

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny	
Date:	19 January 2026	
Report Title:	Draft Business Plan 2026-27	

1 Purpose / Summary

For Overview & Scrutiny to comment on Draft Business Plan 2026-27.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Our Draft Business Plan 2026-27 identifies the key challenges and opportunities for Fenland. Its structure outlines our key Corporate Priorities. These are Communities, Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation.
- 2.2 In addition to our 4 priorities, we also have ambitions to deliver several investment projects under the Fenland Inspire! programme.
- 2.3 The Draft Business Plan 2026-27 will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 19 January 2026.
- 2.4 The public will be invited to comment on the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 between 5 January 2025 and 1 February 2026. Feedback will be incorporated into the final version of the Business Plan that will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 23 February 2026.
- 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 2026-27.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Chris Boden, Leader of the Council Councillor Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Communications
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

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The Draft Business Plan 2026-27 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 It also remains a priority of our elected Cabinet Members to deliver several investment projects under the Fenland Inspire! programme, launched at the end of 2024. The projects aims include enhancing sports, leisure, heritage facilities, promoting healthy lifestyles and preserving the district's unique character.
- 1.5 We continue to deliver on our transformation journey, which 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 Overview and Scrutiny to make comment on the Draft Business Plan 2026-27.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The public will be invited to comment on the Draft Business Plan 2026-27 between 5 January 2026 and 1 February 2026. Feedback will be incorporated into the final version of the Business Plan that will be considered by Cabinet and Council on 23 February 2026.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 N/A

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

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

5.3 Financial Implications

5.4 The Draft Business Plan 2026-27 sets out our corporate priorities we aim to deliver over the next 12 months. These are reflected in the Council budget.

5.5 Equality Implications

5.6 N/A

6 SCHEDULES

Draft Business Plan 2026/27



Fenland District Council **Business Plan 2026/27**



Contents



- Introduction
- About Fenland
- Our Priorities
- Fenland Inspire!
- Transformation
- Our priorities: Communities
- Our priorities: Environment
- Our priorities: Economy
- Our priorities: Quality Organisation
- Performance

introduction

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Business Plan for 2026/27

Fenland District Council enters 2026/27 knowing that significant change lies ahead. The Government's national requirement for Local Government Reorganisation will see the biggest shake up in how councils are structured and residents access services in more than 50 years.

If it proceeds as planned, Fenland and the six other constituent councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will cease to exist from April 2028, and the reins will be handed over to newly established unitary authorities.

Our Cabinet Members have challenged the proposed reform process and made clear their concerns about its scope, cost, deliverability, and impact on local identity. However, they accept reform is desirable and recognise their responsibility to ensure Fenland's communities are represented, and its voice heard as the changes are developed.

The Government is expected to consult the public on its preferred option(s) for unitary authorities in early 2026 before Ministers make a final decision on which new arrangements are put into place.

Against this evolving backdrop, our focus remains firmly on continuing to serve our residents and businesses, delivering on our

priorities, and driving forward ambitious projects.

Through our Fenland Inspire! projects, we are investing in improvements to sports, leisure, and heritage facilities across our towns and villages. Alongside this, we are maximising external investment, including £1.5million Pride in Place Impact Funding, to deliver even more meaningful improvements that people will see and experience in their everyday lives.

We are also supporting the Wisbech Town Board to deliver a regeneration plan for the town as part of the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods, which has promised up to £20million for Wisbech over a ten-year period.

Financial pressures continue to affect all local councils, but once again Fenland stands out nationally for its record on council tax. In our Draft Budget for 2026/27, Members are proposing to maintain a 0% increase in our portion of the council tax bill for the EIGHTH year running (in 2023/24, we even cut our element by 2%). This demonstrates our continued commitment to balancing financial prudence with support for those who need it most.

