

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>21 July 2025</b>	
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Annual Report 2024/25</b>	

## **1 Purpose / Summary**

- 1.1 To present the Annual Report of the Council for Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities in 2024/25.

## **2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2024/25 sets out the Council's performance over the last year, linking to the priorities detailed in our Business Plan. These priorities are designed to deliver outcomes that improve the quality of life for Fenland residents and are listed under the key headings of Communities, Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation.
- 2.2 The achievements outlined in the Annual Report are not exhaustive but reflect some of our successful projects over the last year. Notable examples are given of how we have worked closely with the community and partners to tackle important local issues in a collaborative and efficient way.
- 2.3 The past 12 months has brought both ongoing challenges and significant developments, not least the Government's announcement in December 2024 of its plans for Local Government Reorganisation.
- 2.4 Once again, we reduced our element of Council Tax in 2024/25 by 0.2% following a 2% reduction in 2023/24 which followed four years of no increases. Members again decided to not increase its element of the Council Tax bill in 2025/26. A clear demonstration of our commitment to easing pressures on household budgets.
- 2.5 This year, Members also launched Fenland Inspire!, an exciting investment campaign designed to enhance sports, leisure, and heritage facilities across the district. The programme is aimed at promoting healthier, more active lifestyles whilst celebrating Fenland's unique character.

## **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Annual Report of the Council 2024/25.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Boden, Leader of the Council Cabinet Members

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	Business Plan 2024/25

#### **4 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES**

- 4.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2024/25 summarises key examples of the Council's performance against each of our corporate priorities over the past year. This document is published and circulated on an annual basis to provide a summary of performance for councillors, customers and partners.
- 4.2 The achievements outlined in the Annual Report are not exhaustive but reflect some of our successful projects over the last year. Notable examples are given of how we have worked closely with the community and partners to tackle important local issues in a collaborative and efficient way.
- 4.3 This year, Members also launched Fenland Inspire!, an exciting investment campaign designed to enhance sports, leisure, and heritage facilities across the district. The programme is aimed at promoting healthier, more active lifestyles whilst celebrating Fenland's unique character.
- 4.4 The Council continues to deliver high quality services and effective projects within each of its corporate priorities. Key examples include:

##### **4.5 Communities - highlights**

- 4.6 Our Housing Options team received 2201 requests for homeless advice and continued to demonstrate our commitment to supporting them at an early stage to prevent homelessness.
- 4.7 Used our powers to improve the condition of private rented homes and ensure they are safe, secure and accessible, investigating a total of 286 homes.
- 4.8 To assist in our aim of meeting housing needs, we brought 64 empty homes back into use.
- 4.9 Our My Fenland customer contact team enabled the Early Help Hub project to provide support to residents struggling to work due to poor physical or mental health, supporting 265 customers from June 2024. In December 2024, the externally funded WorkWell project launched with similar aims and 220 people were supported to year-end. With funding in place until March 2026, the project goes from strength to strength.
- 4.10 We worked collaboratively with partners, including operators of our four Fenland leisure centres Freedom Leisure and our health providers, to deliver leisure and wellbeing services. In July 2024, figures for the previous year were reported and showed active participation from 486,081 people; 100,050 gym visits and 93,510 swim visits.

- 4.11 We encouraged partners to support the delivery of Golden Age events providing information to over 60s on opportunities, services and support available to them. Four Golden Age events were held, reaching 528 visitors. A pilot Golden Age Christmas appeal saw 200 shoeboxes filled with donated gifts for distribution to over 60s in Fenland.
- 4.12 Our Active Fenland team, which provides free and low-cost social and fitness sessions in a bid to launch good health habits, delivered and supported a total of 1,463 sessions catering to young and old and focused often on reaching those who have lost fitness or do not do regular exercise.
- 4.13 We delivered on promoting culture and heritage including by issuing Fenland Culture Fund grants totalling more than £55,000 to 35 applicants. These are funded through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund, via the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and Arts Council England and is a partnership project with the Fenland Culture Partnership and Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy.

#### **4.14 Environment – highlights**

- 4.15 We continued to deliver an efficient and reliable refuse and recycling service, collecting over 39,192 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste across the district.
- 4.16 Our Garden Waste service remained extremely popular, with 24,403 households subscribed, generating £1.1 million to support the service's running costs. A total of 7,615 tonnes of garden waste was collected.
- 4.17 We Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team worked tirelessly 364 days a year to keep Fenland's streets and open spaces clean and welcoming. They responded to 1,651 environmental requests from the public – including litter, broken glass, fly-tipping and drug-related waste – and resolved 87% of these the same or next working day.
- 4.18 Working alongside Fenland's active volunteers, including Street Pride groups, the team delivered high standards of street cleanliness. Cleanliness was independently monitored using Keep Britain Tidy surveying methodology. Of 1,022 street cleanliness inspections, 98.7% met or exceeded required standards.
- 4.19 Our Street Scene team spent 4,150 hours in the community, in all weathers, working on various proactive environment and enforcement projects.
- 4.20 We worked with our contractor to ensure the maintenance of more than 135 hectares of green space, in excess of 40 play areas and 11 parks in Fenland.
- 4.21 We continued to deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council, which responded to 1,225 incidents in Fenland. Direct outcomes included 200 arrests made by Cambridgeshire Police as a result of real-time CCTV detection, evidence gathering, and live support from the control room.

