

CABINET

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2025 - 2.00 PM



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

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Wallwork

CAB49/24 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 27 January 2025 were approved and signed.

Councillor Mrs Laws asked to retract her statement under minute CAB45/24: Leisure Centre Conditions Survey Update, namely "due to some disagreement with the management of the tennis club who do not seem to have welcomed the netball club" as she believed she had said it was hearsay. There is no rift, and friendly consultation is going on.

CAB50/24 BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26

Members considered the Business Plan 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Councillor Boden advised that the Business Plan had been significantly changed to include capital investment projects under the banner Fenland Inspire! and due to local government reorganisation, to ensure that Fenland residents are left with upgraded facilities before this Council ceases to exist after 31 March 2028. Councillor Tierney said the Business Plan is brilliant for Fenland and he looks forward to it being approved at Full Council so the projects can be moved forward.

Proposed by Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to consider and recommend to Council the approval of the Business Plan 2025-2026.

CAB51/24 BUDGET & MID TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26

Members considered the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said this had not been an easy budget, and credit was due to the Chief Accountant and Finance Team for all their work behind the scenes. Whilst well into the process, hearing in December that this Council is to be abolished on 31 March 2028 meant everything changed. Now the plan is to look at significant capital expenditure over the next three years as the new unitary authority will have different priorities and there will be pressure to meet the needs of services such as social care.

Councillor Tierney pointed out that this will be at least the eighth year that Fenland District Council has frozen its portion of council tax which is a fantastic achievement; hard decisions have had to be made whilst doing everything possible to relieve financial pressure on residents. The Council has been sensible and made mature decisions with taxpayers' money over the years, with strong leadership and the excellent work of officers. His concern is that this authority will have to merge

with some who are in far worse financial shape. It is important that Fenland taxpayers get a fair deal for the money they have provided, which is why Fenland Inspire! is such a great idea. Councillor Mrs French agreed and offered her congratulations to officers and the Leader personally, who have done an extremely wonderful job.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED that:

- (i) the revised estimates for 2024/25 as set out in Section 8 and Appendix A showing an estimated shortfall of £350k (to be funded from the Budget Equalisation Reserve if required), be approved.**

and to recommend to Council that:

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

CAB52/24 LEISURE FACILITY STRATEGY - INITIAL ASSESSMENT PHASE

Members considered the Leisure Facility Strategy – Initial Assessment Phase report proposed by Councillor Miscandlon.

Councillor Tierney commented that he is glad this Council is protecting the leisure centres when so many others are closing. Although members cannot affect what a future council might do, at least Fenland's leisure centres will be handed over in good shape.

Councillor Boden commented on the prospects for the Whittlesey Rifle Club. He has asked the club to meet with officers to see if the Council can assist in meeting their ambition to become a regional centre of excellence. Councillor Boden advised that shooting is a valid and valued sport which provides a lot of benefit despite being vilified by some; it is a sport open to people regardless of their physical ability and promotes good mental health. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that the club tutors various age groups, it deals with responsibilities and supports many forces veterans by opening up their social circle. Councillor Benney said it is commendable to see a council pushing to have a rifle club when nationally central government is clamping down and taking away freedom of choice, we live in a rural area, and this is part of rural life. He supports anything that will encourage the rifle range, it teaches safe use of firearms, and furthermore it will help support the gun shop in Whittlesey and rural sports in general. Councillor Boden added that the rifle club are also aware of the competitive side of laser guns and what they are putting forward will include

those as well.

Councillor Tierney pointed out the potential for a new swimming pool in Chatteris and the importance of children learning to swim so he is looking forward to seeing the public response to that news. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Anne Hay for pushing this plan forward as she had been emphatic in her desire to see a pool in Chatteris as one of the Fenland Inspire! projects. Councillor Benney added that the lack of a pool in Chatteris has been mentioned numerous times so he welcomes this news, a pool for Chatteris residents will be a lasting legacy, and he looks forward to seeing it come to fruition.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED:

Conditions Survey Work

- That condition survey work across the leisure facilities remains necessary and should remain funded within the capital programme. 5-year costs are estimated to be £9.155m.
- To instruct the S151 Officer to make continued provision for condition survey work by adding an additional £7m into the capital programme in the next three years, adjusted as necessary to be included within other leisure capital project options detailed below.

