



**CABINET - MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2025**  
**NOTICE OF DECISIONS PUBLISHED ON 17 DECEMBER 2025**

Item 5
<b>Draft Business Plan 2026/27</b>
<b>Purpose</b>
For Cabinet to approve the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 for public consultation.
<b>Decision</b>
<b>AGREED to approve the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 for public consultation.</b>
<b>Reason for Decision</b>
For Cabinet to approve the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 for public consultation.
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>
N/A
<b>Interests</b>
N/A
<b>Background Documents</b>
Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Item 6
<b>Draft Budget &amp; MTFS 2026/27</b>
<b>Purpose</b>
To consider and approve the revised General Fund Budget and Capital Programme for 2025/26; the Draft General Fund Budget Estimates for 2026/27 and the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2030/31 for consultation; and the Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2028/29.
<b>Decision</b>
<b>AGREED that:</b>
(i) The revised General Fund Budget and revised Capital Programme for 2025/26 be approved.
(ii) The draft budget proposals for 2026/27 outlined in this report be approved for consultation.
(iii) The proposed Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2028/29 be approved.
<b>Reason for Decision</b>

N/A
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>
N/A
<b>Interests</b>
N/A
<b>Background Documents</b>
<p>Provisional Finance settlement – Ministry of Housing, Communities &amp; Local Government (MHCLG).</p> <p>Autumn Statement 2025 (HM Treasury)</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Strategy working papers.</p> <p>Government announcements since February 2025.</p>

<b>Item 7</b>
<b>Adoption of a New Planning Enforcement Policy</b>
<b>Purpose</b>
<p>To seek approval for the adoption of a revised Planning Enforcement Policy for Fenland District Council. The updated Policy sets out how the Council will exercise its planning enforcement functions, establishes clear priorities and provides transparency for residents, developers and landowners.</p>
<b>Decision</b>
<b>AGREED to approve the revised Planning Enforcement Policy.</b>
<b>Reason for Decision</b>
<p>In light of the limitations of the current document and the importance of effective planning enforcement, the Local Planning Authority has prepared a new Planning Enforcement Policy which is considered to be more robust, comprehensive, and fit for purpose. The revised policy reflects current national expectations and provides clearer direction to officers, Members and the public.</p> <p>It is considered that the new policy aligns more closely with this guidance, by setting out a clearer framework for investigation, prioritisation, and formal action. Due to the substantial changes in format, tone, and content, a direct comparison between the new and previous documents is not considered meaningful.</p> <p>The Policy is designed to support a more focused and efficient service, recognising that enforcement capacity is limited. It will help manage expectations and improve case throughput by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearer prioritisation of cases based on harm, enabling more efficient use of limited resources.</li> <li>• Stronger emphasis on harm-based assessment.</li> <li>• Service standards and indicative response timescales.</li> </ul>

- Improved transparency and consistency in decision-making.
- Greater clarity on the factors that will influence whether formal action is taken.
- Guidance on how anonymous, persistent, or vexatious complaints will be handled.
- Formal reference to statutory powers.
- Stronger alignment with the principles of proportionality, expediency, and public interest; and
- Clear references to enforcement powers and tools previously omitted, including use of Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) powers in appropriate cases.

The new policy is intended to better support officers in day-to-day enforcement decision-making, improve the Council's ability to defend its actions when challenged, and reinforce public trust in the planning system.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

**Maintaining the Existing Policy Without Revision** - This option was discounted because the current policy is outdated, lacking clarity on prioritisation and service standards and does not fully reflect recent legislative changes or best practice. The lack of clarity and precision results in officers not being able to priorities cases effectively. Continuing with the existing policy risks inconsistent decision-making and reduced public confidence, whilst officers are unable to effectively manage their workloads.