#### **4.22 Economy – highlights**

- 4.23 Promoting and developing our business premises to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification, resulted in overall occupancy across South Fens Business Centre, Chatteris; The Boathouse, Wisbech, and our light industrial units of 94.1%.
- 4.24 The three-year Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund grants programmes with funds from UK Government and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, completed. Initial assessments show benefits including:
- More than £1million of grant support provided to Fenland businesses
  - 125 new Fenland jobs created
  - 11 new businesses started
  - 16 farm businesses supported including 9 diversification projects

- 4.25 The transformation of Broad Street was the final step in a multi-million pound programme of schemes to regenerate March town centre. Delivered in partnership with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council, the Broad Street project has transformed the appearance and functionality of the area. The scheme included changes to the road layout to improve traffic flow, improvements to the streetscape, better pedestrian facilities, enhanced green spaces, and upgraded lighting. The scheme was highly commended in the national Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation 'Creating Better Places Award'.
- 4.26 Our planning team assisted with the appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective planning service. In the year ending December 2024, 538 planning applications were received and 521 decisions made. Of those 462 were granted (89 per cent) A total of 83 per cent of decisions were delegated to officers.
- 4.27 A total of 240 new affordable homes were delivered (subject to final figure verification) in our bid to meet housing needs and a significant number of additional units are on the horizon. Pipeline developments provide more than 200 much-needed one-bed units, with around 50 of these to be under construction in the coming 12 months.

#### **4.28 Quality Organisation – highlights**

- 4.29 We collected over £73million in Council Tax and £29million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community.
- 4.30 The MyFenland team answered more than 56,000 phone calls and resolved 92% of customer queries at the first point of call.
- 4.31 Our website over 20,000 online form submissions across 50 different topics.
- 4.32 We maintained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation demonstrating that we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities.
- 4.33 Our transformation Agenda enabled us to make £241k of cashable savings in addition to saving more than 5,700 officer hours and identified and reduced more than 20 service risks. Each of these supports our goal of becoming a modern council that is more effective, flexible and future-ready.
- 4.34 We used a fair and proportionate approach to improve living, working and environmental standards as set out in our Enforcement Policies. This has included through our:
- housing enforcement policy where a total of 286 homes were investigated and a total of 87 enforcement notices, penalties or fines issued, such as in relation to landlords to rectify hazards and meet energy performance requirements
  - parking enforcement where appropriate on our land, such as in March Market Place.
  - close work with food businesses to make sure they operate safely by following food safety legislation and hygiene standards. In January to March alone, 79 businesses received an inspection and were awarded a score using the food hygiene rating scheme, where applicable.

## **5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2024/25 shows clear performance towards the achievement of our corporate priorities. It is only a summary document; many more projects are ongoing that aim to improve quality of life for Fenland residents.

- 5.2 For Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities and for Cabinet to approve the Annual Report of the Council 2024/25.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Not Applicable.

## **7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 No alternative options were considered as the Council has made an ongoing commitment to produce an Annual Report of the Council.

## **8 IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 Legal Implications**

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

### **8.3 Financial Implications**

- 8.4 The Annual Report 2024/25 sets out high level corporate achievements that are linked to the priorities in our business plan which are reflected in the Council budget.

### **8.5 Equality Implications**

- 8.6 Not Applicable.





# Fenland District Council Annual Report 2024/25

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# Introduction by the Leader and Chief Executive

## Welcome to Fenland District Council's Annual Report for 2024/25

We are pleased to introduce you to our latest Annual Report, highlighting the progress we've made, the services we've delivered, and the work we've continued to carry out to support communities across Fenland.

The past 12 months has brought both ongoing challenges and significant developments, not least the Government's announcement in December 2024 of its plans for Local Government Reorganisation – the biggest shake-up in local government since the 1970s.

The proposals to replace existing district, city and council councils with single-tier unitary councils will have a far-reaching impact on how local services are delivered, and how people engage with councils in the future.

In response, we're working closely with councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to shape proposals for new unitary councils – and ensure that any new arrangements put in place by Government work in our residents' and businesses' best interests.

Work on these reforms will continue into the year ahead and beyond. But throughout the process and despite the uncertainties, our priorities and values will remain unchanged: to deliver high-quality, responsive services, support the most vulnerable, strengthen the local economy, and deliver value for money.

Once again, we reduced our element of Council Tax in 2024/25 by 0.2% following a 2% reduction in 2023/24 which followed four years of no increases. Members again decided to not increase its element of the Council Tax bill in 2025/26. A



Chris Boden  
Leader of the  
Council



Paul Medd  
Chief Executive

clear demonstration of our commitment to easing pressures on household budgets.

