

# **Cabinet and Corporate Management Team**

## **Portfolio Holder Briefing Report**

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

## Cabinet Members



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



**Cllr Ian Benney**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Economic Growth & Skills



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



**Cllr Sam Hoy**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Housing & Licensing



**Cllr Dee Laws**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Planning & Flooding



**Cllr Alex Miscandlon**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Leisure & Internal  
Drainage Boards



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



**Cllr Chris Seaton**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Transport, Heritage &  
Culture



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



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

## Communities

### Projects from Business Plan:

#### Support Vulnerable Members of Our Community

##### **ARP updates (Cllr French)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Homelessness and meeting housing needs (Cllr Hoy)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

The geographical spread is as follows:

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

### **VILLAGE BREAKDOWN**

Benwick = 0

Coates = 0

Coldham = 0

Christchurch = 1

Doddington = 0

Eastrea = 0

Elm = 1

Fridaybridge = 1

Gorefield = 0

Guyhirn = 2

Leverington = 4

Manea = 0

Newton = 0

Parson Drove = 0

Throckenholt = 0

Tydd = 0

Turves = 0

WSM = 0

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

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

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

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

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

### **Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy)**

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

#### **Table 1**

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

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

#### **Table 2**

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

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

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

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

#### **Case Example:**

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

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

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

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

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

## Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

### **Leisure Centre and Freedom Leisure Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)**

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

#### **Learn to Swim**

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

#### **Memberships**

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

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



### **Staffing challenges**

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

### **Excess Energy Cost Support**

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

### **Swimming Pool Support Fund bid**

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

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

### **Integrated Care Partnership (Cllr Boden)**

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

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

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

The future objectives explored at the session were;

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

Sometimes people have crisis situations – we want to:

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

### **Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)**

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

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

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

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

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

Active Fenland Project delivery information:

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

#### **1. What's being delivered**

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

#### **2. Who is this project targeting:**

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

#### **3. Feedback**

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

*activities we run”*

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

## **April – August attendance and session information**

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

## **Healthy You Project – funded by CCC Public Health Team**

### **1. What’s being delivered**

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

### **2. Who are we targeting?**

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

Schools were also targeted to support families during the holidays.

## **April – August attendance information**

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

## **Healthy Weight – Community Programme funded by CCC public health team**

The following programmes have been delivered for this project;

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

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

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

### **Number of attendees from April**

50 attendees from 5 different programmes.