**The provision of a more aggressive Policy** - This option was discounted because a more aggressive enforcement stance would require significantly increased staffing and financial resources to investigate and pursue a larger volume of cases, which is not sustainable within current budgets. Planning enforcement is inherently discretionary and must be applied proportionately. Pursuing formal enforcement with limited direction increases the likelihood of appeals and legal challenges, potentially resulting in additional costs and reputational damage. A balanced approach that targets serious breaches while using informal resolution for minor issues is considered more effective and sustainable.

### **Interests**

N/A

### **Background Documents**

Local Planning Enforcement Plan (June 2020)

### **Item 8**

#### **Pride in Place Impact Fund - project proposal**

#### **Purpose**

Fenland District Council has been awarded £1.5 million from the Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund to support capital funded initiatives across the district. Building on the previous report in November to accept this funding, this report proposes the project to receive this funding over the coming 16 months.

Following an initial discussion with elected Members, and a review of the Fenland Inspire! projects within the Council's Business Plan, the recommended use for the funding is to enhance open spaces facilities and play areas across the district in line with the Fenland Inspire! project aims.

Decision
<p><b>AGREED to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the allocation of the £1.5 million Pride in Place Impact Fund allocation to the delivery of improved open spaces and play park enhancements across the district.</li> <li>• Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Open Spaces and Inspire! Projects, to commence an assessment of open spaces facilities and play parks to identify, alongside local elected Members, sites for improved or new facilities and return to Cabinet with a report with recommendations on the specific projects to be undertaken.</li> <li>• Note the necessary recruitment of a part-time, fixed term contract Project Officer to ensure that the organisation has the capacity to deliver this work in a timely manner, within the tight timeframe and deadline of March 2027 stipulated by Government.</li> </ul>
Reason for Decision
<p>Allocation of the funding in this way aligns with the Council's corporate priorities and is detailed specifically in the Fenland Inspire! projects within the Business Plan.</p> <p>It also specifically aligns with objective 2, detailed above in paragraph 4.2 of the Pride in Place Impact Fund guidance.</p>
Alternative Options Considered
<p>Alternative projects were considered – specifically other projects within the Fenland Inspire! programme. However, due to the very tight prescribed time constraints imposed against this funding, only projects that are realistically deliverable in a short time frame are acceptable for consideration.</p>
Interests
N/A
Background Documents
<p><a href="#">November 2025 Cabinet Report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Pride in Place Impact Fund: prospectus</a></p>

Item 9
Local Plan Update
Purpose
<p>In February 2019, Fenland District Council agreed to prepare a new Local Plan. Progress has been slower than expected since publication of the Draft Local Plan due to the uncertainty created by ongoing national planning reforms, Covid 19, updated flood-risk data, resourcing and procurement challenges, and the potential for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It is now necessary to rethink our approach to ensure Fenland continues to have a strong voice after LGR.</p> <p>This report therefore recommends formally withdrawing the Draft Fenland Local Plan (2019–2040) and beginning work on a new Local Plan under the new plan making system introduced by the</p>

Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. Much of the work done to date can be updated and carried forward into this new process.

The new Plan will provide a more streamlined, responsive, and forward-looking framework that reflects local priorities and clearly articulates the district's ambitions. It will place people and place at its core—ensuring future development supports quality homes, good jobs, town centres, services, and resilient communities. It will also have a facilitative and inward investment focus which is increasingly important given the sluggish national economic context.

### Decision

**AGREED to recommend to Council that they:**

- a) Withdraw the emerging Fenland Local Plan 2021-2040**
- b) Commence the production of a new Local Plan under the new system to be completed by March 2028 that will cover the period 2025 to 2050 once the new plan making regulations are published.**
- c) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to publish and keep up to date a new Local Development Scheme.**

### Reason for Decision

The recommendation to withdraw the emerging Fenland Local Plan (2019–2040) and begin a new plan reflects the scale of recent national reforms and shifting local priorities. Extensive work has already informed the current draft, but changes in legislation, policy, and guidance mean that the methods used to prepare it are no longer completely aligned with how Local Plans must now be produced under the new system.

