


Agenda Item No:	4	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	6 August 2020	
Report Title:	Annual Report of the Council 2019/20	

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 2019/20.

2 Key issues

- The Annual Report of the Council 2019/20 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.
- 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. Our recently approved Commercial and Investment Strategy will pave the way for new and exciting development opportunities.
- We continue to be ambitious and lobby for investment to tackle important issues. Ongoing funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has already committed £61million towards projects that will benefit Fenland, enabling us to address important issues relating to housing, skills, transport, infrastructure and employment. As a direct result of this, each of our market towns now have their own masterplan through the 'Growing Fenland' project.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Annual Report of the Council 2019/20.

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

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 2019/20 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 187 complaints from tenants in private rented accommodation resulting in serious health and safety failings being put right. Supported by £196,000 of Government Funding, officers have built upon existing enforcement work to visit 2,713 properties and make 920 interventions.
- 2.2 Supported by new housing legislation, we prevented 390 households from becoming homeless, an increase of 24% since 2018/19. Our Housing Options team also gave valuable advice to 2,065 households about a variety of issues including homelessness, tenancies, eviction, debt and living independently.
- 2.3 367 people attended our Golden Age events. The Fairs, held in our villages and towns, enable older residents to access information, advice and guidance from many local and national partner organisations. Financed by the 'Better Care Fund', we adapted 157 homes to help elderly and disabled people remain safe, secure and protected at home.

3 Environment - highlights

- 3.1 More than 2.9 million bin collections were made 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 street sweeping and litter picking service. Last year they responded to over 1,400 service requests and undertook over 1,000 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. 350 Fixed Penalty Notices were served on people who committed environmental offences, with many individuals taken to court and fined.
- 3.3 We worked with over 300 volunteers across 24 dedicated local volunteer groups including Street Pride, In Bloom and Friends organisations, who delivered a record 254 environmental events across the district.

4 Economy - highlights

- 4.1 Our Planning service processed over 700 applications and investigated nearly 300 cases of unauthorised development. In terms of meeting Government targets, our performance remains excellent (between 96% and 100% depending on application type).
- 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, £32 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. The aim is to bring jobs, infrastructure and growth to Fenland whilst enabling each town to become and remain 'vibrant and thriving places' in their own right. Now approved, the Town Teams look forward to delivering the priorities of the masterplan once the funding is secured.

5. Quality Organisation - highlights

- 5.1 We collected over £56 million in Council Tax and £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 685,000 visits to www.fenland.gov.uk and over 10,000 online form submissions. Our Twitter followers have increased to 8,570 and Facebook 'likes' to 3,368.
- 5.3 Due to a decreasing footfall (-81% in 15 years) and increased online service update, we relocated our Wisbech and March One Stop Shops to existing Council sites. This has reduced the cost to the tax payer whilst still offering face to face to customers who need it.

6 Consideration

- 6.1 The Annual Report of the Council 2019/20 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 2019/20 sets out the progress made in achieving the Council's corporate objectives.

8 Community impact

- 8.1 The projects detailed in the Annual Report 2019/20 illustrate how the Council is contributing to improving quality of life in Fenland.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 The projects detailed in the Annual Report 2019/20 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

2019/20

Introduction by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Annual Report for 2019/20. 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.

We continue to work closely with partners to effectively tackle many complex issues, whilst delivering projects that improve the quality of life for local people. We remain ambitious and continue to lobby for investment to deliver regeneration and economic growth. Our recently approved Commercial and Investment Strategy will pave the way for new and exciting development opportunities. Ongoing funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (exceeding £61million) is enabling us to address important issues relating to housing, skills, transport, infrastructure and employment. As a direct result of this, each of our market towns now have their own masterplan through the 'Growing Fenland' project, which will support future regeneration and maximise their potential.

However, we now find ourselves in unprecedented times as Coronavirus (COVID-19) is significantly impacting the UK and the world. We are doing everything in our power to minimise its impact on residents and businesses. By working closely with partners, volunteers and communities, who are generously providing help where they can, we are able to signpost residents to a wide range of support services and reduce duplication between organisations. In addition, we are quickly acting upon ever-changing Government advice to offer businesses valuable guidance and help.

