

Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	27 June 2019	
Report Title:	Annual Report of the Council 2018/19	

1 Purpose / Summary

To present the Annual Report of the Council for Cabinet to note the achievements made in delivering the Council's corporate priorities in 2018/19.

2 Key issues

- The Annual Report of the Council 2018/19 describes the performance of the Council over the last year, linking to the priorities detailed in our Business Plan. These are designed to deliver outcomes that improve the quality of life for Fenland residents and are listed under the key headings of Communities, Environment and Economy.
- The achievements listed 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. One such example is the trial of the multi-agency 'Trailblazer' project, which is preventing people from becoming homeless at an earlier stage. Supported by £736,000 in Government funding, it has helped over 460 people living in Fenland since August 2017.
- As like other local authorities, Fenland District Council faces significant financial challenges due to continued reductions in Government Grant and increased demand upon services. Nevertheless, we continue to provide high quality services whilst keeping our budget balanced. This is supported by our established shared service and partnership working arrangements. Our newest arrangement with Freedom Leisure will save £351,000 a year against our current budget and result in a £1.1 million investment into our four leisure facilities.
- We continue to be ambitious and lobby for investment to tackle important issues. Over 2 years, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority have already committed £61million towards projects that will benefit Fenland. Insight from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) and the 'Growing Fenland' Market Mastertown projects will also support areas of need to be addressed to stimulate economic growth and regeneration.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Annual Report of the Council 2018/19.

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 Carol Pilson, Corporate Director Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director Gary Garford, Corporate Director
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director
Background Paper(s)	Business Plan 2019/20

1 Background / introduction

- 1.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2018/19 summarises key examples of the Council's performance against each of our corporate objectives 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.
- 1.2 The Council continues to deliver high quality services and effective projects within each of its corporate priorities. Key examples include:

2 Communities - highlights

- 2.1 Over the last year we investigated 152 complaints from tenants in private rented accommodation and 216 from tenants in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). Supported by £196,000 of Government Funding, officers have built upon existing enforcement work to inspect 1,746 properties and make 719 interventions.
- 2.2 310 people attended our Golden Age events. Designed for the over 60's, attendees received valuable advice from a variety of partners whilst enjoying tea and cake. We also held the 12th Pride in Fenland awards to celebrate the hard work undertaken by the district's unsung heroes. This was attended by over 200 people.
- 2.3 In December, Freedom Leisure took over the operation and management of Fenland's four leisure centres for the next 15 years. The partnership will save £351,000 a year against our current budget and bring investment of £1.1million to the facilities. Through a variety of 'Active Fenland' projects, local people have been encourage to get moving and try new sports where they live. This has been cost neutral to the Council thanks to £256,000 of external funding from a variety of organisations.

3 Environment - highlights

- 3.1 We made nearly 2.9 million bin collections across the district in all weathers, with residents have recycled more than 50% of their waste through waste collections and by using the household waste recycling centres in Fenland. Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team continue to provide an excellent seven day service; responding to over 1,200 service requests and undertaking 1,355 inspections.
- 3.2 Our Street Scene team spent over 4,800 hours on patrol in Fenland; working closely with the community to tackle environmental and anti-social behaviour problems. 384 Fixed Penalty Notices were served on people who committed environmental offences, with many individuals taken to court and fined.
- 3.3 The Diverse Communities Forum (DCF) continues to improve integration and cohesion between local communities. Formed of over 30 partners across a variety of sectors, they have received over £1,456million in government funding for 11 cross-cutting projects.

4 Economy - highlights

- 4.1 Our Planning service processed 759 applications and investigated nearly 300 cases of unauthorised development. In August, an independent 'Peer Challenge Review' took place from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). This gave valuable feedback on our strengths whilst suggesting potential areas for improvement.
- 4.2 Supported by funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), a variety of projects continue to address transport connectivity in Fenland and beyond. These include: up to £25million towards improvements to the A47 Guyhirn roundabout, £16.4 million to deliver the A605 Kings Dyke crossing, £10.5 million for Phase 1 of the Wisbech Access Strategy, £9 million to improve March Manea and

Whittlesey railway stations, £1.5 million for feasibility work for a March-Wisbech railway line and £1 million for a March area transport study.

- 4.3 Work continues on developing our four Market Town Masterplans ('Growing Fenland'). Funded by the CPCA (£50,000 per town), public engagement sessions have sought the opinions of residents, businesses and visitors about how we can make our towns vibrant and thriving places.