Partnership working also

continues to be as important as ever in our day-to-day work and in the lead up to Local Government Reorganisation, ensuring Fenland benefits fully from wider collaboration. This includes working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority on key initiatives such as its Local Growth Plan, as well as with health and employment partners to deliver our successful WorkWell programme.

Transformation continues to underpin all our services too, driving efficiency, effectiveness and resident satisfaction in everything we do. We will build on the progress of recent years and strive for even greater impact.

Together with our communities, we look forward to making a meaningful difference once again in 2026/27 – creating a stronger and more resilient Fenland for the future.



Paul Medd
Chief Executive



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council

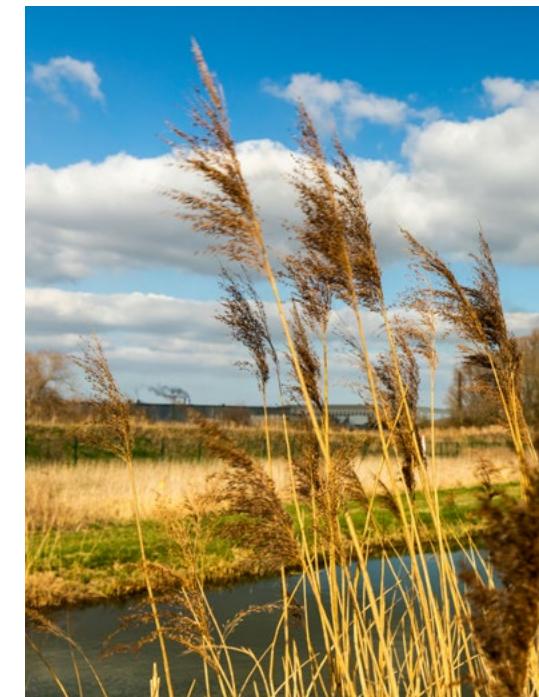
About Fenland



Fenland is a district defined by strong community spirit, rich heritage and expansive rural landscapes. Located in North Cambridgeshire, the district covers 211 square miles and brings together four vibrant market towns – Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech – alongside 29 villages that reflect the area's strong identity.

- Home to approximately 104,595 residents (ONS: mid-2023 estimate).
- Population projected to reach 120,860 by 2043, a 16% increase (ONS: mid-2023 estimate).

- 23% of residents (around 24,540 people) are aged over 64, above both county and national averages.
- Average house price of £225,000 (UK HPI: August 2025), 20% lower than the national average.
- Close proximity and excellent links to large urban cities like Cambridge and Peterborough.
- 135 hectares of public green space and over 200 miles of navigable waterways.
- 66th most deprived area out of 296 local authorities nationally (IMD: 2025).



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



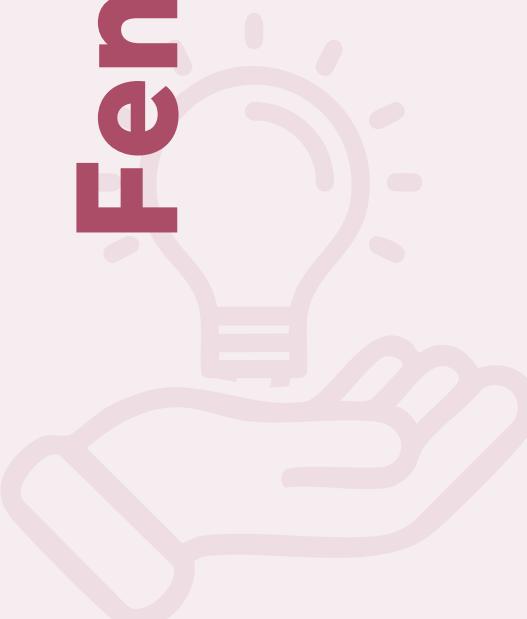
Economy



Quality Organisation



Fenland Inspire!



Fenland Inspire!

It remains a priority of Fenland's elected Cabinet Members to deliver several investment projects under the Fenland Inspire! programme, launched at the end of 2024.