We are working hard to continue delivering our core services, with appropriate modifications to meet Government guidelines. Our Refuse team are working at capacity, but by volunteering to cancel holidays and rest days, are still providing a normal service - despite a significant increase in household bin usage. Our Housing team have offered temporary accommodation to over 50 rough sleepers who are particularly vulnerable within the pandemic. We would like to thank residents for their gratitude and continued support which is helping to keep our workforce motivated during these challenging times.

Our COVID-19 telephone co-ordination Hub, launched at the end of March, is providing valuable support to residents aged over 70 and other vulnerable groups. Staffed by our Customer Services team and officers repurposed from non-critical services, the Hub received over 300 phone calls in its first three days of operation and has helped residents to access food, medicines, essential supplies and over 50 different support services.

Our Environmental Health team has been actively supporting the Government's closure of certain businesses and offering guidance for those who can open under revised operating measures. As well as implementing business rates relief measures, we are quickly responding to the Government's business support measures. To date we have been responsible for administering three business grants in Fenland, and have paid over £19million to businesses who were eligible for support.

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



Councillor Chris Boden –
Leader of the Council



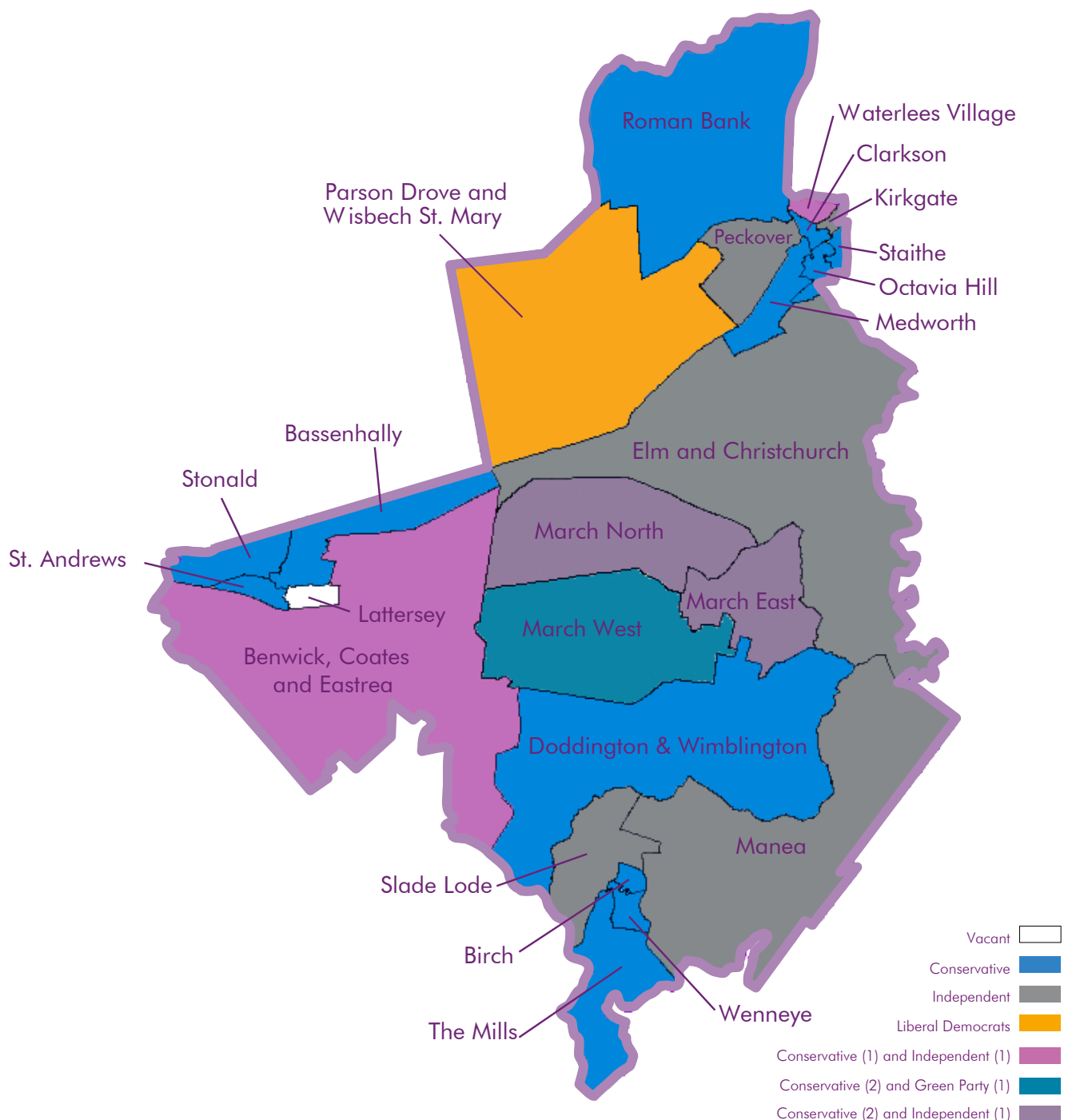
Paul Medd –
Chief Executive

Our 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 25 seats. The remaining seats are made up of 10 Independent Councillors, 2 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 1 Green Party Councillor. 1 seat is vacant and its by-election is currently expected to take place in early May next year.



Our Councillors by Ward

Cabinet



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
Bassenhally
(Whittlesey)



Jan French
Deputy Leader of the Council
March West



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 and
Wimblington



Michelle Tanfield
Elm and Christchurch



Will Sutton
Elm and 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)



Vacant
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 

Where your Council Tax goes

In 2019/20, the Band D Council Tax bill was set at £1,865.97 (plus individual Parish amounts). In 2020/21 this increased to £1,924.38 (plus Parish amounts).

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	2019/20	2020/21	% of total bill
Fenland District Council	£260.46	£260.46	13%
Cambridgeshire County Council	£1,312.11	£1,359.18	69%
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£222.66	£232.65	12%