5. Quality Organisation - highlights

- 5.1 We collected over £53 million in Council Tax and nearly £24 million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community.
- 5.2 A record number of people are choosing to engage with us online. We received over 607,000 visits to www.fenland.gov.uk and over 10,000 online form submissions. Our Twitter followers have increased to 8,300 and Facebook 'likes' to 2,200; +3% and +34% more than last year.
- 5.3 Due to a 85% reduction in footfall (over 15 years) and expiry of the lease, we relocated our March One Stop Shop from Broad Street to our offices in County Road. Similarly, we plan to move our Wisbech shop from Bridge Street to the Boathouse Business Centre later this year. This will save taxpayers £130,000 a year whilst still offering excellent service. We also retained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

6 Consideration

- 6.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2018/19 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.

7 Effect on Corporate Objectives

- 7.1 The Annual Report 2018/19 sets out the progress made in achieving the Council's corporate objectives.

8 Community impact

- 8.1 The projects detailed in the Annual Report 2018/19 illustrate how the Council is contributing to improving quality of life in Fenland.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 The projects detailed in the Annual Report 2018/19 are some examples of how the Council has delivered successful projects - meeting corporate objectives and securing the best possible life chances for local people.

Fenland District Council

Annual Report

2018/19

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Introduction by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Annual Report for 2018/19. Our report explains how we've worked with residents, partners, businesses and community groups over the past year to deliver the priorities in our Business Plan. These focus on our communities, our environment and our economy.

Despite continued austerity challenges within Local Government, we continue to provide high quality services to our residents whilst keeping our budget balanced. This is supported by established shared service and partnership working arrangements, which continue to work well. Our newest arrangement, which saw Freedom Leisure take over the management of our leisure centres in December 2018, will result in a £1.1million investment into the facilities and save £351,000 a year against our current budget. This will enable our facilities to remain high-quality, affordable and accessible to all.

Partnership working continues to support us to effectively address complex issues that cannot be solved by one organisation alone. One such example of this is the multi-agency 'Trailblazer' approach, which is preventing people from becoming homeless at an earlier stage. Supported by £736,000 in Government funding, it has helped over 460 people living in Fenland since August 2017. Work through the multi-sector Diverse Communities Forum continues to improve integration and cohesion between local people. As well as being awarded £1.4million in Government funding, the partnership has been shortlisted for a prestigious national 'MJ' award, with the winner being announced in June 2019.

We are ambitious and continue to also lobby for investment needed to tackle important issues. Over 2 years, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) have already committed over £61million towards projects that will benefit Fenland. This will address important issues relating to housing, skills, transport, infrastructure and employment. Many projects are at the feasibility stage and are explained in greater detail later within the document.

Work also continues to support economic growth and regeneration within Fenland. Valuable insight from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) is being explored and is shaping the development of the CPCA funded 'Growing Fenland' Market Town Masterplan project. The £2.1million Heritage Lottery Funded Wisbech High Street Project is making good progress in improving the look of buildings and raising awareness about heritage. Furthermore, partnership working is making good progress in overcoming transport and infrastructure challenges within Fenland and the surrounding area.

We hope that this report gives a flavour of the things we do to make Fenland a happy, safe and prosperous place to live. We remain committed to working with all of our towns, villages and rural communities to improve the quality of life for local people.