This year, Members also launched Fenland Inspire!, an exciting investment campaign designed to enhance sports, leisure, and heritage facilities across the district. The programme is aimed at promoting healthier, more active lifestyles while celebrating Fenland's unique character.

Our transformation agenda has also continued at pace. We've taken further steps to modernise how we work, enhance our digital services, and improve customer experience, ensuring our services are as accessible, efficient and resilient as possible.

In addition, we launched our WorkWell support programme to help people with health issues to get back to or stay in work, and it continues to go from strength to strength.

And we invested and used our powers where necessary to ensure more families have a safe place to call home.

We also successfully secured more funding for Fenland, to deliver thousands of pounds of grant funding for businesses, boost arts, culture and heritage activities, reduce carbon emissions and promote energy efficiency, help reduce youth anti-social behaviour and much, much more.

We encourage you to explore the rest of this report to learn more about the wide-ranging work we've carried out over the past year. From frontline services to long-term planning, community investment to environmental action, it offers a detailed picture of how we are working to support our residents, strengthen our district, and build a better future for Fenland.



# About Fenland

Fenland is a district shaped by its rural character and strong community values, with wide-open landscapes, vibrant market towns and a deep-rooted connection to agriculture – and heritage.

Located in North Cambridgeshire, the Fenland District spans approximately 211 square miles and is home to an estimated 104,595 residents (ONS, mid-2023 estimate). Over 70% of the population lives in the four market towns – Chatteris, March, Whittlesey, and Wisbech – while the wider rural areas include 29 villages.

Fenland offers some of the most affordable housing in Cambridgeshire, with an average house price of £230,103 (UK HPI: March 2025), which is 22% below the national average. Its close proximity and excellent links to cities like Cambridge and Peterborough makes it attractive to new residents, with the district's population projected to grow to 120,860 by 2043, a 16% increase (ONS, mid-2023 estimate). Fenland also has a higher proportion of older residents, with 23% aged over 64 (approximately 24,540 people). We work closely with health and care partners to ensure older residents have access to the support and resources they need to maintain independence and wellbeing.

Despite economic and social challenges – we are ranked as the 80th most deprived area in England out of 317 local authorities (IMD, 2019\*). Despite this, the community demonstrates resilience, and the council remains committed to working with partner organisations to invest in services, infrastructure, and opportunities for all.

\* The next release of the English Indices of Deprivation, including the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), is expected to be in late 2025.



Fenland covers approximately 211 square miles



Over 200 miles of navigable waterways



Over 135 hectares of open green space



The population is around 104,595



Average property price is £230,103

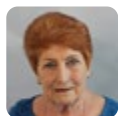


Over 3,160 businesses in Fenland

## Cabinet



**Chris Boden**  
Leader of the Council  
Whittlesey East  
and villages



**Jan French**  
Deputy Leader of the Council  
March South



**Steve Count**  
March North



**Gary Christy**  
March South



**Chris Seaton**  
Leverington and  
Wisbech Rural



**Dee Laws**  
Whittlesey North West



**Sam Hoy**  
Wisbech South



**Steve Tierney**  
Wisbech South



**Susan Wallwork**  
Wisbech South



**Sidney Imafidon**  
Wisbech Waterlees and  
Walsoken

## Other Councillors



**James Carney**  
Chatteris North  
and Manea



**Alan Gowler**  
Chatteris North  
and Manea



**Charlie Marks**  
Chatteris North  
and Manea



**Anne Hay**  
Chatteris South



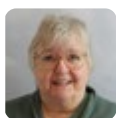
**Ian Benney**  
Chatteris South



**Peter Murphy**  
Chatteris South



**David Connor**  
Doddington and  
Wimblington



**Maureen Davis**  
Doddington and  
Wimblington



**Dal Roy**  
Elm and  
Christchurch



**Matthew Summers**  
Elm and  
Christchurch



**Brenda Barber**  
Leverington and  
Wisbech Rural



**Sam Clark**  
Leverington and  
Wisbech Rural



**John Clark**  
March East



**Stuart Harris**  
March East



**Mark Purser**  
March East



**Kim French**  
March North



**Paul Hicks**  
March North



**Tim Taylor**  
March West and  
Benwick



**Andrew Woollard**  
March West and  
Benwick



**Gavin Booth**  
Parson Drove and  
Wisbech St Mary



**Diane Cutler**  
Parson Drove and  
Wisbech St Mary



**Michael Humphrey**  
Parson Drove and  
Wisbech St Mary



**Alex Miscandlon**  
Whittlesey East  
and villages



**Dr Haq Nawaz**  
Whittlesey East and  
villages



**Jason Mockett**  
Whittlesey Lattersey



**Elisabeth Sennitt Clough**  
Whittlesey North West



**Roy Gerstner**  
Whittlesey South



**Gurninder Singh Gill**  
Whittlesey South



**Lucie Foice-Beard**  
Wisbech North



**Nick Meekins**  
Wisbech Riverside



**David Oliver**  
Wisbech Riverside



**David Patrick**  
Wisbech Waterlees and  
Walsoken



**Billy Rackley**  
Wisbech Waterlees and  
Walsoken

Conservative   
Independent   
Liberal Democrat 

# Money Matters

## Where your Council Tax goes

In 2024/25, the Band D Council Tax bill was set at £2,278.35 (plus Parish amounts). In 2025/26, this increased to £2,378.07 (plus Parish amounts). Fenland District Council collects money through Council Tax on behalf of other authorities, as shown on the diagram.