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

#### **Pre-Fit – Whittlesey**

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

#### **Cardiac Phase IV sessions**

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

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

#### **Diabetes Level 4 sessions**

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

#### **Get Active – A Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity**

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

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

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

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

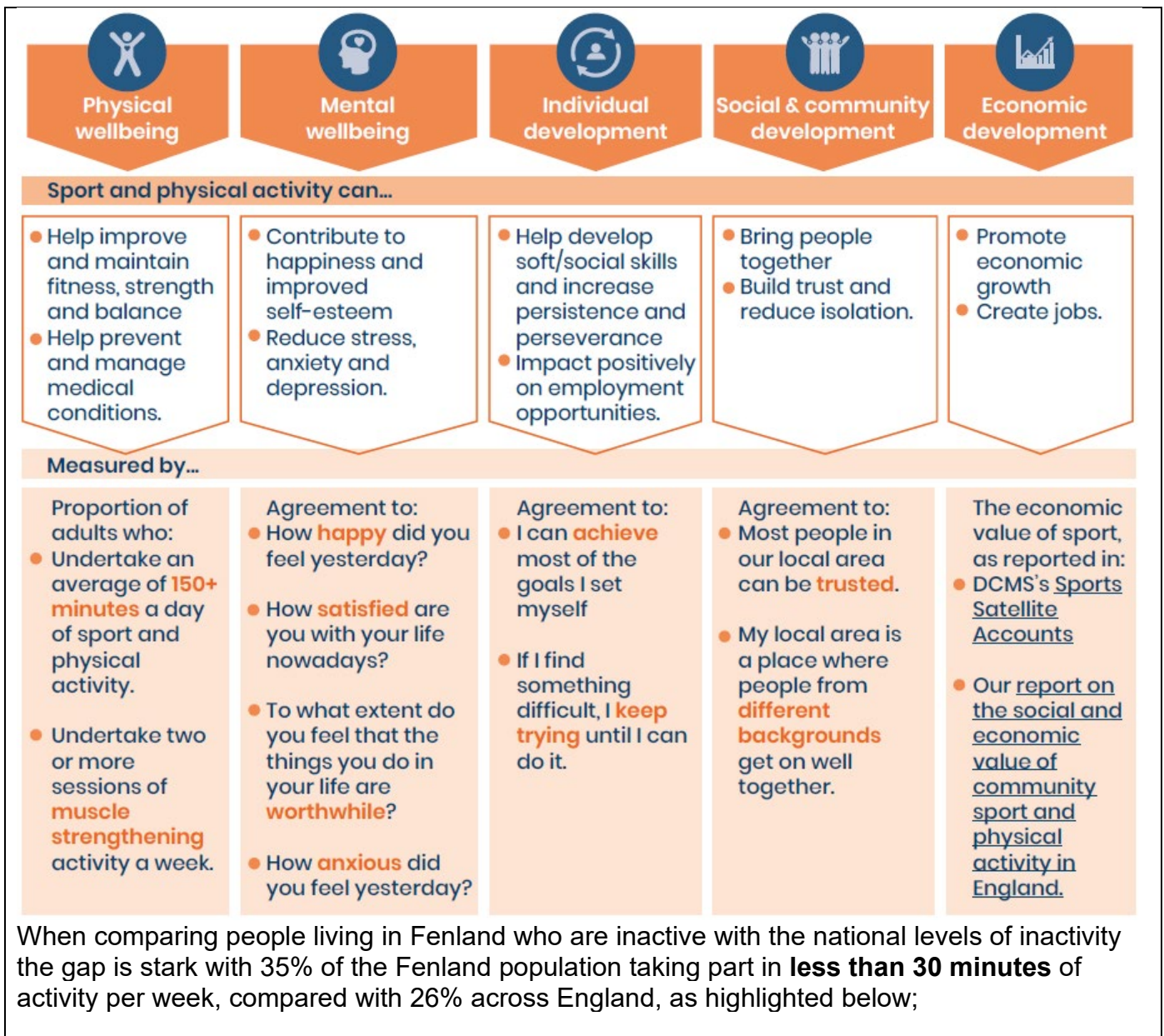
**The outcomes of being more active are well known – now is the time to shout about them and to embed activity at the heart of government policy.** The more active we are, the healthier we become both physically and mentally, the stronger our communities, and the more prosperous our society. Great work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