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council



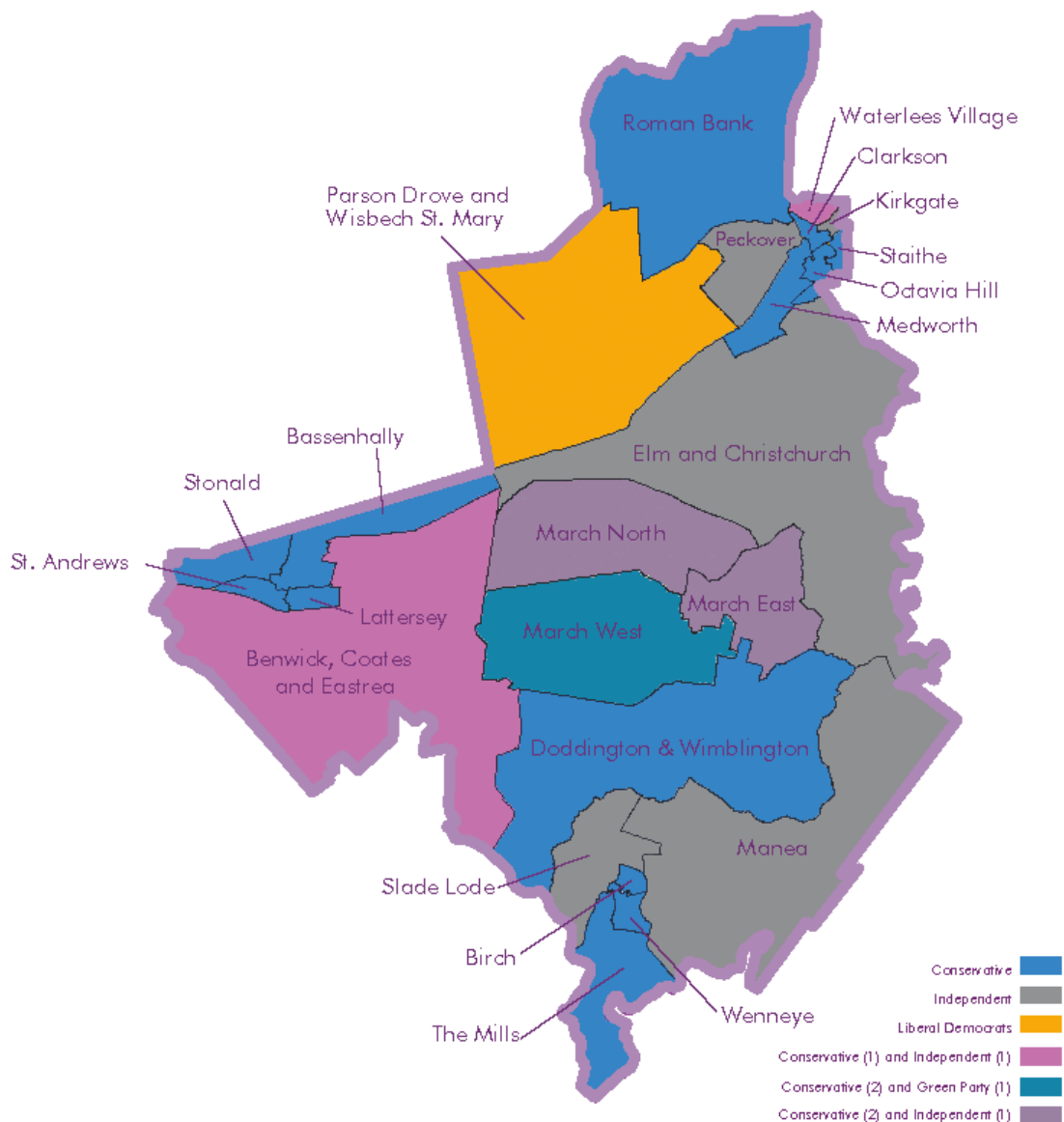
Paul Medd
Chief Executive

Fenland Councillors

Councillors are elected by local residents every four years. They represent their area, make decisions and set priorities for the district. Fenland District Council has 39 Councillors representing 24 wards.

We have a Leader and Cabinet style of governance. Our Cabinet is made up of 10 Councillors, each holding different responsibilities.

The Conservative group holds the majority with 26 seats. The remaining 13 seats are made up of 10 Independent Councillors, 2 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 1 Green Party Councillor.



FENLAND COUNCILLORS

Cabinet



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council



Jan French
Deputy Leader of the Council



Ian Benney
Birch (Chatteris)



Sam Clark
Roman Bank (Wisbech)



Susan Wallwork
Octavia Hill (Wisbech)



Sam Hoy
Octavia Hill (Wisbech)



Dee Laws
Stonald (Whittlesey)



Peter Murphy
Wenneye (Chatteris)



Chris Seaton
Roman Bank (Wisbech)



Steve Tierney
Medworth (Wisbech)

Other Councillors



Alex Miscandlon
Benwick, Coates and Eastrea



Bob Wicks
Benwick, Coates and Eastrea



Anne Hay
The Mills (Chatteris)



Daniel Divine
Slade Lode (Chatteris)



David Connor
Doddington and Wimblington



Maureen Davis
Doddington & Wimblington



Michelle Tanfield
Elm and Christchurch



Will Sutton
Elm & Christchurch



Charlie Marks
Manea



Steve Count
March North



Mike Cornwell
March North



Kim French
March North



John Clark
March East



Mark Purser
March East



Fred Yeulett
March East



Rob Skoulding
March West



Simon Wilkes
March West



Sarah Bligh
Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary



Gavin Booth
Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary



Kay Mayor
Bassenhally (Whittlesey)



Alan Bristow
Lattersey (Whittlesey)



David Mason
St Andrews (Whittlesey)



Andrew Lynn
Clarkson (Wisbech)



David Patrick
Kirkgate (Wisbech)



Nick Meekins
Peckover (Wisbech)



Michael Humphrey
Roman Bank (Wisbech)







David Topgood
Staithe (Wisbech)



Andy Maul
Waterlees Village (Wisbech)



Billy Rackley
Waterlees Village (Wisbech)

Conservative 
Independent 
Green 
Liberal Democrat 

Money Matters

Where your Council Tax goes

In 2018/19, a typical Band D Council Tax bill was £1,824.74 (including Parish amounts). In 2019/20, this increased to £1,912.38.

