched heads and stone sills. The upper floor ones survived as 6/3 sashes at the time of listing; the first and second floor were replaced by plate glass sashes probably in the C19. The building was topped by a plain brick parapet with the roof drained by a central downpipe. In later years, the building was painted.
- 2.2 No.11 is suggested to have been built slightly earlier, probably in the early C18. This was of reddish-brown brick and similarly of two bays, four storeys and with a central downpipe. There were expressed plat-bands between the floors and a stone-topped parapet. The windows openings again had cambered brick heads, though all the windows were plate glass sashes at the time of listing (though the original sash boxes remained).
- 2.3 In fact, it appears that the buildings were constructed as a pair in the early C19, but the façade of No.12 was rebuilt in the late C18 or early C19. The plans of both buildings were very similar. The front ranges had shallow pitched hipped roofs, hidden behind the parapet, but to the rear was a cross range with coped gable ends. That to No.12 can be seen on the historic photographs later in this report. Historic England, when inspecting the buildings in 2006 suggested that this more vernacular rear range could have been built c1700, with the street frontage perhaps thirty years later¹.



Utting's 1850 Survey of Wisbech

- 2.4 The plan above shows the High Street as a fully built-up street of buildings right against the carriageway edge. Nos. 11 and 12 are the fifth and sixth properties from the west ,

1

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/5525/Nos11and12HighStreetWisbechFenlandDistrictCambridgeshire>

both with long slim rear wings which link with blocks fronting onto what is today Castle Mews.

- 2.5 By the time of the late C19, it seems that both buildings had extended to the rear and No.11 linked to a much larger block on Castle Mews (presumably the four storey red brick property which still survives).
- 2.6 This later plan shows the change in levels down from Castle Mews, with steps from the street and from No.12 which access the sunken yard area. The yard to No.11 is particularly small.



1887 Ordnance Survey: Wisbech- Cambs VII 3.14

The photograph below is said to date from 1854 and shows Nos. 11&12 as four-storey blocks. The rectangular front block raises above the much older timber framed building to the right and impressive chimney stacks (so that the flues would draw) are particularly notable. However, to the rear of the frontage block, the gable end of the rear cross block can just be seen (it is clearer on the photographs below).



- 2.7 By 1897, the form of No.11 & 12 appears the same and the rear gable is particularly notable. The gabled dormers of the adjacent building have become catslide dormers and the thatched roof has been slated. By the early 1920s (second photograph below) the property adjacent to No.12 has been replaced with a three-storey brick commercial premises.



- 2.8 Throughout the C20, Nos. 11 & 12 continued as commercial premises; their shopfronts displaying the changing fashions in displaying goods. Also during the C20, the ground floor display area was extended through the rear blocks and filled the majority of the depth of both plots.



Shopfront at No.11 High Street c.1930.



Nos. 11& 12 in early 1970s

- 2.9 In the photograph above the structural issues in No.11 can be seen by the twisting brickwork at second and third floor levels whilst the poor condition of the brickwork at higher level is evident in No.12.

- 2.10 No.11 was likely painted to improve the appearance, but by the early years of the C21, the condition of both buildings was seriously deteriorating.



Nos. 11 & 12 – early C21



Historic England Archive: DP173667

The properties by 2015

- 2.11 As the photographs above show, the early years of the C21 saw the continued decline of the buildings. They were placed on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2001. Cosmetically, false shopfronts were inserted.
- 2.12 In 2006, Historic England's Structural Engineers visited and produce a report on the buildings' condition following the collapse of part of the roof of No.11. The report suggested that the buildings had been empty for 10 years. It is very clear from the report that the form of construction, with the unusual roof form was inherently weak and rebuilding works had occurred for probably more than a century.
- 2.13 Following the roof collapse, the buildings were seemingly propped as façade and the upper storey of each building removed.² In 2019, the buildings were demolished. Structural reports suggested that the condition of the front facades (the main remaining aspect of the building's heritage significance) was unsafe and would be virtually impossible to retain above first floor level even with significant (and costly) shoring.

² As evidenced by the commentary in the Wisbech Conservation Area Appraisal (2016) p 45

3. Character of the Conservation Area

- 3.1 The Conservation Area Appraisal divides the town into five different character areas; the site falling within 'Character Area No.3 – Commercial Centre, High Street and Market Place'. The appraisal describes the wealth of listed buildings, but also the impacts of vacancy and lack of maintenance of properties on the High Street. As noted earlier, the condition of Nos. 11 & 12 is specifically mentioned.
- 3.2 Important aspects of the description of the architectural qualities (leaving aside the impact of many years of neglect, include:-
- Narrow building plots and good quality frontages (even at higher level);
 - Timber and glazed shopfronts often with tiled thresholds;
 - Brick buildings (usually brown brick) and with tiled or slate roofs and sash windows.
- 3.3 To these could be added the fact that buildings almost universally sit right on the edge of the carriageway; most properties are of brick (occasionally painted), most have a regular pattern of windows to the upper floors. In addition, given the former commercial importance of the street, virtually all buildings are at least three to four storeys high.
- 3.4 The appraisal notes that the area does not contain any green spaces³.