Fenland District Council further reduced its element of Council Tax in 2024/25 by 0.2% following a 2% reduction in 2023/24 which followed four years of no increases.

Members again decided to not increase its element of the Council Tax bill in 2025/26. Just 10.5% of each household's Council Tax bill goes to Fenland District Council, with the remainder going to the other authorities.

The numbers above relate to a Band D property. However, 83% of properties in Fenland are in Bands A-C. The average Council Tax per property in Fenland was £1,585.11 in 2024/25 and is £1,666.27 in 2025/26 and is the lowest average per property in Cambridgeshire. This also compares to an average Council Tax per property of £1,769.94 in 2025/26 across all English authorities.

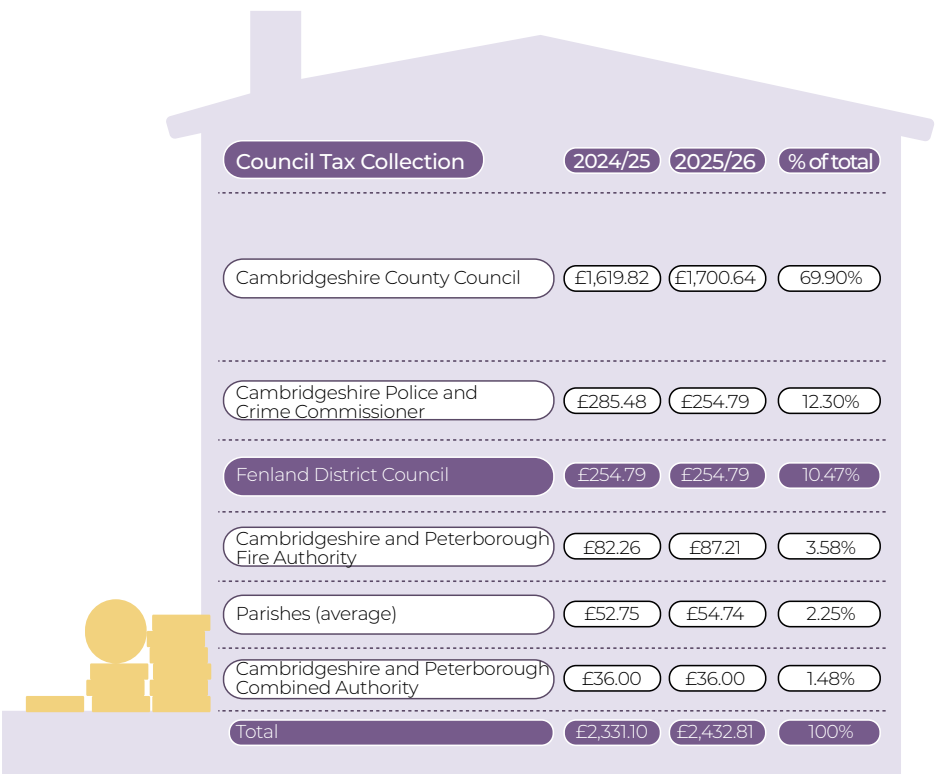
## Our finances

The Council's net spending on services in 2024/25 was £17.616m. This sum is financed by the Council's share of Business Rates (£9.440m), Council Tax (£8.102m) and Government Revenue Support Grant (£0.185m) which resulted in a surplus of £130k being returned for 2024/25. At the budget meeting in February 2025, a net deficit of £350k was forecast at the year end. The surplus of £130k has been transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve.

This reserve represents the amount taken in tax which has not been spent and now stands at £2.213m.

Full details of the Council's Budget for 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found at: [www.fenland.gov.uk/finance](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/finance)

You may also wish to read our Business Plan. This explains our organisational priorities for the next financial year: [www.fenland.gov.uk/businessplan](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/businessplan)



# Transformation Agenda

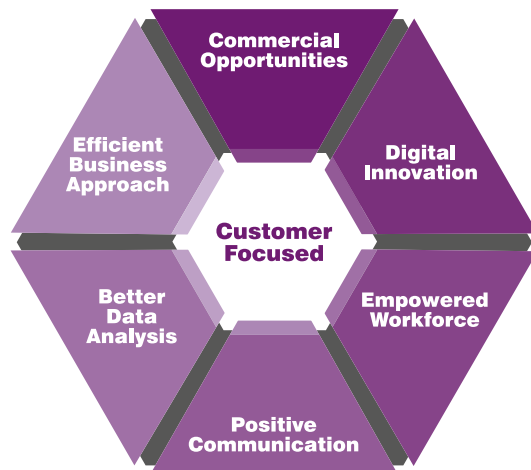
We began our ambitious Transformation Agenda programme back in 2019 to reshape how we deliver services and engage with our customers – with a clear focus on improving satisfaction while increasing efficiency and cost savings.