Fenland District Council collects money through Council Tax on behalf of other authorities. A breakdown of this is shown in the table below:

Council Tax collection	2018/19	2019/20	% of total bill
Fenland District Council	£260.46	£260.46	14%
Cambridgeshire County Council	£1,249.83	£1,312.11	68%
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£198.72	£222.66	12%
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority	£68.76	£70.74	4%
Parishes (average)	£46.97	£46.41	2%

The numbers above relate to a Band D property. However, the average property in Fenland is a Band B. This means that the average Council Tax paid per property in Fenland was £1,198.12 in 2018/19 and will be £1,262.74 in 2019/20.

Our finances

The Council's revised estimate for new spending on services in 2018/19 was £13.080m. This sum is financed in part by Government Grant (£0.444m) together with the Council's share of Business Rates (£5.081m), with the remainder being raised through Council Tax (£7.658m). At the budget meeting in February 2019, a net surplus of £103,000 was forecast at the year end. The actual surplus was £200,418 (subject to external audit) and this has been transferred to the Council's General Fund Balance.

Full details of the Council's financial position and performance are contained in the Statement of Accounts 2018-19: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/article/13042/2018---2019>

Like most other local authorities, we face an ongoing difficult position in the medium term. This is due to ongoing pressures including providing statutory services and the maintenance and development of sources of income through fees and charges, whilst managing the impact on revenue and capital budget of delivering against our strategic priorities. However, the most significant factor that will impact on the budget will be the level of Government funding. This includes the ongoing uncertainty in respect of changes to financing arrangements, such as the proposal for 75% localisation of business rates and changes to New Homes Bonus currently scheduled for 2020/21.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council in February 2019 shows that we face a continuing budget gap over the five years from April 2019. By 2023/24, our most recent forecast gap is £1.015m, although this assumes Council Tax increases each year of 1.98%. Were there no Council Tax increases in the next four years, the forecast gap is £1.665m.

Full details of the Council's Budget for 2019/20 and Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/article/14084/2019---2020> You may also wish to read our Business Plan. This explains our organisational priorities for the next financial year: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/businessplan>

A snapshot of achievements - Communities



In December 2018, Freedom Leisure took over the management of our four leisure centres. Their mascot, 'Jim Trainer', was also present at the launch



Saying 'thank you' to unsung heroes at the Pride in Fenland awards



A £2million housing development in Tydd St Giles was completed, providing 12 new homes to rent for local people

Achievements in detail – Communities

Support vulnerable members of our community

- Over the last year, we investigated 152 complaints from tenants in private rented accommodation and 216 from HMO tenants (Houses of Multiple Occupation), which resulted in serious health and safety failings being put right. Supported by £196,000 from the Government's 'Controlling Migration' fund, we have been able to build upon our existing enforcement work. By undertaking street-by-street inspections in Wisbech, we have gathered valuable property intelligence and uncovered hidden issues. In just one year, officers inspected 1,746 properties and made 719 interventions.
- Supported by new housing legislation, we prevented 315 households from becoming homeless; a 174% increase since 2017/18. Our Migrant Outreach Worker (also financed from Government's 'Controlling Migration' fund) is working with over 30 clients in Wisbech to find a route away from sleeping rough. Successful work continues through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 'Trailblazer' project to pilot early approaches to homelessness prevention. Through £736,000 of Government funding, the project has received over 1,130 referrals since inception (August 2017). 463 of these were from Fenland; the highest rate in Cambridgeshire. Our Housing Options team continue to give valuable advice, with nearly 1,800 households asking for advice in 2018/19.
- Financed through the 'Better Care Fund', we adapted 145 homes to help elderly and disabled people remain safe, secure and protected at home. 97% of people asked were satisfied with the works and said it has made their life easier 1 year on.
- 310 people attended our Golden Age events. Designed for the over 60's, attendees can get advice from a variety of partner organisations as well as enjoying tea and cake. Most recently in Chatteris (February), attendees received advice about fire safety, avoiding scams, calling 999, getting help in a power cut and joining voluntary groups. Of those asked, 100% (66 people) were satisfied with events.
- We held the 12th annual Pride in Fenland awards to honour the district's unsung heroes. Organised in partnership with the Fenland Citizen newspaper, over 200 people attended a celebration evening in Wisbech St Mary to recognise the work of selfless volunteers. Winners and runners-up were chosen in six categories including good neighbour, young citizen and sports volunteer in the community.