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority	£70.74	£72.09	4%
	£1,865.97	£1,924.38	
Parishes (average)	£46.41	£48.46	2%
Total (including Parishes)	£1,912.38	£1,972.84	

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 £1,262.74 in 2019/20 and will be £1,312.01 in 2020/21.


Our finances

The Council's revised estimate for spending on services in 2019/20 was £12.966m. This sum is principally financed by the Council's share of Business Rates (£4.632m) and Council Tax (£7.652m). At the budget meeting in February 2020, a net surplus of £93,837 was forecast at the year end. The actual surplus was £115,308 (subject to external audit) and this has been transferred to the Council's Budget Equalisation Reserve.

Full details of the Council's financial position and performance are contained in the Statement of Accounts 2019-20.

Like most other local authorities, we face an ongoing deficit position in the medium term. This position has been further exacerbated by the impact of the Covid 19 emergency which has impacted the Council's financial position in numerous ways ranging from an expected decline in the amount of Council Tax and Business Rates we are able to collect, reduced income from fees and charges and additional expenditure to keep our communities safe and respond to the pandemic in line with government guidance.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council in February 2020 shows that we face a continuing budget gap over the five years from April 2020. The published MTFS shows that by 2024/25 our forecast budget gap is £1.105m. However, our forecasts are being revisited and will continue to be revised as details of the financial impact of Covid 19 become clearer.



The Council will continue to face ongoing pressures associated with managing the cost of providing statutory services alongside maintaining and developing sources of income through fees and charges, whilst managing the impact on the revenue and capital budget of delivering against our strategic priorities. The most significant factor that will impact on the budget will continue to 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. The government has recently confirmed that the fair funding review, which took account of these developments and was due to be reflected as part of the 2021-22 local government finance settlement, will now be implemented as part of the 2022-23 settlement.

Full details of the Council's Budget for 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found at: 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

A snapshot of achievements



Participants at an Active Fenland Badminton tournament at the Hudson Leisure Centre, Wisbech

Just a few of our residents and partner organisations who attend our Golden Age Fairs



Bricklaying students from the College of West Anglia – one part of the Wisbech 2020 Vision project