³ Para 4.153

4. The replacement scheme

- 4.1 In 2019, under reference 19/0509/FUL, planning permission was granted for a replacement building on the site.
- 4.2 In terms of the elevation to the High Street, this sought to largely replicate the original appearance of the buildings. Consequently, they were of red-brown brick and of four storeys with traditional- style shopfronts at ground floor level (though the units were linked and so No.12 did not have a separate doorway). Above, each block was two bays wide with multi-paned sash windows with arched brick heads. The brick banding between the floors of No.11 was to be recreated.
- 4.3 Whilst the window style and head details were not precisely as the originals, and a central downpipe between the two properties was proposed instead of one in the middle of each property, to all intents and purposes, the appearance would have been very similar to the original design but with No.12 left unpainted.
- 4.4 The main change was at roof level, where the double-piled roofs were replaced with a further floor of accommodation, designed as a modern recessive storey glazed and with a metal standing seam cladding and roof.
- 4.5 The rear elevation to Castle Mews was much more contemporary in style though again of brick and with metal cladding at upper levels. Three balconies provided amenity for the apartments, but otherwise the doors were simpler and without brick heads.
- 4.6 The ground floor was proposed as a single commercial unit (with basement beneath). The upper floors were proposed as 15 apartments (11- single bed and 4- two bed units). Access to the apartments was from Castle Mews at the rear where cycle and bin stores were provided.
- 4.7 In consultation on the application, there were no significant objections to the proposals, though Historic England and the Wisbech Society both requested a more faithful recreation of the original appearance of the buildings on the High Street façade. The Fenland Conservation Officer, in her very detailed comments, concluded that both the design and the proposed height were appropriate. She recognised that the additional roof storey made the buildings taller than other properties in the area, but felt that as this was recessed, it would not ultimately harm the character or appearance of the conservation area (further commentary is provided in the next section).

5. Impact of various options on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The Approved Scheme

- 5.1 The scheme granted consent in 2019 effectively sought to recreate the character of the listed buildings which originally occupied the site, and of which parts of the façade remained at the time. Whilst the proposed façade was not an exact copy, it was a very close approximation.
- 5.2 The upper storey was of course new. It is clear from the assessment made by the FDC Conservation Officer that she was content (because the roof was recessive in style and materials) that the additional height did not harm the prevailing character of the Conservation Area. Her comments appear to infer that any higher structure, would likely have been considered too tall. Whilst both Historic England and The Wisbech Society commented that the detailing could have been closer to the original, they did not object to the proposals.
- 5.3 The approved consent established that the form of the rear elevation was far less of a concern, and that there was no objection to building to the limits of the site footprint. The development did not include any car parking provision, though some cycle parking was included.
- 5.4 A reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the documentation attached to the 2019 scheme would be that the development was at or very close to the maximum that the site will accommodate in heritage / townscape terms and that the form of the front elevation and ensuring that it respects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, is paramount.

Assessment of Options

- 5.5 As the approved scheme ultimately proved not to be viable, this section will therefore consider different scenarios which would either provide more accommodation and so could potentially raise the yield or build more cheaply either in design terms or by providing less accommodation.
- 5.6 The rest of this section considers potential different approaches to the site and what the impact would be from a townscape and heritage perspective. These options are then summarised in the concluding table. For the options which propose buildings, there are inevitably numerous possible variations. For all however, it is considered that a new building would follow the prevailing building line and that the ground floor will be designed as a pair of shopfronts (even if the space behind is combined) and that any structure above will similarly reflect the narrow building plot divisions which characterise the area (ie it will give the appearance of two buildings). Whilst there may be a slight cost saving from designing a single homogenous building, this is not considered to be outweighed by the negative impact on the conservation area. The approved scheme shows that the degree of differentiation between the two halves of

the plot could in any case be subtle. It is also assumed that the building, particularly to the High Street, will be predominantly of red brick.