### **Sport England – Active Lives Survey**

#### **National picture regarding physical activity levels**

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

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

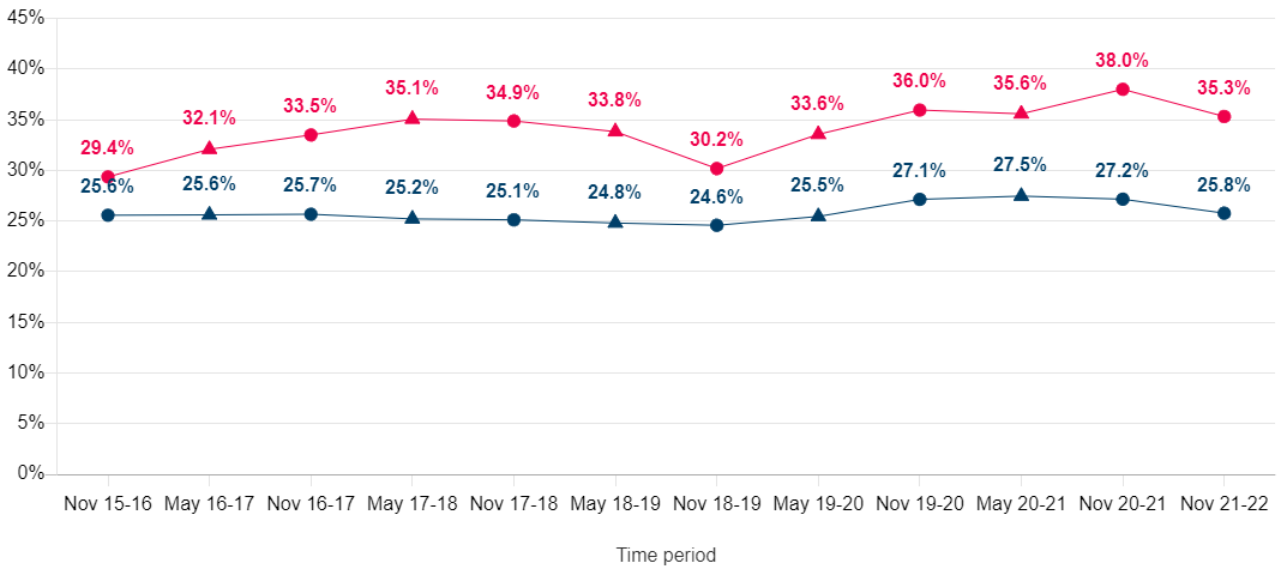


Inactive: less than 30 minutes a week    Fairly active: 30-149 minutes per week    Active: at least 150 minutes a week

Show values

Percentages

Population



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

■ England (Nation) ■ Fenland LA

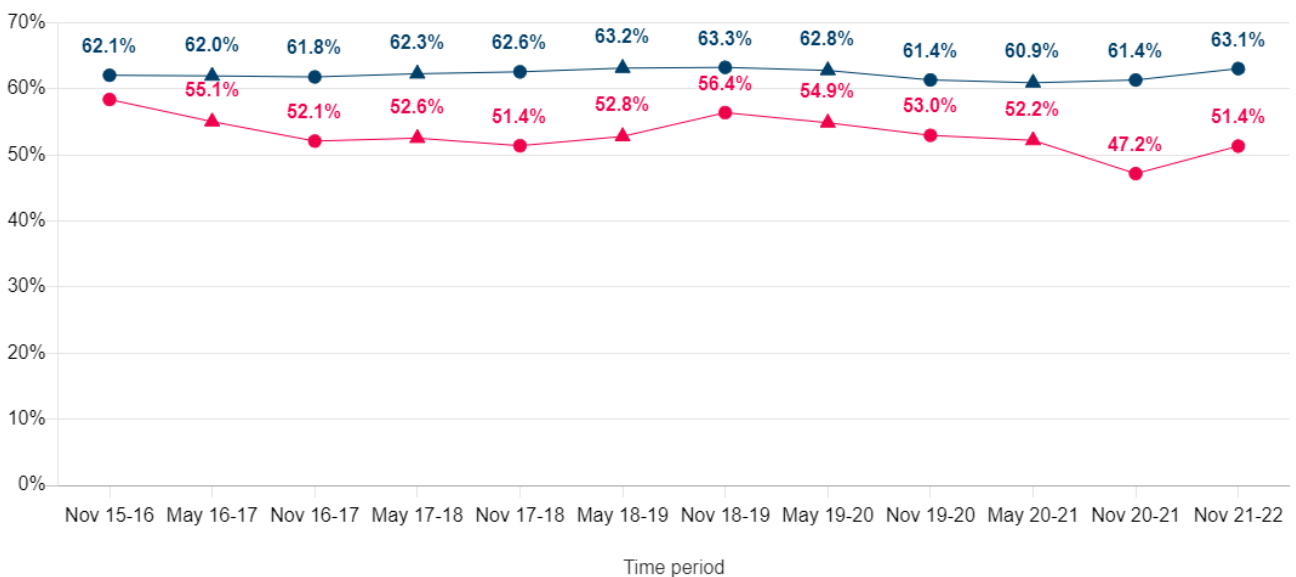
The recommended level of physical activity for adults is 150 minutes per week. This is not referring to just sport – it is any physical activity. Again, those meeting this target in Fenland is significantly below the national level;