Promote health and wellbeing for all

- In December, Freedom Leisure took over the operation and management of Fenland's four leisure centres. A not-for-profit organisation, they will be managing our leisure centres on our behalf for the next 15 years. The partnership will save £351,000 a year against our current budget and enable our facilities to remain high-quality, affordable and accessible to all. Over time, it will bring investment of £1.1million to extend and refurbish gym and studio facilities, get state-of-the-art fitness kit, improve catering offerings and develop a community outreach programme.
- A variety of 'Active Fenland' projects have encouraged local people, of all ages, to get moving and try new sports where they live. This has been cost-neutral to the Council thanks to over £256,000 of external funding from a variety of organisations. Through 'Controlling Migration' funding, people from a variety of cultures have joined together to enjoy a variety of fitness activities including Floorball, Basketball and Yoga.

- We work closely with partners to help households increase their energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. Following referrals from councils, housing associations and the Department for Work and Pensions, the Peterborough City Environment Trust (PECT) charity made free home visits to households who could benefit from money-saving schemes. Through the 'Stay Well' project, over £64,000 in grants were awarded to households needing assistance in paying for gas, electricity, oil or making small repairs. The continuing 'iChoosr' collective switching scheme continues to give households the opportunity to get a better energy deal.
- The Wisbech 2020 Vision continues to make progress in regenerating the town and surrounding area. A number of projects are underway which include improvements to road and rail (see 'Economy'), an upgrade to the North Cambs Hospital and a new training facility at the College of West Anglia. The 'I ♥ Wisbech' also aims to empower local people to lead on projects delivering long lasting impacts to the town. This will be informed by the feedback of over 960 people who live, work or invest in the town.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage

- Work is underway to ask the local community what they'd like to see developed at King's Dyke nature reserve. Led by Peterborough City Council, and supported by Whittlesey Town Council and Whittlesey Museum, it is anticipated a building will be developed to encourage learning at the reserve. The development will also enhance links with Must Farm, considered one of the most important Bronze Age sites in Europe – offering significant visitor economy benefits to Whittlesey and Fenland as a whole. Accessibility to the site will also be improved to ensure it can be enjoyed by all.
- Over the past year, we have been investigating an approach for the development of a creativity and culture strategy. This will lever in investment for creative arts across Fenland, celebrating the Fens. This approach is endorsed by the Arts Council and has been successful in other areas that have similar characteristics to Fenland, such as Lowestoft and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. A stakeholder group will shortly be formed and a bid for supportive funding is with the Arts Council.

Performance

	Target 2018/19	Performance	Variance on target
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax support	8 days	6.3 days	21%
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	8 days	5.02 days	37%
% of attendees satisfied with Golden Age events	96%	100%	4%
Number of paid customer visits to our leisure centres	837,588	562,616 ¹	see footnote
% of those asked satisfied with our leisure centres	82%	92%	12%

Key  On or above target (<-4%)  Nearly on target (-5% to -9%)  Below target (>-10%)

¹ This figure represents performance up to 30 October 2018, which was on target in terms of profiled attendances. The service was handed to Freedom Leisure on 4 December 2018, who will be rebasing performance targets.

A snapshot of achievements - Environment



Saying a big 'thank you' for the continued hard work of Street Pride, In Bloom and Friends groups



Congratulating the Orchard school winners of our Recycling Competition



Residents flocked to the streets to watch the parade at St George's Fayre



The Wisbech Skate Park was refurbished with popular new equipment



Wisbech In Bloom were one of the groups to celebrate success in 2018

Achievements in detail - Environment

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- We made nearly 2.9 million bin collections across the district, in all weathers. Fenland residents have recycled more than 50% of their waste through waste collections and by using the household waste recycling centres in Fenland. Our 30 trained 'Getting It Sorted' volunteers are also doing fantastic work to promote recycling and improve their local environment. To date, they have run 88 events and volunteered over 730 hours in their local community.
- Now about to start its third year, our Garden Waste (Brown Bin) subscription service continues to prove popular with local households. The £40 subscription charge was introduced to make the service self-funding and save £700,000 a year. By the end of March 2019, over 18,000 customers had signed up for the 2019/20 service. Customer satisfaction is at an all-time high; increasing to 98% from 75%.
- Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team continue to provide an excellent seven day street sweeping and litter picking service. Last year they responded to over 1,200 service requests. Of 1,355 inspections, 98% of areas met cleansing standards first time.