Manor Leisure Centre

- To progress the Manor Leisure Centre significant refurbishment project, detailed in the report, to RIBA Stage 3 at a cost of £276,775, with Cabinet authorising the S151 Officer to add this additional sum and any other relevant expenditure into the Council's capital programme in 2025/26 including the rifle range and sports hall options.
- That RIBA Stage 4 be completed concurrently with RIBA 3 at an additional cost of £349,688 and authorise the S151 Officer to add this additional cost and any other relevant expenditure into the Council's capital programme in 2025/26 including any additional RIBA 3/4 costs related to the rifle range and sports hall options.
- To note that upon completion of RIBA Stage 4 a report will be developed offering options for Cabinet to recommend to Full Council to either proceed with construction works or halt the project. Currently construction costs are estimated at £13.49m for the facility (including the rifle range and sports hall options) and could proceed in 2026/27. If Council decides not to proceed with construction, then the RIBA 3 and 4 costs will revert to revenue.

Chatteris Leisure Centre

- To approve refurbishment work of the facility and authorise the S151 Officer to add an additional £50,000 into the Council's capital programme for these works in 2025/26.
- To consider carefully the Chatteris Swimming Pool project and if the capital costs are acceptable, authorise the S151 Officer to add an additional £164,482 into the capital programme to develop the Chatteris Swimming Pool project to RIBA Stage 0-2. Cabinet to note this is a capital cost, but should the project not proceed past this point, then this expenditure would revert back to a revenue cost.

George Campbell Leisure Centre

- To approve to fund short-term projects for the George Campbell Leisure Centre and authorise the S151 Officer to add an additional £390,000 into the Council's capital programme for these works.
- To note, in addition to the short-term projects above, condition survey works will continue at the site at a cost in the region of £2.5m.

Hudson Leisure Centre

- To authorise the S151 Officer to add an additional £450,000 into the capital programme for 2025/26 for the development of three external covered floodlit padel courts at the Hudson Leisure Centre.
- To consider whether to instruct officers to develop estimated costs for each of the non-condition survey, short-term, Hudson projects identified, namely:
 - Adapt the multi-function space that is currently used for spinning into an assisted fitness and older persons health and wellbeing space
 - The current gym has unused spare space at the end of the gym – this has potential for conversion into activity rooms for box fit, circuit training and spin
- To instruct officers and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure to bring to Cabinet further refurbishment options for the Hudson Leisure Centre considering:
 - The addition of a kitchen space to generate additional revenue from soft play and soft play parties
 - Remodelling of access to the sports hall and possible soft play improvements to generate increased community use and revenue
 - Further uses for the sports hall that would generate additional revenue, linked with the new café/kitchen
 - External entrance and reception improvements.

And AGREED to note that agreement to pursue any of the projects above is subject to Full Council approval of the Budget on 24th February 2025.

CAB53/24 FENLAND WASTE STRATEGY

Members considered the Fenland Waste Strategy report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Councillor Miscandlon asked how the public will be notified of the new food waste collections. Councillor Tierney responded that it is a national strategy so it will be promoted by the Government, but this Council will use the usual channels to reach its residents, including press releases, website information, social media and notes left on the bins, however he would anticipate that this will also be promoted by each of the town and parish councils.

Councillor Hoy queried whether people would put their garden waste in the new food bins and cancel their garden waste subscription. Councillor Tierney said the proposal will give residents more space in their normal bins and the new strategy will result in more frequent waste collection than currently. Any issues will be addressed as they arise, currently the Council can only work with what Government are saying but it is a good plan.

Proposed by Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Murphy and AGREED to recommend to Full Council:

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

CAB54/24 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Members considered the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan report presented by Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Hoy said she had made a few changes to the suggested strategy; Government have said they will be producing a new paper on the private rented sector, billed as a Renters Charter. She has reservations on it being billed good news because the harder it is for private landlords to make any money, the more likely it will be that they leave the market. This will lead to less houses being available for rent, and lack of supply will lead to an increase in rental prices, which will likely impact on this authority's temporary accommodation. However, on a positive note she thanked the Housing Team, and Dan Horn in particular, for working to reduce rough sleeping numbers and touched on how their work has led to some success stories and a positive impact on individuals' lives.