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

Show values

Percentages

Population



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

■ England (Nation) ■ Fenland LA

## National swimming participation picture

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

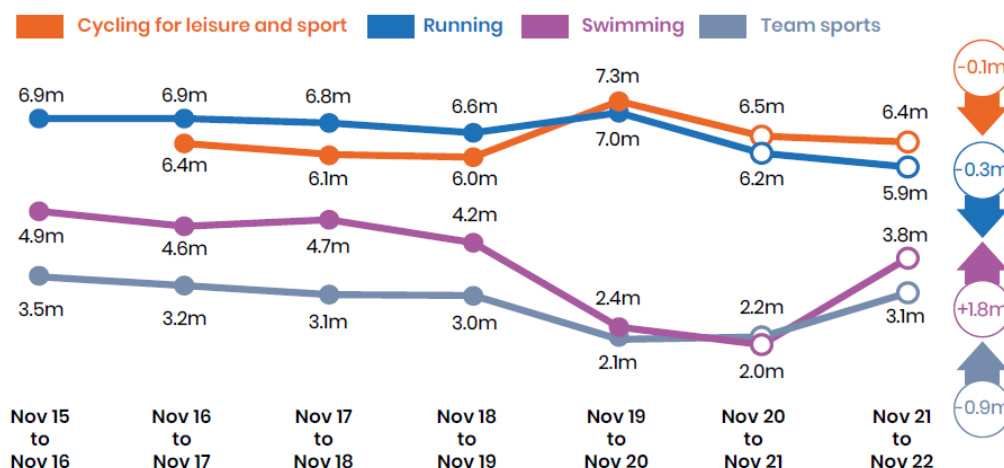
### Running and swimming activity levels have declined over the long term

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

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

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

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



### Deprivation and being active

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



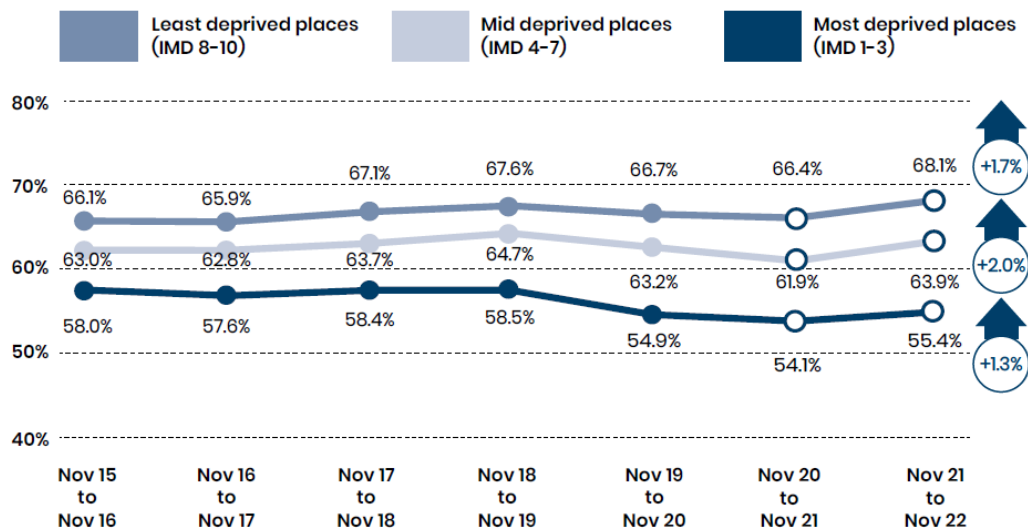
## Those living in the most deprived places are yet to see activity levels fully recover

