

# **Overview & Scrutiny**

## **Progress Against Communities Corporate Priority**

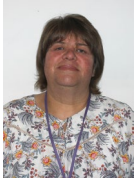
**July 2022**

# Portfolio Holders



**Councillor  
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council  
& Portfolio Holder for  
Finance



**Councillor  
Sam Clark**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Health



**Councillor  
Miss Sam Hoy**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Housing



**Councillor  
Andrew Lynn**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Licensing &  
Community Safety

## Projects from Business Plan:

**Work with landlords to improve housing conditions and management standards in the district's private sector, including using the Council's enforcement powers (Cllr Sam Hoy)**

### 2021/22 – year end performance

Town	HMOs investigated	Privately Rented Homes investigated
Wisbech	47	135
March	3	24
Chatteris	1	18
Whittlesey	0	27
Villages	1  Leverington = 1  HMO TOTALS 52	21  Benwick = 1 Coldham = 1 Doddington = 2 Eastrea = 1 Elm = 1 Guyhirn = 1 Leverington = 2 Manea = 2 Morrow = 1 Newton = 1 Parson Drove = 1 Thorney Toll = 1 Tydd = 2 Wimblington = 2 WSM = 2  PRIVATE RENT TOTALS = 225

### 22/23 year to date (end of June)

The Council has undertaken 4 positive interventions in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district. The Council has also inspected 46 properties as part of the homes for Ukraine scheme and investigated 14 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation in the same period. Council officers intervened to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to

make them safe for the residents.

The geographical spread is as follows:

Town	HMOs investigated	Ukraine Homes / Privately Rented Homes investigated
Wisbech	4	18
March	0	7
Chatteris	0	17
Whittlesey	0	5
Villages	0	13

Enforcement:

- In the first 3 months of 2022/23 Officers have served:
  - 2 improvement notices.
  - 9 Notices of Intent to fine landlords / agents in relation to breaches of Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR)
  - 7 Notices Of Intent to serve a Civil Penalty Notices

Other

- Work has been undertaken to update Overview and Scrutiny on the progress of the Housing Enforcement Policy since July 2018 including proposed amendments to the policy that is going through the due consultation and governance process (July Cabinet).
- Members have been provided an update relating to the financial income linked to the Housing Enforcement priorities at O&S in May 2022.

### **Support property owners to bring long-term empty homes back into use, helping to address the district's housing needs (Cllr Sam Hoy)**

Through the direct involvement of the empty homes officer 77 properties were brought back into use between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022.

Of the 77 properties;

- 31 had been empty over two years and were being charged a premium council tax rate.
- 46 properties had been empty between 6 and 23 months.

Through the officer's work with owners, they highlighted several unintended consequences of the premium charges. Therefore, following the recommendation of the officer the Council agreed in February 2021 to offer a suspension of the premium charge if owners could meet the following criteria:

- They had recently purchased the property and found themselves immediately responsible for a premium charge.
- They could demonstrate they were actively renovating the property and could complete the renovation within 6 months bringing the property back into use.

The officer would assess the property agree the schedule of works and then monitor the progress of the renovation. For the duration of the renovation the owners continued to pay the standard rate of council tax.

To date 10 applications have been received and of those 6 have been brought back into use. The rest are on target to complete in the next few months.

Figures from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
<b>Total Officer involvement</b>	13	3
<b>Total for the period</b>	1.4.22 – 31.3.23	16

### **Prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping through working with individuals, families, landlords, housing associations and providers to meet the housing needs of residents in crisis** (Cllr Sam Hoy)

#### **Summary 2021/22**

The Housing Options team successfully prevented 335 households from becoming homeless in 2021/22. The council received 1905 approaches with housing advice only given to 1220 households with no duties being owed. Approaches for homelessness advice and assistance represented a 6% increase from 20/21.

B&B usage remains high. This is due to increased competitiveness in the private rental sector leading to more of our cases requiring an offer of social housing in order for us to discharge our homeless duties. For households in priority need and not intentionally homeless they are eventually owed a main housing duty. In 2021/22 the number of households owed this main housing duty have increased from 38 in 20/21 to 104 representing a 174% increase. This has a significant impact on B&B use as we must provide these households with temporary accommodation until they are rehoused causing delays in new households moving into our non-B&B accommodation.