Work with partners and the community on project that improve the environment and our street scene

- Supported by a £1.9million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we are working with property owners to improve the buildings on Wisbech High Street. Project engineers are working on plans for the foundations at 'The Gap' (Number 24) as part of the site's redevelopment. Works to numbers 13-17 are also expected to begin later this year. Training events and community activities continue to raise awareness of local heritage. Supported by £40,000 of funding, the College of West Anglia is planning a 2 year programme to enable construction-course students to learn about traditional repairs including stonework and plastering.
- Our Street Scene team spent over 4,800 hours on patrol in Fenland. They continue to work closely with the community to tackle a variety of environmental and anti-social behaviour problems, with a particular focus on preventing fly-tipping, littering and dog-fouling. In a cost-neutral partnership with Kingdom, 384 Fixed Penalty Notices were served on people who committed environmental offences. In one month alone (March), 40 littering and PSPO breach cases were heard at Peterborough Magistrates Court. All were found guilty and fined an average of £400.
- Over £55,000 was awarded to community groups within the vicinity of wind turbines to improve their local environment. This Section 106 funding has delivered a variety of projects including the restoration of green spaces, the creation of outdoor classrooms for children and procurement of new energy efficient appliances for community buildings. For the third year running, the 'Fenland Explorers' programme has helped families to get outdoors and discover previously unknown nature reserves on their doorstep. This has increased the number of volunteers choosing to care for green spaces.
- Last year we worked with over 300 volunteers across 24 dedicated local volunteering groups, supporting a total of 249 environmental events. In October, a record number of people (112) attended the annual Street Pride Celebration evening. Representatives attended from a variety of community groups including Friends of, In Bloom, Street Pride and the new 'Getting it Sorted' volunteers.

- Working with community groups, we continue to support popular local ‘Four Seasons’ events. Last year 25,000 people enjoyed the variety of entertainment and attractions on offer. Support from the community has been the greatest to date, with over £20,000 contributed from local businesses and town councils. Dedicated backing from volunteers and community groups enables the entertainment programme to remain fresh and for the events to be promoted widely. 98% of people asked were satisfied with our events.

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

- Our CCTV service recorded over 1,600 incidents of crime and disorder. This has helped partners to tackle violence, street drinking and anti-social behaviour. To reduce costs (saving over £65,000 per annum from 2020/21) whilst improving operator presence, we will be sharing staff and the control room with Peterborough City Council from later this year.
- With partners, we investigated 163 cases of anti-social behaviour. The Fenland Community Safety Partnership continues its work to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. One area of focus was to raise the profile of Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control. Awareness sessions and a social media campaign were successful in engaging the community and front-line professionals, as well as signposting to support.
- The Diverse Communities Forum (DCF) continues to improve integration and cohesion between local communities. Formed of over 30 partners across statutory, housing associations, health sector, community, voluntary and faith groups, the DCF has received over £1,456,000 in government funding for 11 cross-cutting projects. These have a variety of aims which include improving housing conditions, supporting people to learn new skills and reducing the number of people living isolated ‘parallel’ lives.

Performance

	Target 2018/19	Performance	Variance on target
Rapid or Village response requests actioned the same or next day	90%	97%	8%
% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	93%	99%	6%
% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling	28%	28.3%	1%
Customer satisfaction with Refuse and Recycling services	90%	99%	10%
Customer satisfaction with Garden Waste service	80%	99%	24%
Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	204	249	22%
% of local businesses who thought they were supported and treated fairly	90%	100%	11%
% of those asked who are satisfied with events	90%	98%	9%
% of those asked who are satisfied with open spaces	82%	82%	0%

Key  On or above target (<-4%)  Nearly on target (-5% to -9%)  Below target (>-10%)

A snapshot of achievements - Economy



Top left: Over 100 visitors took part in this year's Heritage Open Day on Wisbech High Street

Bottom left: All aboard! A festive trip on the Wisbech Bus Service in December

Top right: Following public consultation, the new logo for the Hereward Rail partnership was unveiled in March



Bottom right: Delegates attended a public discussion of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER)