Support vulnerable members of our community

- Over the last year, we investigated 187 complaints from tenants in private rented accommodation, resulting in serious health and safety failings being put right. Supported by £196,000 from the Government's 'Controlling Migration' fund, we have built upon our existing enforcement work. By undertaking street-by-street inspections in Wisbech, we have gathered valuable property intelligence and uncovered hidden issues. Last year we made a total of 2,713 visits and 920 interventions.
- Supported by new housing legislation, we prevented 390 households from becoming homeless; an increase of 24% since 2018/19. Our Migrant Outreach Worker (also financed by the Government's 'Controlling Migration' fund) is working with over 23 clients in Wisbech to find a route away from sleeping rough. Our Housing Options team also gave valuable advice to 2065 households about a variety of issues including homelessness, tenancies, eviction, debt and living independently.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 'Trailblazer' project has successfully piloted early approaches to homeless prevention. Supported by £736,000 of Government funding, it has prevented nearly 600 people from becoming homeless (254 in Fenland) since inception (August 2019). The project received over 1,600 referrals; 600 were from the Fenland area (the highest in the region).
- Financed by the 'Better Care Fund', we adapted 157 homes to help elderly and disabled people remain safe, secure and protected at home. 90% of people asked were satisfied with the works and said it has made their life easier 1 year on.
- 367 people attended our Golden Age Fairs. The Fairs, held in our villages and towns, enable older residents to access information, advice and guidance from many local and national partner organisations. Over 20 partner organisations regularly attend the fairs and this year have offered free electric blanket exchanges, scam awareness advice along with health and fitness information. When asked, 100% of visitors were satisfied with the Fairs and would recommend them to their family and friends.

Promote Health and Wellbeing for all

- Freedom Leisure continued to deliver leisure centre services on our behalf. Over the past year, we saw an increased number of learn to swim users, more gym attendees and a high degree of customer satisfaction. With our support, Freedom redeveloped the Hudson Leisure Centre, with new improved facilities opening in January 2020. All gym equipment across our four leisure centres was replaced, offering the community top class equipment to encourage them to stay active. Unfortunately, in March 2020, all four of our leisure centres ceased operating on Government instruction because of the COVID-19 emergency. At the time of writing we are awaiting confirmation of the date that the facilities may be safely re-opened.
- 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 £195,000 of funding from a variety of organisations. 'Active Families' funding has supported families with children from our most deprived areas to enjoy a variety of activities including multi-sport clubs, running, cricket, fitness classes and swimming. 'Let's Get Moving' has supported a variety of people to enjoy sessions including walking sport, chair-based exercise, yoga, running, cycling and mum's fitness. Positively, Cambridgeshire County Council Public Health have now extended this funding for a further five years.


- 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 53 home visits to households to advise them how to save energy and access support. Through the 'Stay Well' project, £15,467 in grants was awarded across 83 households with vulnerable residents needing help to pay oil or top up a pre-payment energy meter. 121 households switched their energy supplier through the 'iChoosr' collective switching scheme, saving an average of £250 on their annual energy bill.
- The Wisbech 2020 Vision programme has achieved significant outcomes since its inception and has created a helpful foundation for recent projects in the area, such as Think Communities and I ♥ Wisbech. A mixture of long-term infrastructure related projects are being driven forward, with more immediate socioeconomic interventions making a difference. Partners remain committed to working both differently and together, with work currently being undertaken to review the Vision's approach, drive forward project delivery and embed actions into partner's business plans. Examples of achievements include:
 - Sponsorship of bespoke training courses at the College of West Anglia to improve local employment opportunities (delivered by Anglian Water)
 - Improvements to the Queen Mary Centre (championed by Anglian Water)
 - Progress on the Wisbech High Street project (see 'Economy' section)
 - Support provided to the Wisbech Society General Cemetery Restoration Project, the opening of Wisbech Community Farm and the Wisbech Museum
 - Over 200 properties visited to address poor quality private rented housing, with remedial action enforced when needed.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

- We successfully secured a grant from the Arts Council to develop a creativity and culture strategy for Fenland. This work is ongoing and is expected to produce a document that will support local creative people and agencies in applying for grant funding, as well as linking groups together to be more effective across the district.

Performance

	Target 2019/20	Performance	Variance on target
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax support	8 days	6.06 days	24%
Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax benefit	8 days	4.65 days	42%
% of attendees satisfied with Golden Age events	96%	100%	4%
% of those asked satisfied with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)*	39	44	13%

Key	 On or above target (<-4%)	 Nearly on target (-5% to -9%)	 Below target (>-10%)
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* This performance is for the first 9 months of 2019/20. Freedom's Fenland contract is running above the Freedom average, as well as performing 'great' when assessed against NPS (Net Promoter Score) expectations.