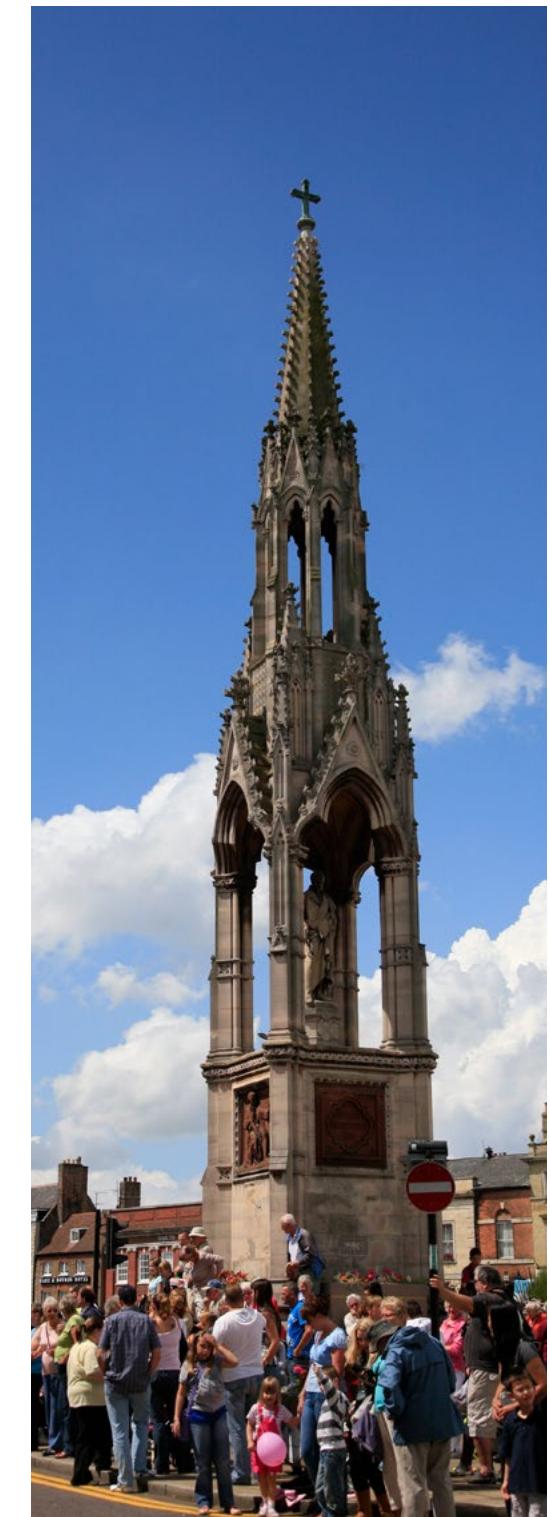
The projects' aims include enhancing sports, leisure, and heritage facilities, promoting healthy lifestyles and preserving the district's unique character.

Fenland Inspire! projects include:

- Pursuing adoption of civil parking enforcement (a legislative change that allows local authorities to enforce on-street parking restrictions in place of the police).
- Districtwide assessment and inventory of current play park provision and play equipment and identify opportunities to enhance it.
- Development of multipurpose / 3G sports pitches in association with the Football Foundation.
- Condition survey work to provide a comprehensive assessment of the physical state and maintenance needs of Chatteris Leisure Centre.
- Securing land next to West End Park, March, to allow, in the future, the creation of a March Country Park.
- Securing the future of St John's Graveyard Chapel, March.
- Progressing the major redevelopment plans for Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey.
- Progressing the transfer of land to secure a village green for Wimblington.
- Progressing development at 11/12 High Street, Wisbech, to repair a gap in the High Street left when the former building had to be demolished.
- Further improvements to Wisbech Park Splash Pad, where additional water features have already been added through Fenland Inspire!, to add a canopy to provide shade and further picnic tables .
- Improvement and the restoration of lighting to the Clarkson Memorial, Wisbech.