The first phase (TA1) successfully modernised core elements of our operations. It helped to deliver more responsive, customer-focused services and smarter ways of working – and delivered over £1million in savings.

Building on those successes, we launched the second phase (TA2) in 2024. Spanning across all services, this phase ties together all major 'change' initiatives that are looking to further improve how the council works and delivers services.

TA2 reflects our Cabinet members' determination to meet the changing needs of our residents and communities while maintaining high service standards in a challenging financial climate.

## Key principals of our Transformation Agenda



A key focus of our Transformation Agenda 2 programme was to work with services across the council to carry out service reviews. This holistic approach ensured we maximised the opportunities, outlined below across the organisation;

- Efficiency
- Smarter ways of working
- Maximising the use of technology
- Enhanced customer experience
- Maximise opportunities for income generation

Results of the service reviews and their recommendations ensured we delivered cashable savings to the Council, cost avoidance, officer hours saved in services and risks mitigated against.

Our Service Review programme has focussed on ensuring the right tasks are being carried out by the right people whilst streamlining processes to the benefit of both the Council and our customers. . Whether reviewing how we deliver a frontline service or investing in digital tools to streamline back-office operations, each outcome supports our goal of becoming a modern council that is more effective, flexible and future-ready.

## Key achievements included:



£236,115 worth of recommendations approved



7,044 hours saved of officer's time



20 risks identified and reduced

# Our Communities

## Support vulnerable members of our community

In our commitment to support vulnerable members of our community, we:

- used our housing powers to prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, meet housing needs, improve housing
- enabled residents to claim the Council Tax and Housing Benefit support they're entitled to in partnership with our shared service Anglian Revenues Partnership
- used our powers to improve the condition of private rented homes and ensure they are safe, secure and accessible, investigating a total of 286 homes
- continued our focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- received inquiries from a total of 2002 households seeking housing advice and continued to demonstrate our commitment to supporting them at an early stage to prevent homelessness. When we've been able to get involved at an early stage our success rate of preventing homelessness has increased to 77 per cent this year from 52 per cent last year.
- continued The Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) project and supported 81 individuals. Of those 34 were supported into stable move-on accommodation. Due to the increase in complexity, 25 clients had an alternative outcome. This included prison, hospital, or loss of contact. We continued to support 22 people through the initiative at year-end. Every attempt is made to encourage engagement with services to allow secure futures for all.

To assist in our aim of meeting housing needs, we brought 64 empty homes back into use.

We supported residents to manage the effects of the cost-of-living through means including issuing food vouchers, benefits advice, signposting and assisting with online Universal Credit (UC) applications.

Our My Fenland customer contact team enabled the Early Help Hub project to provide support to residents struggling to work due to poor physical or mental health, supporting 265 customers from June 2024. In December 2024, the externally



286 rental properties  
inspected



64 empty homes  
brought back into use



220 people supported  
to work

funded WorkWell project launched with similar aims and 220 people were supported to year-end. With funding in place until March 2026, the project goes from strength to strength.

We kept up our active support for our customers who correspond, compliment or complain about services. We use learnings from these interactions to improve service delivery and customer service.

### **Promote health and wellbeing for all**

We worked collaboratively with partners, including operators of our four Fenland leisure centres Freedom Leisure and our health providers, to deliver leisure and wellbeing services.

In July 2024, figures for the previous year were reported and showed active participation from 486,081 people; 100,050 gym visits and 93,510 swim visits.

The leisure centres, three of them significantly aging, remain in a period of major maintenance and repair. Recent investment has been made into Whittlesey's Manor Leisure Centre car park resurfacing and pool covers; March's George Campbell Leisure Centre's swimming pool; Wisbech's Hudson Leisure Centre's swimming pool lighting and sports hall heating. Extensive further work is in progress and discussion.

We encouraged healthier communities through fitness and wellbeing activities developed, delivered and supported by our Active Fenland team, which provides free and low-cost social and fitness sessions in a bid to launch good health habits. Active Fenland delivered and supported a total of 1,463 sessions catering to young and old and focused often on reaching those who have lost fitness or do not do regular exercise.

We encouraged partners to support the delivery of Golden Age events providing information to over 60s on opportunities, services and support available to them.