Increase in new supply of affordable housing helps reduce the need and reliance on the private rented sector.

The team continues to work closely with households, landlords and other partners to resolve issues before notices are served.

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options for 21/2 is 57%.

**Year to date 2022/23 – end of quarter 1**

Approaches	534
Advice only	305
Preventions	116

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work is 47% for Q1.

**Deliver four Golden Age Fairs across the district (Cllr Sam Clark)**

The Golden Age Team met in April and May 2021 to plan for the year ahead following announcements of COVID-19 restrictions being eased. In between meetings the team consulted with external Golden Age Partners to gain their views on how they would like to be involved in the future. Over 30 partners responded positively, and we subsequently held Virtual Partner meeting on Zoom on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to plan for the future of Golden Age.

Following this meeting we have organised three Golden Age events over the last year:

The Whittlesey Big Bash took place on Sunday September 12<sup>th</sup> 2021 between 2-4 pm at Whittlesey Manor Leisure Centre. The Golden Age Team and 17 partners took part in the event within the conference centre with a great turn out of over 200 people visiting the stalls in the space of 2 hours. As the event was not just a Golden Age fair, many partners commented on the great opportunities they had to speak with family members of older relatives that were going to pass vital information on. Partners included Neighbourhood Watch, Whittlesey Museum, Women's Institute, St Andrew's church, Age UK, March Breathe Easy, Versus Arthritis, Care Network, CamSight, Healthwatch, Healthy You, Active Fenland, PECT, East of England Ambulance Service, Royal British Legion, Cambridgeshire Libraries and the Think Communities team from CCC.

Gorefield April 2022 - The first stand-alone Golden Age Fair took place on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 at Gorefield Community Hall and Sport Pavilion. The Golden Age Team and 19 partners took part in the event with a great turn out of over 100 older people visiting our partners gaining vital information. Some of the partners included March Breathe Easy, Care Network, CamSight, Healthwatch, Peterborough Environment City Trust, Cambridgeshire Libraries and the Think Communities team from Cambridgeshire County Council.

The event highlighted a need for financial advice at future events following the absence of the Fenland Ferret. Therefore, we have secured Citizens Advice Rural Cambs to attend future events.

Big Bash II – We were invited back to Whittlesey Big Bash by the festival committee on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022 where over 150 people attended our event in the conference hall at the Manor Leisure Centre. Partners included East of England Ambulance Service, Royal British Legion, Cambridgeshire Libraries, Whittlesey Community Car Scheme, The Good Company, Rosmini Centre, PECT, Brooks Wealth Management, Citizens Advice Rural Cambs, Neighbourhood Watch, Breathe Easy, Versus Arthritis and Age UK.

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

Active Fenland continues to signpost participants to local 'Park Runs' for both adults and juniors and continues to support these events.

Active Fenland has continued to work on promoting the national Ramblers Wellbeing Walks scheme locally. We are currently looking for volunteer walk leaders to lead walks across the district in towns and villages. In April the first walk leader course was run for new leaders. Taster walks were provided by the Active Fenland team in all market towns in May to provide the opportunity for members of the public to ask questions around volunteer walk leading and the scheme.

Active Fenland continues to work with a variety of partners to deliver different opportunities. In April a family activity event was held on the Lime Avenue community Astroturf in partnership with Cambridge FA and Cambridgeshire Cricket to promote other weekly sessions that take place at the Astro on a regular basis for the youth.

Active Fenland continues to promote key messages and national campaigns and ways to be active in the local area such as promotion of the cycle networks, Couch to 5km app and the Active 10 app.

## Other Projects:

### Leisure Update (Cllr Sam Clark)

On a positive note financial results for Freedom last year mean that, on top of the £115k already billed by FDC we are also billing them for an additional £86k management fee. This result is partially because Freedom have been productive and efficient since reopening, but they have also been supported via government grants / NNDR reductions and the like.