Option 1: A larger building

- 5.7 As described previously, at five storeys (plus basement), the approved scheme was a storey taller than the original buildings which were themselves as tall as any buildings in the streets around the Market Place.⁴ The conservation officer describes in some detail where the additional storey will be visible from. From High Street, as the upper floor was recessed, it was not apparent. However, it could be seen from Union Street, Bridge Street and Market Street, though the officer concluded that the extra height would not be overbearing.
- 5.8 From the Castle Estate it was more noticeable, particularly from the Crescent and especially from outside No.8 The Crescent. She also noted that it could be seen from North Brink though 'not with any clarity' and the parish church and Clarkson Memorial would remain the key incidents in the skyline. The 'Key Views' submitted with the 2019 application give some idea of the visibility from the points mentioned and help explain the degree of impact which the officer noted.
- 5.9 Adding a further floor (assuming it was based on the same footprint) could potentially provide a further 2-bed apartment and two more single bed apartments. Leaving aside the practicalities of achieving this structurally, or in terms of providing sufficient amenity space, bike / bin storage etc, the visual impact would be substantial. The Conservation Officer described the fifth storey as 'recessive' and 'rooms in the roof'. An additional storey on top of this would be neither. In design terms the 'roof' becomes far more dominant and reads as a structure in its own right, not as a subordinate element.
- 5.10 An additional floor would be far more noticeable to the extent that it would impact on the previously mentioned views, some of which are amongst the most important in the Conservation Area. The extra height would no longer slightly exceed the norm but would become clearly noticeable as markedly taller. From York Row, this would be very apparent. Whilst a taller, high quality building can often be justified at key 'moments' within streets and spaces, this site sits in a position on the street which requires a building which fits with the established form and scale, not something which becomes obviously discordant.
- 5.11 Before any taller building on the site was seriously considered, I would suggest that an accurate Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment was produced to fully understand the impacts on any key views within the Conservation Area and the possible impact on the setting of the numerous listed buildings in the area.

Option 2: Leaving the site as a landscaped space

- 5.12 As can be seen from historic and modern plans of Wisbech, this area of the town is characterised by streets and spaces defined by buildings. The only gaps are landscape

⁴ Whilst there are 5-storey traditional buildings elsewhere in the conservation area (eg the Horace Friend warehouse) these tend to be industrial in character and relate to the river.

grounds (eg around the Castle and Church), set-piece spaces where streets join (eg the Market Place) or at the ends of streets (eg on York Row).

- 5.13 Whilst it would be possible to create a route through the site between the High Street and Castle Mews, such a route wouldn't be on any particularly beneficial desire-line. Even if the basement was filled in (a significant task in itself), a level change between front and back would still need to be graded out and presumably the adjacent buildings would still need to be supported, as they are by the mass of scaffolding currently occupying the site.
- 5.14 Whilst what appear to be some major practical implications of creating a small area of amenity space are not within the scope of this report, the townscape implications are. In a consistent run of buildings of reasonable scale along what was one of the major commercial streets, a gap site will be a 'missing tooth'. It will be clearly at odds with the prevailing character of the street.
- 5.15 The view from York Row will throw into sharp relief the gable end of No.10 High Street, a façade which was never meant to be seen and which would undoubtedly require some remedial works (even if the scaffolding could be removed / replaced with something aesthetically better).
- 5.16 Leaving the site as a landscaped space is not considered to be an acceptable solution in townscape terms. Practically, it is difficult to see what amenity a heavily-shaded space, not on a main desire-line and which does not benefit from natural surveillance from adjacent buildings would serve.

Option 3: A façade

- 5.17 Had the original façade survived, then there may have been some merit in retaining it in the hope that rebuilding behind may one day be possible. As we have seen, today nothing of the original building survives.
- 5.18 The demolition work in 2019 included the removal of the ground floor slab and so now all the basement area is uncovered. This would almost certainly make it extremely challenging (and costly) to prop a façade and would likely mean some of the basement area at least would need to be infilled. The propping to the adjacent buildings would still be required and the rear elevation would still present a derelict appearance (unless rebuilt in some form).
- 5.19 Clearly the street façade could be reinstated and so in townscape terms there would be some benefit. Whilst from York Row the building may appear like a piece of scenery, there are a number of buildings where the facade sits above the flanking walls giving a not dissimilar appearance.
- 5.20 However, this would almost certainly be a costly exercise which would serve no practical benefit. Without continued maintenance (at a cost), the appearance would quickly deteriorate.

Option 4: Shopfront

- 5.21 For some years, the derelict original buildings were fitted with false shopfronts in an attempt to alleviate the neglected and hostile appearance. The photographs earlier in this report show that this was not particularly convincing.
- 5.22 Although it would no doubt be possible to produce very high-definition photographs to give a very faithful appearance of an old shopfront, this would achieve very little. Whilst it may look attractive from immediately in front, this part of the high street curves and so the fact that was just a piece of scenery would be very apparent when walking towards it from either direction. Again, the scaffolding would need to remain, the rear elevation would be unaltered and it would need to be propped and maintained.
- 5.23 Whilst probably the cheapest of the options, it would serve no practical and minimal townscape purpose.