486,081 active leisure  
centre participants



1,463 Active Fenland  
sessions



£55,000 of culture  
grants awarded



Four Golden Age events were held, reaching 528 visitors. A pilot Golden Age Christmas appeal saw 200 shoeboxes filled with donated gifts for distribution to over 60s in Fenland.

**Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage**

We delivered on promoting culture and heritage including by issuing Fenland Culture Fund grants totalling more than £55,000 to 35 applicants. These are funded through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund, via the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and Arts Council England and is a partnership project with the Fenland Culture Partnership and Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy.

In addition, high-quality, professional training workshops were enabled. And the Fenland Poet Laureate Award supported, which attracted 71 entries across two age categories.

We supported community groups to hold safe and successful public events, not least through Fenland Four Seasons events, which attracted thousands of visitors into our towns, provided crucial trading opportunities for stall holders and opportunities to showcase arts and culture.

Performance Indicators	Target 2024/25	Performance
Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	250	286
Proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work	53%	46%
Number of empty properties brought back into use	50	64
Number of Active Fenland sessions delivered and total attendance per year	600	1547
Customer satisfaction (Net promoter score across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland)	38	17
Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland.	£201,000	£445,000

# Our Environment

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

We continued to deliver an efficient and reliable refuse and recycling service, collecting over 39,192 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste across the district.

Despite an increase in the number of properties served, the total amount of waste collected fell compared to the previous year – a positive sign that residents are managing their waste more sustainably.

Our recycling efforts remained a key focus, with blue bin materials accounting for 25% of all collected household waste. While the volume of dry recycling decreased slightly, this reflects national trends and changing consumption habits.

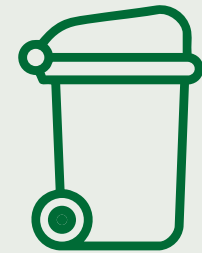
To maintain and improve recycling quality, we stepped up our direct communications and advice to households. More than 6,700 bins were flagged for contamination, with most affected households receiving helpful guidance to recycle correctly in future.

Our team also proactively inspected nearly 3,750 recycling bins, with just 5% found to contain incorrect materials – demonstrating that most residents are recycling well.

Our Garden Waste service remained extremely popular, with 24,403 households subscribed, generating £1.1 million to support the service's running costs. A total of 7,615 tonnes of garden waste was collected.

Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team worked tirelessly 364 days a year to keep Fenland's streets and open spaces clean and welcoming. They responded to 1,651 environmental requests from the public – including litter, broken glass, fly-tipping and drug-related waste – and resolved 87% of these the same or next working day.

Working alongside Fenland's active volunteers, including Street Pride groups, the team delivered high standards of street cleanliness. Cleanliness was independently monitored using Keep Britain Tidy surveying methodology. Of 1,022 street cleanliness inspections, 98.7% met or exceeded required standards.



39,192 tonnes of waste collected



24,403 Garden Waste subscribers



1,441 requests for street sweeping, litter picking or fly-tipping removal resolved within 24 hours

In partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, we also began work on a revised waste strategy, with a draft due for member review in summer 2025 – helping to shape the future of waste and recycling across the area.

### **Work with partners and the community on projects to improve the environment and street scene**

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

Our Street Scene team spent 4,150 hours in the community, in all weathers, working on various proactive environment and enforcement projects.

A total of 16 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for waste offences, of which 11 were paid and the remaining five were referred for prosecution. To date, three of those individuals have appeared in court and had fines issued.

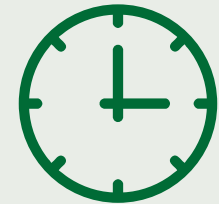
The team monitored illegal parking within council owned car parks and issued 22 parking fines at March Market Place.

A total of 269 reports of abandoned vehicles were investigated.

A special project, which took place in the month of March and focussed on a fly tipping hot spot in South Brink, Wisbech, saw the removal of 15 tonnes of waste plus the installation of a soil bund to dissuade further issues.

We worked with our contractor to ensure the maintenance of more than 135 hectares of green space, in excess of 40 play areas and 11 parks in Fenland.

We continued our support for vital and valued community groups such as Street Pride, In Bloom, Friends of Groups, and Green Dog Walkers. Between January and March 2025 our volunteer groups undertook more than 120 events including wildflower planting, community woodland enhancements and recycled planter installations.



4,150 hours of Street  
Scene patrols



135 hectares of green  
space maintained



120 environmental  
volunteer events

We continue to host and promote regular markets in Chatteris, March and Whittlesey and support Wisbech Town Council's markets in Wisbech.

We remain committed to meeting all climate change targets which are legally required by the UK Government. We supported the delivery of Net Zero Village Fund grants with funds from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to enable community centres in four Fenland villages are to get environmentally friendly upgrades that will help secure their futures through cost and energy saving.

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

We continued to manage the Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour. This involved extensive partnership working with the police, partner local authorities, fire and rescue services, health and probation services.

Projects included:

- work to address youth related nuisance and drug activity at a residential property
- supporting police with patrols and engagements across Fenland during Business and Retail Crime week
- an extensive joint project to work with youths at risk of involvement with knife crime
- community safety information events
- supporting training of front line professionals.