In terms of performance there is much to be happy with. The figures below reflect the current position against the pre-Covid one

- Memberships (pre-paid Direct Debit or Annual) **90%**
- Casual swim **99%**
- LTS (Learn to Swim) **191%** (common across most contracts but Fenland is the top performer in England)
- Catering **71%**
- Studio (those who pay cash for classes rather than a pre-paid membership) **46%**
- Children's Activities **71%**

Fenland's ranking vs other similar Freedom contracts looks like this;



Utilities costs gives cause for concern, however. Freedom have calculated that the additional energy cost for the final 6 months of this financial year will be approximately £67k. All measures to ensure that no energy is being wasted are being taken with multiple meter readings informing management of any unforeseen spikes for remedial action. Options to reduce consumption are being considered and include opening hours, staff levels, and room/pool temperatures but all come with a risk of member upset. Equally, the possibility of price increases, equally contentious, is also being considered as part of a complex financial equation.

Note that £67k is half a year's additional costs. Next financial year – unless we see some changing in the energy market – this cost will be double.

Additionally, with inflation running at near to 10% currently there is a real risk that some



consumers of the Freedom product may, without in any way being dissatisfied, are obliged to cancel or suspend their membership because they can't afford it.

Difficult times for the entire Leisure industry, Freedom are not alone but the management of the centres is excellent and response to the multiple challenges faced to date has been exemplary.

### **Active Fenland update** (Cllr Sam Clark)

Active Fenland continues to provide a number of opportunities across the district for participants to become more physically active or to lead healthier lifestyles.

In the last quarter 11 different weekly sessions have run including: yoga in 4 different locations (including gentle yoga), strength and balance, 3 different badminton sessions, 2 walking netball sessions in different locations, and Forever Fit sessions.

Key healthy eating messages and awareness has also continued to be promoted with a social media campaign being launched in March called '5 ways in 5 days' , in aid of the national 'Food Waste Action Week' in partnership with the 'Getting it Sorted' team and environmental services department. The social media campaign provided links to key resources to help avoid food waste and eat healthily on a budget.

Active Fenland also continued the partnership with the local school sports partnership to deliver into local primary schools as part of their 'Health and Wellbeing' events for KS1 & KS2. Active Fenland ran a workshop around the key messages of the Eat Well Plate and guide. Since the start of the year this has been delivered into 5 primary schools.

Other partnerships include the Easter event with Cambridgeshire FA and Cambridgeshire Cricket to provide a family day to try out football and cricket for the local residents near the Lime Avenue Community Astro. Cambridgeshire FA continue to run their weekly "kickstart" sessions for the local youth.

We continue to provide our 'Active @ Home' booklets for older adults who are looking to increase their strength, balance and flexibility at home since the pandemic. These are free and can be posted direct to participants.

Our 'Forever Fit' sessions started in March and run weekly to provide opportunity for older adults to take part in activities such as new age curling, boccia, table tennis and even badminton on offer at these sessions. Plus the chance to be social with a hot

drink that is provided as part of the free session. These sessions are to help older adults stay active and to help decrease social isolation. As part of this fund we are also launching our first community tea dance in the coming month.

Other events include providing activity and key messages to local groups and organisations, for example local W.I's and the Cambridgeshire Recovery Service open day. The teams has also featured on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire promoting the service and physical activity, as well as promoting health through the continued columns in the Fenland Citizen and Fens Magazine.

Moving forwards Active Fenland has secured some additional funding to run a new Community Healthy Weight project across the district and the funding allows the team to recruit a part time member of staff. Furthermore, a two year project funded by the ICS will also be imminently starting to provide more opportunities across the district.

Finally, some other additional funding to the Healthy You service will allow additional community based falls prevention classes to be set up in the near future in partnership with Freedom Leisure.

### **Pride In Fenland Awards** (Cllr Sam Clark)

The Pride in Fenland Awards took place in November 2021 and volunteers were judged in the following categories:

- Young person in the community,
- Community group,
- Good friend
- Community COVID Award
- Special Judges Award.

The event aired via YouTube in November 2021 which is still available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdyyL-jcfAQ> to hear all the nominations and see the winners and runners up.

