

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny	
Date:	20 January 2025	
Report Title:	Draft Business Plan 2025-26	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 For Overview & Scrutiny to comment on Draft Business Plan 2025-26.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Our Draft Business Plan 2025-26 identifies the key challenges and opportunities for Fenland. Its structure outlines our key Corporate Priorities (Communities, Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation), and an additional cross cutting priority Transformation. This section encompasses our ongoing transformation work to improve efficiency and customer experience, drive positive change and ensure the Council is fit for the future.
- 2.2 Each corporate priority is underpinned by a series of performance indicators, which are used to track progress, measure success, and identify areas for improvement. All performance indicators are reported to all elected Members at our Council meetings.
- 2.3 Despite our financial pressures, no other principle council in the county has a better record for keeping council tax down for its residents than Fenland.
- 2.4 The public will be invited to comment on the Draft Business Plan 2025-26 between 2 January and 2 February 2025. Feedback will be incorporated into the final version of the Business Plan that will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 24 February 2025.
- 2.5 Cabinet would welcome comments on the focus of the priorities and sub priorities of the Draft Business Plan.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 For Overview and Scrutiny to make comment on the Draft Business Plan 2025-26.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	<i>[Insert Reference No. From Forward Plan. (It is a legal requirement to include key executive decisions on the forward plan for 28 days before the decision requested in this report is taken).</i>

Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Chris Boden, Leader of the Council Councillor Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Communication
Report Originator(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Carol Pilson, Corporate Director David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications
Background Papers	Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Draft Business Plan 2025-26 sets out the priorities we aim to deliver over the next 12 months. These priorities have been developed to address the most important needs of our communities and set a framework for how we will work towards our ambitions for the area and achieve our goal of creating a thriving place to live and visit.
- 1.2 Our core priorities focus on three areas: Communities, Environment and Economy. These priorities primarily focus on the statutory and wide variety of services that we provide day-to-day. A fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside everything we do. It aims to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently and sustainably. We invest in and support our workforce to ensure they have the skills and resources they need to work to the best of their ability.
- 1.3 Each priority is underpinned by a series of performance indicators, which are used to track progress, measure success, and identify areas for improvement. All performance indicators are reported to all elected Members at our Council meetings. These public reports are summarised to provide end of year performance updates against our priorities in our Annual Report, which is available to download on our website.
- 1.4 We also have a fifth cross cutting priority: Transformation. This priority encompasses our ongoing transformation work to improve efficiency and customer experience, drive positive change and ensure the Council is fit for the future.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 For Cabinet to approve the Draft Business Plan 2025-26 for public consultation.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The public will be invited to comment on the Draft Business Plan 2025-26 between 2 January and 2 February 2025. Feedback will be incorporated into the final version of the Business Plan that will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 24 February 2025.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 N/A

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

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

5.2 Financial Implications

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

5.3 Equality Implications

N/A

7 SCHEDULES

Draft Business Plan 2025-26

Fenland District Council

Business Plan 2025/26



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INTRODUCTION



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

As Chief Executive and Leader of Fenland District Council, we are pleased to present our Business Plan for 2025/26. This plan sets out our vision for the year ahead and the priorities that will underpin everything we do over the next 12 months.

They outline how we will continue to serve our communities, protect our environment, drive our economy, and deliver a quality organisation that can meet the challenges of the future.

They focus on improving services and achieving meaningful outcomes, and they also serve as clear measures of success by which we can be held accountable.

Our Draft Budget 2025/26, which helps to shape our Business Plan, sets out how we will deliver these priorities within clear expenditure limits. It will come as no surprise that there are ongoing financial pressures on this Council and on all public services, as there are on everyone due to the increased cost of living.

But we can't let a lack of funds prevent us from doing the right thing. We have been doing more with less money for some time, and with opportunity, good governance, and renewed focus we will continue to do so.

Despite our financial pressures, no other principal council in the country has a better record for keeping council tax down for its residents than Fenland.

With a 0% increase in our portion of the council tax bill in 2024/25 and a 2% decrease in 2023/24, our members remain steadfast in balancing financial prudence with prioritising support for those who need it most.

Key plans such as our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which will be implemented in 2025, and the further development of our Early Help Hub following its successful pilot, will be instrumental in providing timely and effective support for our most vulnerable residents.