Proposed by Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan for 2024/2029.

CAB55/24 24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH

Members considered the 24 High Street, Wisbech report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Boden said it is excellent to hear that the end is in sight and the property will soon be in full use. He thanked Councillor Seaton for his work during this very long process. Councillor Mrs French agreed, discussions on this premises began in 2011, and she looks forward to it no longer being on the agenda.

Councillor Seaton said he was grateful for the comments, but officers have done an extreme amount of work on this complex building over a long period of time.

Councillor Boden thanked Cabinet members too for their support to move the project forwards as without some difficult decisions this location could have remained undeveloped for decades.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Hoy and AGREED to:

- **delegate authority to the S151 officer, working in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to fund the additional £265,000 identified as necessary, at this time, to complete the construction of 24 High Street. This cost is a contractual obligation as part of building work.**
- **Note that until the building is completed there may be other additional costs, albeit these are anticipated to be more minor in nature, as the complex part of the building works are completed. It is anticipated that further costs will be addressed by way of a Portfolio or Officer Decision Notice.**

CAB56/24 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Mrs French advised she had raised a motion on Civil Parking Enforcement at a County Council meeting which members of Highways agreed to discuss, so she hopes to see something soon. Councillor Boden said that thanks to Councillor Mrs French, this had been added to the Fenland Inspire! project and it will come before a Cabinet meeting as soon as appropriate.

The draft forward plan was noted for information.

CAB57/24 TRANSFER STATION TENDER (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX)

Members considered the Transfer Station Tender report presented by Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Murphy thanked Mark Mathews and his team for the report and their work to get to this stage.

Councillor Hoy said she had seen comments online that led her to think some residents had misunderstood and they thought the Council was referring to the household waste and recycling centre in Wisbech potentially being moved to March. She asked for clarification that her understanding is correct, that the transfer station is a separate issue and the household waste centre in Wisbech will remain.

Councillor Boden said that Councillor Hoy was referring to the household waste recycling centres run by County Council and asked Councillor Murphy to respond. Councillor Murphy agreed that the waste transfer station is a separate facility and that is the subject of discussion.

Councillor Tierney said that when the incinerator and waste recycling is mentioned, people think this Council will be using the incinerator, but this is not the case. A council resolution was made never to use it, but he would like Councillor Murphy to confirm that will not happen. Councillor Murphy replied that there are other incinerators around Cambridgeshire and that is where the waste will go.

Councillor Mrs French said as there seems to be some confusion she would like to clarify that the recycling centres are run by County Council. March should have had a new centre built this year due to the lease on the Hundred Road site expiring. The current site should then be reverted back into its original form by the end of 2027. However, that is different to this discussion on the transfer station. The household waste and recycling centres in March and Wisbech remain open unless County Council decide otherwise.

Councillor Hoy expressed her concern that Councillor Murphy had suggested waste would be taken to other incinerators. She does not support any incineration of waste, which goes completely against the waste hierarchy. The Council should be recycling all recyclable materials and so having been prepared to second the report, she would like to withdraw her support. Furthermore, she would like to propose an amendment that specifically says this Council will not be sending Fenland's recyclable waste to incineration anywhere. Councillor Boden responded that there will be an opportunity to look at the detail when officers come back with a further report, in the meantime officers will have heard her comments, and he is sure that will be reflected in the options available.

