

CABINET



MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2025 - 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor G Christy, Councillor S Count and Councillor Mrs D Laws

CAB32/25 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 7 November 2025 were agreed and signed.

CAB33/25 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27

Members considered the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 presented by Councillor Tierney.

Councillor Tierney acknowledged the hard work of officers in creating the business plan.

Proposed by Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to approve the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 for public consultation.

CAB34/25 DRAFT BUDGET & MTFS 2026/27

Members considered the Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 report presented by Councillor Boden.

- Councillor Hoy said that if Fenland District Council ceases to exist from April 2028, does that mean there will be a massive cost in its final year? Councillor Boden replied that there may be some termination costs, but these will likely be passed on to the new unitary authority; a few may lie with FDC but all future assets, liabilities etc. will be passed on.
- Councillor Tierney commented that other councils are in all sorts of financial distress, and he wonders if people realise that quietly in the background, FDC is a sound, stable and steady council thanks to the Leader and fantastic work of officers who do not get the credit they deserve. FDC has frozen its portion of council tax for the last nine years but is still doing new things every year with a sound budget. It is sad that Local Government Reorganisation might put an end to that, but this council should be proud of what has been achieved so far.
- Councillor Boden said FDC has always recognised it is using taxpayers' money which is why so much care is taken with it and does not spend on politically correct items or in telling people how wonderful it is. That is also why he set up a budget equalisation reserve, which was to work as hard as possible to keep council tax down. Rather than spend any surplus it was put into the reserve against council tax in future years.

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

- The revised General Fund Budget and revised Capital Programme for 2025/26 be approved.
- The draft budget proposals for 2026/27 outlined in this report be approved for consultation.

(iii) The proposed Capital Programme for 2026/27 – 2028/29 be approved.

(Councillors Boden and Seaton declared that they are trustees of FACT but will consider the item with an open mind).

CAB35/25 ADOPTION OF A NEW PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Members considered the Planning Enforcement Policy report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden thanked the Planning Enforcement Team and Head of Planning for their work on this policy, which reflects best practice.

- Councillor Hoy said she welcomes this policy as she had been frustrated with planning enforcement; it will be more pragmatic on less serious cases but will take sterner action on the more important cases and she appreciates the clarity.
- Councillor Mrs French said she also welcomes this report; as a member of Planning Committee, she regularly receives complaints about the breach of planning regulations.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve the revised Planning Enforcement Policy.

CAB36/25 PRIDE IN PLACE IMPACT FUND - PROJECT PROPOSAL

Members considered the Pride in Place Impact Fund project proposal report presented by Councillor Boden.

- Councillor Tierney said this is fantastic news for Fenland as it will deliver great changes for this area; members should contact officers and say what they want done.
- Councillor Imafidon said he would like to see an improvement to the playground at Jasmine Close in Wisbech as the equipment there has deteriorated over the years.
- Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Imafidon and said the Council will look at where the greatest need is. There are some areas with no play equipment at all, and some with an increased population which has made existing provision inadequate; it is not a one size fits all and everywhere will be considered.
- Councillor Hoy said there needs to be a clear process on how ideas are proposed. She feels the west side of Wisbech is poorly served whilst there is more provision in the centre. Heron Road in Wisbech is badly maintained and there is potential for a soft play area in the Pavilion. She feels there should be surveys of cold spots and the conditions of equipment in each location.
- Councillor Seaton said he appreciated the ideas, and they emphasised why someone is needed to do this work and ensure an even spread across the district before the money must be spent by 2027. The decision will be member-led, and ideas will come back to Cabinet to be followed by a consultation.
- Councillor Mrs French said as Portfolio Holder for parks she is aware of the requests, and some additional staff may be required to look at this.

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

- **Approve the allocation of the £1.5 million Pride in Place Impact Fund allocation to the delivery of improved open spaces and play park enhancements across the district.**
- **Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Open Spaces and Inspire! Projects, to commence an assessment of open spaces facilities and play parks to identify, alongside local elected Members, sites for improved or new facilities and return to Cabinet with a report with recommendations on the specific projects to be undertaken.**
- **Note the necessary recruitment of a part-time, fixed term contract Project Officer to**

ensure that the organisation has the capacity to deliver this work in a timely manner, within the tight timeframe and deadline of March 2027 stipulated by Government.

CAB37/25 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Members considered the Local Plan Update report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to recommend to Council that they:

- a) Withdraw the emerging Fenland Local Plan 2021-2040**
- b) Commence the production of a new Local Plan under the new system to be completed by March 2028 that will cover the period 2025 to 2050 once the new plan making regulations are published.**
- c) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to publish and keep up to date a new Local Development Scheme.**

CAB38/25 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

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

Councillor Boden thanked officers for their work in getting to where this project is now and Wisbech members for their tenacity in seeing something constructive come out of the destruction of The Gap. This update is very welcome news, and members look forward to the official opening in January, the occupation of the flats and the letting of the retail unit.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to note the report.

CAB39/25 WHITTLESEY RELIEF ROAD UPDATE

Members considered the Whittlesey Relief Road report presented by Councillor Boden on behalf of Councillor Christy.

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

- Write to the CPCAA under the budget consultation to request inclusion of the cost of the next Whittlesey Relief Road report in the CPCA 2026/27 budget or, failing that, in the MTFS for 2027/28.**
- Contact Whittlesey Town Council requesting that they consider offering financial support towards the cost of the budget.**
- Consider inclusion within FDC's next budget or MTFS for the provision of funds to cover or contribute towards the cost of the next Whittlesey Relief Road report, as a backstop position.**

(Councillor Boden declared that he is a member of Whittlesey Town Council and on the board of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority).

CAB40/25 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Noted for information.

CAB41/25 PORT OPERATIONS UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL)

Members considered the confidential Port Operations Update report presented by Councillor Boden on behalf of Councillor Christy.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to instruct officers as outlined in the confidential minutes.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the discussion on this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)).

CAB42/25 **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 7 November 2025 were agreed and signed.

2.55 pm Chairman