Transformation also continues to be at the heart of the Business Plan. Spanning across all services within the Council, our Transformation Agenda is all about delivering measurable improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, and resident satisfaction. A lot of work has been carried out in this area in the last two years, but there's more we want to achieve.

Of course, none of our priorities would be possible without our



valued partners and dedicated staff, and as we move into 2025/26, we thank them for their ongoing contributions and support. Together with residents and businesses, we look forward to making a meaningful difference and creating a stronger, more resilient district in the year ahead.



Paul Medd
Chief Executive



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council

 We have been doing more with less money for some time, and with opportunity, good governance, and renewed focus we will continue to do so. 

ABOUT FENLAND



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

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

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



OUR PRIORITIES

Our core priorities focus on three areas: Communities, Environment and Economy.

A fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside everything we do. It aims to ensure that the Council runs effectively, transparently and sustainably.



Communities



Environment



Economy



Quality
Organisation



TRANSFORMATION



Transformation programme and outcomes

In addition to our 4 priorities, we also have a fifth cross cutting priority, Transformation. This encompasses our ongoing transformation work to improve efficiency and customer experience, drive positive change, and ensure the Council is fit for the future.

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

- An improved customer experience where customers will be able to interact with the council via a channel and time that is convenient to them.

- The ability for customers to self-serve via a suite of online processes or gain the personal support they need on more complex issues.

- Be flexible and forward thinking reflecting the diversity of our workforce and services we provide and enabling us to continue to be resilient and adapt to changing circumstances.

- Interdependencies between services will be maximised to improve outcomes for local people.

- Our building layout, usage and ways of working will encourage closer working with partners to further enhance service delivery for local residents.

- We will continue to attract, recruit and retain skilled staff enabling us to continue to deliver excellent services to our local residents

- We will have a motivated, committed, productive workforce ensuring colleagues have the necessary tools, equipment, training, and ongoing support to fulfil their role.

- Services will be aligned, bringing together teams with similar processes and outcomes therefore building capacity whilst maximising efficient working practices.

- We will continue to have a commercial focus to service delivery, considering future opportunities and sustainable income streams

Transformation Programme

Cllr Chris Boden Finance Audit & Risk Accommodation Project
Cllr Ian Benney Property & Estates Marine Services Economic Growth
Cllr Jan French Benefits & Council Tax (ARP) Car Parking

Cllr Sam Hoy Housing Options Private Sector Housing Licensing
Cllr Dee Laws Planning Local Plan
Cllr Alex Miscandlon Leisure Internal Drainage Board (IDB)

Cllr Peter Murphy Environmental Services Park & Open Spaces
Cllr Chris Seaton Transport Heritage
Cllr Steve Tierney ICT My Fenland Policy & Communications
Cllr Susan Wallwork Environmental Health Communities

COMMUNITIES



Support vulnerable members of our community

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

Promote health and wellbeing for all

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



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

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

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



Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

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

ENVIRONMENT



Environment priorities Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

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

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

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



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



ECONOMY



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

- Provide responsive business support to encourage business growth, job diversity, skills development and increased access to grants.
- Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification.
- Work with external stakeholders, local businesses and the Combined Authority to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

- Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective Planning service.
- Work with the Combined Authority on the development of its new ten-year Local Growth Plan, to link the potential for growth in Fenland to Government priorities and the development of a national industrial strategy and unlock the potential of its key industrial sectors to power the local economy.
- Drive forward the development and delivery of new homes and commercial space by using our surplus property and land assets to



deliver sustainable economic and residential growth.

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

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

- Promote sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services.
- Engage with the Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of road and rail infrastructure projects.
- Work with the Combined Authority to influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth and improve connectivity in the district.



QUALITY ORGANISATION



Performance Management (Performance Indicators)

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

Excellent Customer Service

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

Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management

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

Consultation and Engagement

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



Asset Management and Commercialisation

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

Equalities

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



Workforce Development

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

Enforcement and Compliance

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

Health and Safety

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

Performance

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

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

Performance



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

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

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

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

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

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

Economy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

% of those asked satisfied with community events.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance Measures

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Annual Monitoring Report.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance



Quality Organisation

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

Corporate performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

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

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

Customer Service Excellence Report.

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

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

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

Annual External Audit Report.

Comply with data protection and General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Consultation Strategy and Consultations reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Commercial Investment Strategy updates via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Annual Equality Report.

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

Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.

Support and empower our staff to make effective decisions.

Bi-annual Staff survey.

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

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

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

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

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

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

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