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

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

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

### Active: 150+ minutes a week



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

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

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

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

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

## Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

### **Delivering the Creativity & Culture Strategy (Cllr Seaton)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)**

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

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

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

**Key PIs:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Environment

### Projects from Business Plan:

#### Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

##### Diverting waste from landfill (Cllr Murphy)

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

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

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

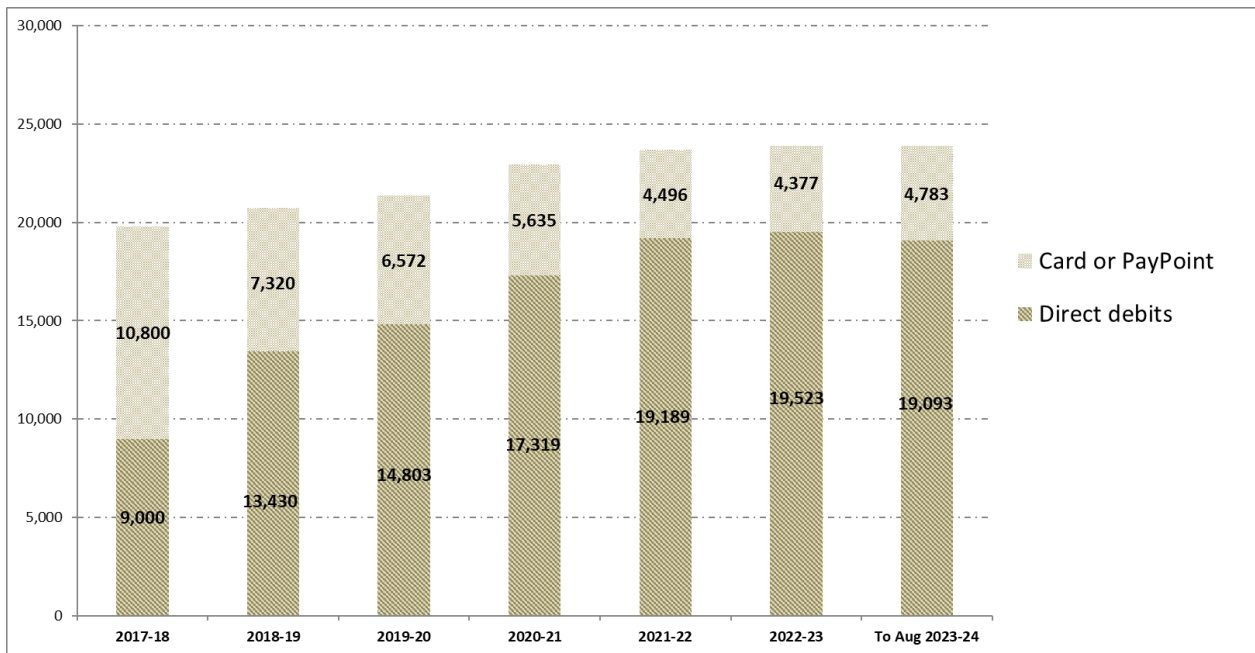
Collected Waste – Percentage Recycling (Blue Bin to Residual)	27%	26%
Percentage Recycling (Blue and Brown Bin to Residual)	43%	45%

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

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

##### Garden Waste Collection (Cllr Murphy)

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



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

**Delivering clean streets and public spaces (Cllr Murphy)**

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

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

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

**Deliver a competitive trade waste service (Cllr Murphy)**

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

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

**Fly Tipping**

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

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

With August figures to be provided in our next report

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

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

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

**Illegal Parking and Abandoned vehicles**

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



found to be parking illegally.

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

### **Dog Control**

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

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

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

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

A few key events to highlight are:

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

### **Parks & Open Spaces Maintenance Jun – Aug 2023**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

for each of Fenlands Market Towns.

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

Officers have advised that FDC would not commit to individual phases without the overall target costs being known. At this stage it does raise major concerns in terms of FDC's ability to deliver the CPE project within the available grant funded budget of £400k. Based on the latest predicted sign and line delivery costs the likelihood is that there would be a substantial shortfall in the overall budget to deliver the whole CPE project which is now estimated to be in the region of £900k.

A service level agreement and agency agreement between both authorities would be required to define responsibility for things such as enforcement officer patrol requirements, PCN processing and appeals, sign and line maintenance, CPE surplus and deficit and CPE monitoring and reporting. Both documents have been initially drafted with officers having highlighted a number of potential red flags which could impact heavily on Fenlands CPE running costs and resources.