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act introduces a new plan-making system expected to take effect this year, and Government has set a hard deadline of 31 December 2026 for submitting plans under the current system. Any plan not submitted by then must restart under the new regime. These national decisions leave the Council with limited room to manoeuvre, making it necessary to begin a new-style Local Plan now to ensure Fenland retains a clear and influential voice through and beyond local government reform.

Local circumstances have also evolved. Issues such as the nationally significant Fens Reservoir proposal, pressures from HMOs in Wisbech, new opportunities in advanced manufacturing and clean tech, updated flood-risk modelling, and wider governance uncertainty all require a fresh strategic response. Added to this, the emerging Local Growth Plan identifies Fenland as a key area of investment and opportunity, reinforcing the need for a planning framework that can support and shape this long-term economic potential.

Preparing a new Local Plan will allow the Council to respond proactively to these challenges and opportunities, influence regional planning and investment, and ensure local policies remain legally sound, locally grounded, and nationally compliant. Although some previously completed work will need to be updated, much of it can still inform the new plan, and the district's strong five-year housing land supply provides the space to make this transition responsibly.

The benefits of moving early to the new system outweigh the risks. Acting now avoids duplicated effort, prevents further resource waste as national deadlines approach, and places Fenland in the strongest position to deliver a modern, place-based plan aligned with national reforms and local economic ambitions—ensuring the district can fully capitalise on the investment opportunities set

out in the Local Growth Plan and support sustainable growth to 2050 whilst Fenland District Council continues to exist.
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>
There are no viable alternative options. The technical work underpinning the existing draft would need to be substantially revisited to meet new national planning guidance, leaving insufficient time to submit a compliant plan under the current system. Continuing with the existing plan is therefore not feasible, and choosing not to prepare a plan is not permitted under national policy. Starting a new Local Plan, whilst retaining much of the information already completed, is the only practical and responsible way to ensure Fenland maintains control over future development and retains a strong voice within the reformed planning system.
<b>Interests</b>
N/A
<b>Background Documents</b>
<a href="#">February 2019 – Cabinet Report - Local Plan Review and Update</a>

<b>Item 10</b>
<b>Wisbech High Street Update</b>
<b>Purpose</b>
To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding the ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech and the pre-construction design and planning work for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.
<b>Decision</b>
<b>AGREED to note the report.</b>
<b>Reason for Decision</b>
N/A
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>
N/A
<b>Interests</b>
N/A
<b>Background Documents</b>
Previous monthly Cabinet reports regarding Wisbech High Street July 2022 Cabinet and Council reports regarding 24 High Street, Wisbech June 2025 Cabinet papers regarding the Fenland Inspire! project and 11-12 High Street, Wisbech

<b>Item 11</b>
<b>Whittlesey Relief Road Update</b>

## Purpose

This report relates to the Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Business Outline Case (SOC) and possible opportunities to fund the recommendations from this 2025 study. Members are requested to:

- Write to the CPCA under their budget consultation to request inclusion of the cost of the Whittlesey Relief Road SOC recommendations report in the CPCA 2026/27 budget or, failing that, in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the 2027/28 budget.
- Contact Whittlesey Town Council requesting that they consider offering financial support towards the cost of the report.
- Consider inclusion within FDC's budget or MTFS. For the provision of funds to cover or contribute towards the cost of the next Whittlesey Relief Road report, as a backstop position.

## Decision

### **AGREED to:**

- **Write to the CPCAA under the budget consultation to request inclusion of the cost of the next Whittlesey Relief Road report in the CPCA 2026/27 budget or, failing that, in the MTFS for 2027/28.**
- **Contact Whittlesey Town Council requesting that they consider offering financial support towards the cost of the budget.**
- **Consider inclusion within FDC's next budget or MTFS for the provision of funds to cover or contribute towards the cost of the next Whittlesey Relief Road report, as a backstop position.**

## Reason for Decision

The total cost for the Whittlesey Relief Road SOC was £277,783. This was funded by the original £260,000 Market Towns Fund plus some additional underspend from other Growing Fenland projects. This investment has delivered a SOC which makes a clear case for the need for traffic interventions in Whittlesey.