Option 5: A smaller building

- 5.24 Given the amount of remedial works needed to enable anything to be built on this site, it seems unlikely that a less intensive form of development from that approved in 2019 would be viable. As noted earlier, however, this report does not give viability advice and as the viability assessment produced in 2019 is not available, it is not possible to understand the impact of demolition / remedial works etc to understand whether a smaller scheme could produce significant cost savings.
- 5.25 Assuming they could, then the ideal solution would be to provide a building which largely recreated the original façade to High Street. It would therefore be of four storeys, commercial at ground floor and with residential accommodation above (assuming this remains the most viable use). It may be possible to just reproduce the frontage block (perhaps as six two-bedroom apartments) and leave part of the rear as a semi basement garden area to reduce costs. The rear part of the site would need to provide bike and bin storage.
- 5.26 Now that the original building has been demolished, the need to faithfully reproduce it is less important than it was when parts of it remained in 2019. Whilst some key aspects should be retained – the subdivision into two narrow plots, the regular bays of windows with horizontal proportions, careful choice of building materials etc, with care it may be possible to build slightly more cheaply. The key is that the building should sit comfortably with its neighbours and so anything of too overt a design, or which uses materials not drawn from the Wisbech context will not be successful.
- 5.27 A variation on this would be to build a three-storey building. This could either be a scaled down version of what was there (ie after the top storey was removed) or take inspiration from other 3-storey, two-bay buildings in the area. This would mean greater visibility / some remedial work of the gable ends of the adjacent buildings, the existing variation of roof heights means this approach would not appear out of place.

- 5.28 Whilst there are two storey buildings opposite the site, these are C20 developments and reproducing this scale in this position in the street would make it rather weak in townscape terms and with much more of the adjacent buildings apparent.

6. Summary Analysis

	High St facade	Wider High St impact	Castle Mews Impact	Wider Impact	Notes
2019 Scheme	Very Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Minor adverse	
1. Larger building	Very Positive	Minor adverse	Neutral	Adverse	
2. Landscaped space	Adverse	Adverse	Neutral	Neutral	
3. Façade	Positive	Minor adverse	Neutral	Neutral	
4. Shopfront	Neutral	Adverse	Neutral	Neutral	
5a New 4-st	Very positive	Positive	Minor positive	Neutral	
5b New 3 st	Positive	Neutral	Minor positive	Neutral	
5c New 2 st	Neutral	Minor adverse	Neutral	Neutral	

Scoring key:

Very positive	Positive	Minor positive	Neutral	Minor adverse	Adverse
+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2

2019 Scheme	3+0+0-1	+2
1. Larger Building	3-1+0-2	0
2. Landscaped space	-1-1+0+0	-2
3. Facade	+2-1+0+0	+1
4. Shopfront	0-2+0+0	-2
5a New 4-storey	3+2+1+0	+6
5b New 3 storey	2+0+1+0	+3
5c New 2 storey	0-1+0+0	-1

- 6.1 The above table shows that the most successful replacement would be a four storey structure, of similar form (though not necessarily identical) to the original building. This assumes that the Castle Mews elevation will be improved from its current appearance. The scoring given for this element of the scheme relates purely to the impact of the scale of the proposed replacement building.
- 6.2 The second most appropriate form would be a three-storey structure which either replicated the form of the 'reduced' original façade or took inspiration from similar traditional three-storey buildings in the area.
- 6.3 A key aspect of both these proposals, and indeed the scheme approved in 2019, is that the façade should be inspired by the original buildings / other traditional buildings in the locality to have an appropriate appearance in the conservation area.
- 6.4 Options which either leave a gap site, or infill with a structure of smaller scheme are not considered to have a positive impact on the conservation area.
- 6.5 In a 'broad-brush' analysis such as this, the scoring is inevitably based on assumptions. There may be opportunities to score higher if, for example, the High Street façade was faithfully reproduced or a particularly successful elevation to Castle Mews was created. However, this is not considered likely to overcome the overriding conclusion of this study that the High Street needs a frontage of scale if the character and appearance of the conservation area is to be at least maintained.
- 6.6 The option which is the most difficult to score is that for a taller building. Realistically a more detailed proposal would need to be drawn up so that the impact of taller

elements on the wider area can be properly and accurately assessed. What is very clear however is that taller elements would need to be recessive behind the four-storey High Street façade. Adding further floors which are clearly visible above the front elevation would be out of keeping with the area.

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