The main areas of concern are centred around the County Council requiring FDC to be responsible for various functions on the highway network. These would include the administration of all parking suspensions, waivers, dispensations on the highway and the potential impact that future changes in legislation such as pavement parking would have on the number of enforcement officers that FDC would need to employ. Further concern is associated with the absence of a specific County Council budget for sign and line maintenance. Post CPE implementation this would have a huge impact on FDC enforcement officers' ability to carry out enforcement where defective signs and lines have been reported and not corrected within an agreed timeframe.

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

### **Street Lighting (Cllr French)**

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

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

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

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

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

### **FDC Car Park Maintenance (Cllr French)**

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

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

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

### **Community Safety Partnership updates (Cllr Wallwork)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A case study:

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

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

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

knew and understood her.

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

### **Community Safety Grant Agreement updates (Cllr Wallwork)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

control room.

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

### **Street Drinking Update (Cllr Wallwork)**

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

**Key PIs:**

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

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

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



## Economy

### Projects from Business Plan:

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)**

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

### **Skills Update (Cllr Benney)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)**

#### **Food Safety**

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

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

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

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

We also dealt with 23 service requests:

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

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

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

## Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

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

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

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

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

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

### External funding bid updates (Cllr Boden)

#### Shared Prosperity Fund

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

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

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

### **Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund**

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

### **March Future High Street Fund (Cllr French)**

See update [below](#).

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

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

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

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

### **Capital Projects Update – Cllr Boden**

#### **Wisbech Pavilion**

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

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

#### **The Elms Chatteris**

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

### **Nene Waterfront Development**

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

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

#### **Broad Street/Riverside:**

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

#### **Marketplace:**

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

#### **Development Site Creation:**

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

### **Vacant Unit and Residential Unit Grants:**

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

### **Upcoming Works:**

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

### **Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)**

#### **Chatteris Projects**

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

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

#### **Whittlesey Projects**

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

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

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

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

### Wisbech Projects

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

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

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

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

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

## **Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements**

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

#### Manea Railway Station

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

#### March Railway Station

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

#### Whittlesea Railway Station

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

#### Hereward Community Rail Partnership

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



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

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

#### Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

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

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

[CMIS > Meetings](#)

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

#### Wisbech Access Strategy

**There is no specific update for this project.**

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

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

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

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

#### March Area Transport Study – Main schemes

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

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

housing and employment growth.

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

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

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

The schemes forming part of this project are:

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

#### March Area Transport Study – Walking & Cycling Schemes

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### March to Wisbech Railway Line

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

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

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

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

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

### A47

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

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

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

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

### Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Key PIs:**

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

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

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

## Quality Organisation

### Projects from Business Plan:

#### Governance, Financial Control & Risk Management

##### **Internal audit updates (Cllr Boden)**

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

##### **Data protection updates (Cllr Boden)**

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

#### Transformation and Efficiency

##### **Transformation Project updates (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)**

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

##### **Current projects include:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Communication, Consultation and Engagement

**News update:**

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

Highlights include:

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

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

Highlights include:

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

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

Highlights include:

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

### **Monthly update on FDC social media sites:**

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

- Twitter = 92
- Facebook = 88

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

- Twitter = 84
- Facebook = 81

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

- Twitter = 98
- Facebook = 92

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

### **Consultation Summary:**

In June:

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



In July:

- Alcohol PSPO renewal

In August:

- Statement of Community Involvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Asset Management and Commercialisation

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

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

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

### **Commercial & Investment Strategy (Cllr Boden)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Workforce Development

### **Workforce skills and training (Cllr Boden)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Supporting and empowering staff (Cllr Boden)**

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

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

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

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

## Enforcement

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

Please see other enforcement updates in this report:

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

## Health & Safety

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Health & Safety Action Plan updates (Cllr Boden)

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

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

### Other Updates:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

<b>CPCA COMMITTEE</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>LINK</b>
Combined Authority Board	29.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Audit & Governance Committee	17.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Skills & Employment Committee	06.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	15.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Human Resources Committee	04.10.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	13.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Business Board	13.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>

**Key PIs:**

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

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

Comments