These projects are subject to scoping work and the development of outline business cases to determine their feasibility and affordability, ensuring that investment is targeted effectively and delivers the greatest benefit to local communities.

**Fenland
Inspire!**



Transformation



Transformation programme and outcomes

Our transformation programme ties together all major 'change' initiatives that are looking to improve how the council works and delivers services.

In 2026/27 we will be continuing our transformation journey to improve efficiency, customer experience, and drive positive change.

Key outcomes include:

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



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.
- 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 WorkWell programme using an integrated approach to providing health and employment support.
- 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.

Environment



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.
- In cooperation with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, to plan and deliver the domestic food waste service and other Environment Act 2021 changes through the shared 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 associated anti-social 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 Government.

Ensure Fenland is attractive to new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses

- 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.
- Support the Combined Authority with their ambitious Local Growth Plan to attract investment into Fenland.

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 partners and the local community to deliver targeted improvements using the £1.5million Pride in Place Impact Funding awarded by Government, supporting projects that enhance public spaces, revitalise town centres, and strengthen community facilities across Fenland.
- Support the Wisbech Town Board to deliver long-term regeneration through the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative, securing and overseeing up to £20million of investment for Wisbech over a ten-year period to enhance the town centre, boost economic growth, and improve opportunities for residents and businesses.

- 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, Members and the public.

Excellent Customer Service

- Maintain excellent Customer Service standards 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.
- Ensure we proactively manage all risks in accordance with our Corporate Risk Management Strategy.

Local Government Reorganisation

- Ensure Fenland's residents, businesses and communities are represented and the district's identity and priorities safeguarded, as the Government's



requirement for Local Government Reorganisation is developed.

- Develop our workforce so they are prepared for Local Government Reorganisation.

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.

Equalities

- Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by complying with the requirements of the Equality Act

2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 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.
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.	Customer satisfaction for Freedom Leisure Centres
Work with partners to deliver the WorkWell programme using an integrated approach to providing health and employment support.	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.
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.
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.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports. Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services.
Use education, guidance and Council powers to fairly enforce environmental standards and tackle issues such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, littering and associated antisocial behaviour.	% 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.
Ensure well maintained parks and open spaces by working with our ground maintenance contractor.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance



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

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

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

% of those asked satisfied with 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.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Economy

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.

% occupancy of Business Premises estates.
% of debt on the investment portfolio of the total rent roll.
% occupancy of our Wisbech Yacht Harbour.

Support the Combined Authority with their ambitious Local Growth Plan to attract investment into Fenland

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Annual Monitoring Report.

Work with partners and the local community to deliver targeted improvements using the £1.5million Pride in Place Impact Funding awarded by Government, supporting projects that enhance public spaces, revitalise town centres and strengthen community facilities across Fenland.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Support the Wisbech Town Board to deliver long-term regeneration through the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative, securing and overseeing up to £20million of investment for Wisbech over a ten-year period to enhance the town centre, boost economic growth and improve opportunities for residents and businesses.

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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.

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

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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

Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

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.

Quality Organisation

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

Corporate performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.

Performance



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 excellent Customer Service standards to ensure we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
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.
Ensure we proactively manage all risks in accordance with our Corporate Risk Management Strategy.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Ensure Fenland's residents, businesses and communities are represented and the district's identity and priorities safeguarded, as the Government's requirement for Local Government Reorganisation is developed.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Develop our workforce so they are prepared for Local Government Reorganisation.	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.
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.	Performance reported via Portfolio Holder Reports.
Support and empower our staff to make effective decisions.	Ad-hoc staff surveys.
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.

Fenland District Council
Fenland Hall, County Road,
March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8NQ

T: 01354 654321 E: info@fenland.gov.uk W: fenland.gov.uk