The best performing scheme to address the issues in Whittlesey has been identified as a southern relief road, HGV rerouting and active travel improvements. The cost of a scheme of this scale is significant and requires further work to understand the monetised value the wider benefits it may bring. The Benefit to Cost Ratio for the project is currently too low for the project to progress to Outline Business Case. The recommended assessment work would focus on addressing the gap between the benefits costed so far and the scale and cost of the proposed scheme with the aim of creating a stronger BCR.

To undertake the additional assessment, the scheme requires development funding. At its meeting in May 2025, Cabinet approved a recommendation that officers explore potential opportunities to secure the £220,000 funding needed to complete the recommendations in the SOC. Following the November CPCA Board meeting, where the Mayor expressed support for progressing Whittlesey capital transport schemes, there is an opportunity via public consultation to influence the public consultation for their 2026/27 budget and to consider other possible funding sources.

## Alternative Options Considered

A non-relief road option was included in the shortlisted options and the public consultation. This performed poorly against the scheme objectives, particularly due to it not affecting the current routing of HGVs. This option was garnered the least support of all the options.

The conclusion of the project highlights that transport interventions are needed for Whittlesey and that one single solution is unlikely to resolve all the towns transport issues. This suggests a multi-mode; multi-faceted approach is needed. Part of the solution is therefore likely to include the Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority and CPCA as the Local Transport Authority programmes to develop transport proposals across all modes of transport; a new Transport Strategy for Fenland District covering all modes of transport; and walking and cycling proposals for Whittlesey included within the new district transport strategy, the Fenland Walking, Cycling and Mobility Aid Strategy and the County Council emerging Active Travel Strategy. Fenland District Council's work with CPCA and others to develop plans to significantly improve Whittlesey railway station will also be a significant factor.

A key component for any solution for transport issues in Whittlesey will need to continue to consider alternatives ways to address the key issues that need resolving. Alternative options must be considered to satisfy funding requirements and therefore they will continue to form part of this work.

#### **Interests**

N/A

#### **Background Documents**

FDC Cabinet – May 2025

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=3070&Ver=4>

Whittlesey Relief Road SOC Final Report

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/s17117/Whittlesey%20Relief%20Road%20SOC%20FINAL.pdf>

Whittlesey Relief Road SOC Final Report Appendix A to O

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/s17118/Combined%20Appendices%20A%20to%20O.pdf>

Whittlesey Relief Road SOC Options Appraisal Report and Appendix A to E

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/s17119/Combined%20OAR%20Appendices%20A%20to%20E.pdf>

FDC Cabinet – 16 March 2023

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/s11850/Cabinet%20Paper%20March%202023%20-%20Whittlesey%20Relief%20Rd%20V2%206.2.2023%20updated%2002.03.23.pdf>

FDC Cabinet – 9 January 2022

[Report and appendices.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

CPCA Board Meeting – 30 November 2022

[353.pdf](#)

**Item 14**

**Port Operations Update (Confidential)**

**Purpose**

To provide Members with an update regarding FDC's ongoing position relating to Wisbech Port following actions agreed at previous Cabinet meetings.

**Decision**

**AGREED to review the terms on offer from Port of Wisbech Limited and then give officers instructions on how to proceed.**

**Reason for Decision**

N/A

**Alternative Options Considered**

All the options have been set out to Members in previous Cabinet reports.

**Interests**

None

**Background Documents**

Various confidential reports, Cabinet 12 November 2025, 19 May 2025, 16 December 2024, 16 March 2023

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

The 23 December at 1700 hours is the expiry date for call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel of any of the above decisions. These decisions will come into force and may then be implemented on 24 December 2025, with the exception of any that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel calls in.