We maintained support for the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to develop and deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion Action Plan.

Our work to deliver the Community Safety Grant Agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioner has included:

- supporting reports and action related to quad bikes impacting on a rural location in March
- supporting the promotion of road safety initiative Speedwatch
- action on anti-social behaviour in Wisbech town centre including:
  - securing the injunction and subsequent jailing of a man responsible for causing significant harassment and distress
  - supporting police and partner work which has led to arrests of two further adults and action related to several youths
  - work towards closure orders for anti social behaviour linked residential properties.

We continued to deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council, which responded to 1,225 incidents in Fenland. Direct outcomes included 200 arrests made by Cambridgeshire Police as a result of real-time CCTV detection, evidence gathering, and live support from the control room.

In addition to its responsive duties, the CCTV shared service has expanded its proactive surveillance programme, with operators completing 5,406 proactive patrols across town centres and known hotspots in Fenland. This represents a 25% increase on the 4,308 patrols conducted in the previous year.

The CCTV service also acted as the Council's out-of-hours contact centre, providing 24/7 telephone support across a range of key council services.

The team handled 437 emergency calls, covering:

- homelessness triage and emergency accommodation
- stray and lost dogs
- dangerous structures and buildings
- urgent cleansing or environmental incidents.

Performance Indicators	Target 2024/25	Performance
% of household waste recycled through the blue bin service	28%	25%
Customer satisfaction with our Refuse and Recycling services.	90%	97%
Customer satisfaction with our Garden Waste service	85%	97%
% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	93%	99%
% of Rapid or Village response requests (to action issues such as fly-tipping, dog fouling and littering) actioned the same day	90%	87%
Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	204	282
% of those asked satisfied with community events	90%	98%
% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	95%	100%

# Our Economy

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

We provided responsive business support to encourage business growth, job diversity, skills development and increased access to grants, including by attending events to drive growth. Conversations with businesses interested in moving to Fenland took place and are ongoing.

Work with external stakeholders, local businesses and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities has continued.

Promoting and developing our business premises to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification, resulted in overall occupancy across South Fens Business Centre, Chatteris; The Boathouse, Wisbech, and our light industrial units of 94.1%.

The three-year Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund grants programmes with funds from UK Government and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, completed.

Initial assessments show benefits including:

- More than £1million of grant support provided to Fenland businesses
- 125 new Fenland jobs created
- 11 new businesses started
- 16 farm businesses supported including 9 diversification projects

## March town centre regeneration

The transformation of Broad Street was the final step in a multi-million pound programme of schemes to regenerate March town centre.

Delivered in partnership with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council, the Broad Street project has transformed the appearance and functionality of the area. The scheme included changes to the road layout to improve traffic flow, improvements to the streetscape,



94.1% business centre occupancy



£1million+ grant support for businesses



March regeneration 'highly commended' in national awards



better pedestrian facilities, enhanced green spaces, and upgraded lighting. The scheme was highly commended in the national Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation 'Creating Better Places Award'.

A project to support businesses with grants to improve shopfronts is ongoing.

### **Wisbech High Street improvements**

Reconstruction of 24 High Street, Wisbech, to close a gap in and elevate the streetscene, continued and will be completed in summer 2025.

Plans to develop 11-12 High Street continue to be progressed.

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

Strides were made in recruiting to our planning team, which has had an extended period of vacancies. This supported us to enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective planning service.

In the year ending December 2024, 538 planning applications were received and 521 decisions made. Of those 462 were granted (89 per cent) A total of 83 per cent of decisions were delegated to officers.

A total of 240 new affordable homes were delivered (subject to final figure verification) in our bid to meet housing needs and a significant number of additional units are on the horizon. Pipeline developments provide more than 200 much-needed one-bed units, with around 50 of these to be under construction in the coming 12 months.

In partnership with the Wisbech Town Board, Fenland was in a positive position in relation to the Long-Term Plans for Towns programme, with £20m funding secured. Wisbech Town Board has begun prioritisation of projects for the four-year investment plan.

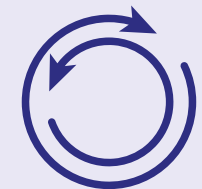
Separately, proactive projects to develop land owned by the council through the subsidiary Fenland Future Ltd were progressing at The Elms, Chatteris, and New Waterfront, Wisbech, at year-end.



521 planning  
applications processed



240 new affordable homes  
delivered



£20million secured for  
Wisbech investment plan

**Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements**

Focus remained on promoting sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services.

Work on Whittlesea Station improvement project continued with the outline business case in progress.

We continued to engage with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects.

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project, managed by Fenland District Council with funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) market towns programme, continued with a report due in early 2025.

The Council continued to work collaboratively with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and its constituent councils to submit a Local Growth Plan by the summer of 2025.