Our Environment

A snapshot of achievements



Our new CCTV control room in Peterborough was officially opened in February

Our Refuse team pictured looking smart in their new uniforms



Following a £120,000 renovation, the West End Skate Park (March) re-opened to the public in December

24 people registered their dogs on the launch day of the community-led Green Dog Walker scheme in Chatteris
The launch took place on Furrowfields Recreation Ground



Achievements in detail

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- More than 2.9 million bin collections were made across the district, in all weathers. Residents recycled over 50% of their waste through waste collections or using the household waste recycling centres. Customer satisfaction with our Garden Waste (Brown Bin) service remains high at 94%. Subscriptions continue to rise, totalling 21,300 in 2019/20. Almost 19,000 households signed up early for the current year.
- Our 40 trained 'Getting It Sorted' volunteers delivered 113 recycling events, generously volunteering for over 1,500 hours to promote recycling. Projects included launching a new multi-lingual recycling website, www.gettingitsorted.org, which has seen over 23,000 hits in its first three months and running a primary schools recycling project, raising over £5,600 for local schools.
- 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 1,400 service requests; 95% on the same or next day. Over 1,000 quality inspections were made and 99% of areas met cleansing standards first time.

Work with partners and the community on projects to improve the environment and streetscene


- Tivoli, our grounds maintenance contractor, continues to keep our parks and open spaces well maintained so they can be enjoyed by all. In addition to their usual maintenance programme, they undertook extra works related to our tree stocks.
- With significant community involvement and considerable support from the AmeyCespa community fund, the brand new West End Skate Park officially opened in December. It is larger than the old park, suitable for all users (from beginner to expert) and is made of concrete so should last for many years.
- Our Street Scene team spent over 4,800 hours on patrol. They work closely with the community to tackle environmental and anti-social behaviour concerns, with a focus on preventing fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling. 350 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) were served on people who committed dog and littering related offences. The 50 people who didn't pay were found guilty at Peterborough Magistrates court and ordered to pay an average of £220 fine and £226.50 costs. 3 people were issued with a £400 FPN for fly-tipping, with 3 others prosecuted at Peterborough Magistrates Court which resulted in a total combined fine of over £26,000.
- We worked with over 300 volunteers across 24 dedicated local volunteering groups including Street Pride, In Bloom and Friends organisations, who delivered a record 254 environmental events across the district. In addition, we launched community-led Green Dog Walker schemes in March, Chatteris, Whittlesey, Wisbech and Wisbech St Mary which aim to encourage responsible dog ownership and reduce dog fouling.
- Over £102,000 was awarded to community groups living within the vicinity of wind turbines to improve their local environment. Projects included energy advice sessions, solar panels for community buildings, environmental education in schools, switching to LED lighting, enhancements to green spaces and the fourth year continuation of the 'Fenland Explorers' programme.
- Working with community groups, we continue to support popular 'Four Seasons' events. Backing from town councils, volunteers and businesses has kept the programme fresh and engaging for the 18,000 visitors who attended last year. The 11th annual St George's Fayre, with a 'Vikings and Dragons' theme, saw stilt walking warriors and juggling jesters perform on the streets. The Whittlesey Festival offered an acrobatic display from the UK's leading Cossack group along with free climbing walls, miniature golf, inflatables and bumper cars.

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

- Our CCTV service recorded over 1,250 incidents of crime and disorder and supported our enforcement partners to make 105 arrests, helping to make our towns and public spaces safer. To reduce costs (saving circa £55,000 per annum from 2020/21) whilst improving operator presence, we now operate a shared service with Peterborough City Council in a new 'state of the art' control room within Peterborough. The shared service went live from January 1st 2020 and now monitors our newly upgraded digital camera network.
- With support from partners, our Community Safety team responded to 150 reports of anti-social behaviour. A high-profile example of their work is Ely House (Wisbech), where they successfully applied for a Closure Order due to the community impact of criminal and anti-social behaviour there. As part of the Fenland Community Safety Partnership, public engagement and workforce development activities took place surrounding Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime, Scams and Cybercrime.
- The Diverse Communities Forum (DCF), formed of over 30 partners across statutory, housing associations, health sector, community, voluntary and faith groups, continues to improve integration and cohesion between communities. With Government funding, they have delivered a project to recruit and manage bi-lingual advisors in the community. This has improved access to over-subscribed local translation services at a reduced cost, whilst helping non-English speakers to access services, improve their language skills and become more self-sufficient.