Initial planning has commenced and we plan for this years event to take place in late November 2022.

## **Health & Wellbeing Update (including Covid-19 Outbreak Plan implementation)** (Cllr Sam Clark)

### Outbreak management

Between the time period October 2021 and March 2022 the local outbreak management plan continued to be implemented within the agreed partnership structure. This included a continued support for contact tracing, support for businesses and referrals into the self-isolation scheme for relevant financial support.

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board is a key part of the pandemic response and meets to support the outbreak management plan and met in October 2021, January 2022 and March 2022.

The meeting papers can be found on the County Council website here:

[Council and committee meetings - Cambridgeshire County Council > Cambridgeshire Committees > Health & Wellbeing > Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Outbreak Engagement Board \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

Since April 2022 the local outbreak management plan response has no longer been required and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board will reconvene in July after standing down during the pandemic.

### Enduring Transmission

The pilot project, supported by Cabinet Office, commenced in June 2021 and has continued throughout the period of the pandemic. Final self-isolation payments being processed in May 2022 as the self-isolation scheme closed.

1410 people in more than 15 job sectors and over 10 nationalities, accessed financial support through the Rosmini Centre with 60% coming from Peterborough, 39% from Fenland and 1% from South Holland. A total of 900 employees were supported during the months of October 2021 to January 2022 when the Omicron variant was at its highest level of transmission. During the period of the project customers were supported to access grants up to a maximum of £1500, ensuring those at risk of financial hardship due to contracting the virus were able to continue to meet their weekly outgoings such as rent, energy bills and food shopping. The total payments made during the whole pilot was £398,654.63 with £238,154.63 being paid as a top-up payment and £160,500.00 being paid from the main government self-isolation grant.

### Vaccination support

The council has continued to play a part in supporting communities with access to vaccination information and drop-in sessions. Alongside the permanent vaccination centre at Horse Fair – Wisbech, we have coordinated an ongoing programme of pop-up events covering the other market towns and villages across the district.

The Mass Vaccination Programme Director at NHS Peterborough & Cambridgeshire has given very positive feedback about the support provided by the Council to extend vaccination accessibility for all in the area.

We have, and will continue to, run a programme of dates going to the 4 main market towns and villages.

The following highlights some of the successes of the past 9 months that we will look to repeat and build on:

- A pop up at Chatteris resulting in 141 jabs, more than the Horse Fair does on some days. On paper, Chatteris is not an area of high need and yet the results of the day proved access is key.
- 2 outreach projects targeting the homeless in partnership with the Ferry Project, resulting in 20 homeless people being vaccinated. This cohort is always hard to reach and can struggle accessing services so represents a great success.
- Visit to a local business with the vaccination bus that had an employee pool with low vaccine take up resulting in several 1st vaccinations jabs nearly a year into them being available.

Further information about vaccine take up and other data can be viewed here:  
<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

## Key PIs 2021/22:

Performance Indicator	Baseline (2020/21)	Target (2021/22)	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Communities</b>														
Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	7.06 days	8 days	9.32	6.97	7.11	7.21	7.32	7.44	7.16	7.10	7.02	7.09	6.95	7.02
Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	4.28 days	8 days	8.07	6.90	7.09	7.32	7.46	7.79	7.97	8.05	7.95	8.01	5.81	5.60
Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	226	250				59			95		189	224	250	277
NEW INDICATOR The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work	N/A	Baseline	56%	74%	75%	50%	84%	45%	50%	50%	59%	61%	53%	57%
Number of empty properties brought back into use	87	70		12	20	27	32	39	41	50	56	58	63	77
Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use (To be reported TBC)	£79,217	£50,000									Expected			£93,099
Number of active health sessions per year that improve community health (added)	N/A	225	29	81	138	181	227	297	360	414	441	469	489	504
Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	N/A	90%												85%

## Key PIs 2022/23:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 22/23	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	277	250	64	
CELP2	NEW INDICATOR The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	57%	57%	47%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	77	50	16	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£93,099	£45,000	N/A (December 22)	N/A
CELP6	Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health	504	500	90	
CELP19	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	85%	85%		
CELP20	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland	N/A	£40,000		

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