Performance Indicators	Target 2024/25	Performance
% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	70%	91%
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks	70%	85%
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks	80%	91%
% occupancy of our Business Estates	95%	94.2%
% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	97%	85%

# Quality Organisation

## Performance Management (Performance Indicators)

We set relevant and robust performance targets to ensure the effective delivery of Business Plan priorities and report those regularly, including via publicly available portfolio holder reports.

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

## Provide excellent Customer Service

We maintained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation demonstrating that we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities.

We helped residents to self-serve and access our services digitally where appropriate to allow us to provide 24/7 help for simpler queries and dedicate resources, where direct contact was needed, to those who needed greater support, such as vulnerable customers and in the case of complex queries.

## Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management

We maintained robust and effective financial standards, internal controls and organisational management and complied with data protection and General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

## Transformation and Efficiency

We sustainably delivered required savings whilst pursuing transformation and commercialisation opportunities to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. A laser focus on this led to £241k of cashable savings in addition to saving more than 5,700 officer hours across the planning team, markets and events, cemeteries, licensing, My Fenland customer service team, workshop and fleet and environmental services. We also identified and reduced more than 20 service risks.

We set out with an objective to engage with the Combined Authority's Public Service Reform agenda. Then, in December, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper, setting out its plans to reform local government



56,380 telephone  
enquires answered



Over 50 online  
self-service forms



Maintained Customer Service  
Excellence accreditation

across England. The government expects all two-tier areas to develop proposals for reorganisation. It said new unitary authorities will focus on delivering services, with the intention to serve populations of more than or equal to 500,000 residents, although lower for exceptional circumstances, to achieve efficiencies.

We have sent initial responses to the review.

### Consultation and Engagement

We appropriately consulted with residents about our service and proposals as outlined in our Consultation Strategy and kept up proactive information streams via social media, our website, digital newsletter and responses to Press and public queries.

### Equalities

We met 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.

### Asset Management and Commercialisation

We continued to ensure our asset base is sustainable, suitable and fully utilised to maximise income opportunities and financial efficiencies. And delivered our adopted Capital Programme in line with our Corporate Asset Management Plan to maintain the integrity and safety of our assets.

This has included the progression of the projects to develop land owned by the council through the subsidiary Fenland Future Ltd at The Elms, Chatteris, and New Waterfront, Wisbech. As well as drawing rental income from a commercial investment in Wisbech made in 2021.

### Workforce Development

We have a one-team and people focussed culture and believe very strongly in developing and supporting our workforce. We maintained our commitment to



Progressed two housing developments on council-owned land



87 housing enforcement notices issued



6 planning enforcement notices

equip our workforce with the right skills to effectively deliver our priorities and support and empower our staff to make effective decisions.

This was achieved through extensive opportunities for training and development, coaching, support and a defined appraisal and 121 process. We implemented a new people system to utilise technology to provide blended learning and development option to suit the needs and demands of our workforce.

### **Enforcement**

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

This has included through our:

- housing enforcement policy where a total of 286 homes were investigated and a total of 87 enforcement notices, penalties or fines issued, such as in relation to landlords to rectify hazards and meet energy performance requirements
- parking enforcement where appropriate on our land, such as in March Market Place. We also continued to consider taking on responsibilities for wider parking enforcement though so far costs have proven prohibitive.
- close work with food businesses to make sure they operate safely by following food safety legislation and hygiene standards. In January to March alone, 79 businesses received an inspection and were awarded a score using the food hygiene rating scheme, where applicable.

We also received 41 support requests, ranging from new business enquiries to foreign body and food poisoning complaints or issuing a food export certificate.

Support requests often include additional, unforeseen work, for example the Food Standards Agency asked local authorities to contact all care homes and hospitals in our district as a precaution due to certain desserts containing small levels of Listeria. We contacted 28 of these health care settings and seven confirmed they had these desserts at their site and withdrew the products from their offer.

- Work as Port Health Authority, monitoring the classification of shellfish beds around the mouth of the River Nene.
- Recently we also participated in a national sampling study focusing on raw shell eggs and both unpasteurised and pasteurised milk cheese at retail sale in order to ascertain their microbiological safety and quality
- Planning enforcement, with six enforcement notices issued to year ending December 2024, four planning contravention notices and one breach of condition notice.


## Health and Safety

We maintained a strong and focussed approach to ensuring effective health and safety systems to comply with all relevant legislation and local requirements.

Performance Indicators	Target 2024/25	Performance
% of customer queries processed at the first point of contact	85%	92.45%
% of customers satisfied by our service	95%	96.66%
% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	46.5%	57.54%
% of contact centre calls handled	80%	87.42%
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	9	9.4
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Housing Benefit.	8	8.36
In year % of Council Tax collected	100%	99.67%
Council Tax net collection fund receipts	73,595,060	73,350,882
In year % of national non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	96.57%	95.70%
national non-domestic rates (NNDR) net collection fund receipts	28,409,318	29,467,704



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