Councillor Tierney made the point that it would be hypocritical for members to refuse to send anything to the Wisbech incinerator but instead send it to an incinerator that is plaguing another area. Therefore, he would like officers to take a very strong steer that if this comes back to Cabinet with recommendations for incineration, he will not support it. Councillor Hoy agreed that it should be underlined today that the Council will not use incinerators at all or, as a compromise, MVV as a minimum. Councillor Boden responded it is a bit late to make an amendment and by doing so will hinder officers at this early stage. Consideration should therefore be given to the recommendations before Cabinet today and to add in for the Portfolio Holder to be part of the consultation process to move this forward. He would like to make a commitment incineration does not proceed as an option unless it comes back before this Cabinet. Councillor Murphy said what is important is whatever is best for the residents of Fenland. Councillor Boden confirmed in that case incineration will not proceed as an option unless brought back to Cabinet for further discussion. Councillor Hoy repeated that this is not acceptable to her, she does not support the incinerator option at all.

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

- **Commit the procurement and appointment of one or more contractors to deliver services for bulking and transfer of Fenland's collected municipal mixed dry recycling materials.**
- **Delegate to the Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer for the authorisation of the final Invitation to Tender (ITT), and to award the contract, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, after considering possible sharing of facilities and/or contractors with neighbouring Councils which are likely to form part of the same Unitary Authority in Fenland after Local Government Reorganisation.**
- **Allow authority for the Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, in tandem with the tender process to explore the provision of this contract through agreement with the County Council at their March Transfer Station, operated by Thalia, where this is financially advantageous and contractually practicable.**
- **To note that should a suitable contractor and/or facilities not be forthcoming, then it may be necessary for the Council to pursue the construction of a suitable solution for our own operation, or to discuss possible sharing of facilities with neighbouring Councils which are likely to form part of the same Unitary Authority in Fenland after Local Government Reorganisation.**

(Councillor Tierney and Councillor Hoy voted against the recommendations).

CAB58/24 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION - HMO'S IN WISBECH (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX)

Members considered the Article 4 Direction – HMOs in Wisbech report presented by Councillor Hoy.

Proposed by Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws and AGREED to recommend to Council that they:

- **Approve the making of a direction under article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) having non-immediate effect for Wisbech Town apart from the excluded areas (the excluded areas being Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South wards) withdrawing the permitted development right to change use from a dwelling house (Class C3) to a small HMO (Class 4) use as set out in Schedule 1.**
- **Approve the making of a direction under article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) having immediate effect for the area of Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South wards withdrawing the permitted development right to change use from a dwelling house (Class C3) to a small HMO (Class 4) use as set out in Schedule 2.**
- **Delegate the implementation of the consultation process and final approval of the Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions to the Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Licensing and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Flooding.**
- **Endorse the production of additional guidance to ensure the planning policy approach for assessing planning applications from Class C3 to C4 is clearly set out.**

CAB59/24 CONSIDERATIONS OF INITIAL OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT OF 11 & 12 HIGH STREET, WISBECH (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES)

Members considered the Considerations of initial options for the future redevelopment of 11 & 12 High Street, Wisbech report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Tierney said he supports this, one of the problems with private buildings in old towns is if they fall into disrepair, they can become difficult to fix and the impression people get is that the town itself is becoming run down. In those instances, it is always expected that local councils will step in and fix them. However their powers over private property are limited, nobody wants to pay more council tax, and this Council aspires not to charge more but sometimes that is the only way. A future unitary authority will most likely do nothing about buildings like these, so it is this Council's last opportunity to fix two buildings that have been known about for a long time before they get even worse.

Councillor Hoy queried the mention of finance and Wisbech Town Board funding. Councillor Seaton responded that officers have merely looked at all opportunities. Councillor Boden added that as with all Fenland Inspire! projects, financing will be looked at separately from the authorisation of them so there is no obligation for it to be covered by the Wisbech Town Board Fund but only a possibility. Councillor Hoy said she would be disappointed to see that mentioned in a report again, other towns are having capital money spent on them from Fenland and it seems unfair that money for Wisbech may be spent on the Council's current obligations, which is not right. Councillor Seaton said £1m from the Lottery Fund is still available but all funding options have to be looked at.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED:

- **To note the contents of the report.**
- **That officers progress with Option 2 as detailed herein up to and including the grant of planning consent and tender return and the expenditure of £75,000 of capital monies to deliver this work is also approved.**
- **That upon completion of the tender return the matter be brought back before Cabinet for approval prior to any commitment to the project commencing.**

3.20 pm

Chairman