Achievements in detail - Economy

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

- Through 'Fenland for Business', we continue to support local businesses and help them to grow. Working with partners including NWES and the Chamber of Commerce enables free events to be run throughout the year. As well as offering a great networking opportunity, these events provide useful information on topical issues, funding opportunities and business basics.
- Our Business Premises continue to provide popular 'start up' and conference sites, with 92% occupancy. 100% of customers surveyed were happy with our facilities. Later this year, the Boathouse will also become the new location for our Wisbech One Stop Shop.
- Our Wisbech Yacht Harbour remains busy. Our full-time berths are fully occupied and we are exceeding targets for boatlift operations. Alongside Lincolnshire County Council and Kings Lynn Borough Council, we are developing a marketing plan for the leisure ports in the wider Wash area. A bid has also been placed with the Government Coastal and Communities fund to finance extra infrastructure and operational costs.
- We continue to work with skills services and local education providers to support young people to get ready for work. As well as welcoming students for work experience, we created nine new apprentice roles across a variety of teams. The CPCA are also in the process of developing a Skills Strategy. Once complete, it will give valuable intelligence on where skills are needed to address current issues and deliver future growth.
- Work continues on developing our four Market Town Masterplans (aka 'Growing Fenland'). Funded by the CPCA (£50,000 per town), public engagement sessions have sought the opinions of residents, businesses and visitors about how we can make our towns vibrant and thriving places. Town teams are working closely with Metro Dynamics, the appointed consultants, to conduct further consultation and develop the final reports.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland

- Work continues on investigating the feasibility of a Wisbech Garden Town which could bring 12,000 new homes, improved infrastructure and better facilities to the area. Royal Haskoning Peterborough are undertaking detailed flood modelling work based on successful Dutch projects. In addition, Cambridgeshire County Council is progressing work on the A47 capacity alongside the CPCA, who are also looking at the feasibility of a Wisbech to March rail link.
- Our Planning team processed 759 applications from across the district. We also investigated and closed nearly 296 cases of unauthorised development. In August, we invited an independent 'Peer Challenge Review' to take place. Organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), senior officers and a Councillor from other UK authorities assessed our planning service to give feedback on our strengths and areas for improvement. Their valuable advice helped inform our future actions and to build upon initiatives already planned.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

- Following public consultation, and supported by Cross Country, the Hereward CRP (Community Rail Partnership) unveiled their new logo and branding in February. As part of this, members spoke to around 500 people at local railway stations to explain the work they do to improve and promote the local Hereward railway line. In addition, two fully-booked Transport and Access focus groups were held to understand local issues and requirements relating to railways, local highways, buses, walking and cycling.
- Supported by CPCA funding, work continues to improve transport connectivity in Fenland and beyond. This has included:
 - Up to £25 million to improve the A47 Guyhirn roundabout by increasing its size and widening the carriageway on the River Nene Bridge. Consultation is due to take place in 2019, with works beginning during 2020/21. Work continues on the proposals of dualling the A47, with the CPCA investing an extra £1 million
 - £16.4 million to deliver the A605 Kings Dyke crossing. Preparatory works commenced in November 2018, with anticipated completion in 2020/21.
 - £10.5 million for Phase 1 of the Wisbech Access Strategy. Led by CCC, FDC, CPCA and Wisbech Town Council, it will deliver improvements around Weasenham Lane/Ramnoth Road, Broad End Road, Elm High Road, Newbridge Lane/Cromwell Road. Works are expected to be complete by 2021
 - £9 million to improve March, Manea and Whittlesea stations. New solar 'LED cat eye' lights have already been installed from the Whittlesea station platform to Station Road. This has made a huge difference to railway users as there was previously no light at all.
 - £1.5 million for the next stage of feasibility work for a March–Wisbech railway line
 - £1 million for a March area transport study. Led by Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council and March Town Council, a series of technical workshops have been held to consider the feasibility of potential options. These aim to address transport issues in March and the surrounding area.

Performance

	Target 2018/19	Performance	Variance on target
% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	75%	100%	33%
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks	80%	94%	18%
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks	90%	99%	10%
% occupancy of Business Premises estate	87%	92%	6%
% of customers satisfied with our Business Estates	92%	100%	9%
% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	85%	100%	18%

Key  On or above target (<-4%)  Nearly on target (-5% to -9%)  Below target (>-10%)

A snapshot of achievements – Quality Organisation



In November, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall made a Royal visit to Wisbech



We moved our One Stop Shop on Broad Street (March) to our offices in Fenland Hall



Our Environmental Health team assessed local businesses on food hygiene. Susan from 'A Little Bit of What You Fancy' catering (Benwick) was one of the establishments to receive 5 stars



We welcomed nearly 30 guests from Stadt Nettetal (Germany) for a Twinning visit in July



Over 30 Fenland veterans were presented with their HM Armed Forces Veteran Badges by The High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire

Achievements in detail – Quality Organisation

- We collected over £53million of Council Tax and nearly £24million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community. We also pass a large share of this money onto the Police, Fire Service, County and Parish Councils – see the 'Money Matters' section for more information.
- A record number of people are choosing to access our services online through www.fenland.gov.uk. We received 607,000 visits in 2018/19 and over 10,000 online form submissions (excluding Garden Waste subscriptions). Positively, we also scored very well and above average in Socitm's Accessibility testing (January 2019). This shows that our website performs well and is very well used.
- Our Social Media following continues to grow, with 8,300 Twitter followers and 2,200 Facebook 'likes' (+3% and +34% on last year). We use these channels to advertise council services, local events and partner organisations. During September, we took part in a joint emergency planning social media promotion with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Communications group. Daily tweets under #30days30ways gave residents and partners useful advice on how to prepare for an emergency.
- Due to a massive reduction in footfall (-81% in 15 years) and expiry of the lease, we relocated our March One Stop Shop from Broad Street to our offices in County Road. Similarly, we plan to move our Wisbech shop from Bridge Street to the Boathouse Business Centre later this year. This will save taxpayers around £130,000 a year without compromising on the quality of service.
- We undertook our Staff Survey, which showed that 83% of staff are proud to work for us – an increase of 3% since 2016. Undertaken every two years, the survey gathers valuable feedback about how staff feel about working for us and where we can improve. We also continue to provide a comprehensive learning and development programme, which offers a variety of training that supports staff to work confidently within their roles.
- We were reaccredited with the Customer Service Award (CSE) last year. This is a Government standard that recognises the high quality, customer focused services we provide. We received an even stronger 'pass' than last year due to more 'compliance plus' scores, which shows areas where we exceed the required standard of service.
- We continue to consult with residents, stakeholders and partners about Council proposals. The feedback we receive helps us to understand residents' priorities and shape our services. We consulted on a variety of topics which included our Business Plan, Housing Enforcement Policy and customer satisfaction.
- Our Elections team continue to work hard to allow everyone to exercise their right to vote. Last year they ran 2 by-elections; one for Kirkgate ward (Wisbech Town Council) and the other for Birch ward (Fenland District Council). They also successfully delivered a compulsory Polling District and Polling Places review. Linking closely to the Boundary Commission review and Community Governance review, this resulted in some changes to the polling districts in Whittlesey.
- The Fenland Twinning Association welcomed almost 30 guests from our twin district of Stadt Nettetal. During their 4 day visit in July, guests undertook a variety of exciting activities in Wisbech, Whittlesey, Norfolk and Ely. The event was enjoyed by their German visitors and hosts, who will next meet in Germany in two years' time.

- Wisbech welcomed Royal visitors in November. The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall made a day trip to find out about the town and the great work that local people do for the community. The Prince of Wales visited St Peter and St Paul Church to meet with local dignitaries, volunteer bell ringers and around 20 organisations, charities and volunteer groups. The Duchess of Cornwall, Patron of The National Literacy Trust, visited the Wisbech and Fenland Museum to find out how local organisations are supporting families and primary schools to improve children’s literacy skills.
- We continue to help food businesses to comply with regulatory and legal requirements. As part of this, we held our Annual Food Business Forum in November. 37 businesses, from takeaways to large food manufacturers, attended to receive valuable information about new and emerging regulatory requirements. Presentations were given from Public Health England, Trading Standards, Cambridgeshire County Council Public Health and our Environmental Health team. 93% of delegates rated these as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.
- Well managed businesses make Fenland a safer place to live, work and socialise. In October, we effectively implemented the new Animal Welfare regulations and communicated with the businesses that would be affected. As a result, Animal Welfare licenses have increased by 20% (totalling 61). Website information has also been improved to enable customers to apply for licences online.

Performance

	Target 2018/19	Performance	Variance on target
% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact	85%	95%	12%
% of customers satisfied by our service	90%	95%	6%
% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	47%	38% ²	-19%
% of contact centre calls handled	80%	78%	-3%
In year % of Council Tax collected	97.3%	96.84%	0%
Council Tax net collection fund receipts	52,879,158	53,286,255	1%
In year % of NNDR collected	98.3%	97.7%	-1%
NNDR net collection fund receipts	25,604,958	23,969,262 ³	-6%
Number of visits to the FDC website	611,000	607,378	-1%
% of staff that feel proud to work for FDC	82%	84%	2%

Key  On or above target (<-4%)  Nearly on target (-5% to -9%)  Below target (>-10%)

² Whilst performance has fallen below the year-end target, the monthly performance trend has improved significantly in recent months, consistently exceeding monthly target figures. The annual performance figures confirm that 50% of calls presented are answered within 40 seconds. This suggests that the target figure remains relevant and achievable in the future. We have also revised our staffing to better reflect how and when our customers present to us.

³ The collection fund target remains below expected collection which can be attributed to £1.78m backdated refunds in respect of Rateable Value changes.