Performance

	Target 2019/20	Performance	Variance on target
Rapid or Village response requests actioned the same or next day	90%	95%	6%
% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	93%	99%	6%
% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling	28%	28%	0%
Customer satisfaction with Refuse and Recycling services	90%	99%	10%
Customer satisfaction with Garden Waste service	80%	94%	18%
Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	204	254	25%
% 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%

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



Members of the Hereward CRP (Community Rail Partnership) visited local stations on the line to raise awareness about the project and engage with the public

'Block and Roll,' a free talk about the development of 18th and 19th century wallpaper, was held in the Wisbech and Fenland museum as part of the Wisbech High Street Project



Delegates examining local buildings on an Archaeology Building Workshop

Achievements in detail

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

- Our 'Fenland For Business' team helped to shape the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough by representing the views of the Council and its local business community. The LIS is a framework for economic growth which is used to develop projects and programmes of support for businesses in key sectors.
- To support businesses in moving to Fenland, we adopted a new Discretionary Business Rate Relief Policy. This aims to attract and support businesses who offer staff training, opportunities for school leavers along with higher skilled and higher paid jobs. We continue to support training and education by hosting events for the Adult Learning and Skills team. This aims to engage harder to reach groups and provide training and support to improve their skills. We are also involved in the National Retraining Scheme initiative. This seeks to support the retaining of employees as automation changes their roles and new roles emerge, whilst others disappear.
- Our Business Premises continue to provide popular 'start up' and conference sites, with 88% occupancy. 98% of customers surveyed were happy with our facilities. In August, the Boathouse became the new location for our Wisbech One Stop Shop (now known as Wisbech Customer Services centre).
- Wisbech Yacht Harbour remains busy. Full-time berths are fully occupied and we have exceeded targets for boatlift operations. With Lincolnshire County Council and Kings Lynn Borough Council we are delivering new infrastructure, a detailed hydrographic survey programme and a new Sail The Wash website. This has been enabled through our £750,000 funding bid from the Coastal Community Fund.

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

- Our Planning team processed over 700 planning applications from across the district. In terms of meeting Government targets, our performance remains excellent (between 96% and 100% depending on application type) making us one of the top performing Councils in the country. Our success rate at appeal remains excellent and is well within Government performance requirements, with only between 1.2-1.6% of appeals (depending on development type) allowed (as percentage of applications determined). We have also investigated and dealt with nearly 300 cases of unauthorised development that was reported to us.
- Work is progressing on the production of the new Local Plan. A first stage consultation took place at the end of 2019 which included a call for development sites. These are in the process of being assessed prior to the publication of a Draft Local Plan consultation.
- Our Economic Growth Team assisted with the assessment applications and payment of grant funding via the Cambridgeshire Fens Leader Programme. This was awarded £1.45m from DEFRA to fund rural diversification and expansion projects. Of the funding available, 49% (£710,500) was allocated to Fenland-based businesses. Projects were funded that improved agricultural productivity, provided enhanced rural workspace, encouraged tourism and supported local heritage.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) funded the development of a 'Growing Fenland' masterplan for each Fenland market town. This aims to bring jobs, infrastructure and growth to Fenland whilst enabling each town to become and remain 'vibrant and thriving places' in their own right. Now approved, the Town Teams look forward to delivering masterplan priorities once funding is secured. A strategic report was produced, containing proposals to address district-wide issues.

- With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we continue to work with property owners and tenants to improve the buildings on Wisbech High Street. Highlights from 2019/20 include:
 - Helping applicants to develop improvement programmes on 8 properties, offering guidance on planning consents, quotations and funding applications
 - Working closely with a developer who plans to regenerate the derelict site at 11-12 High Street into an exciting new residential and retail complex
 - Carefully removing a derelict structure at the rear of 24 High Street to allow for redevelopment in 2020
 - Finalising a programme of training for students in traditional building repairs with the College of West Anglia, using a redundant chapel owned by the Council in Wisbech
 - Delivering workshops, talks and exhibitions to engage residents about local heritage. Topics have included Museums at Night and a History of Wallpaper

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across Fenland

- Following on from last year's relaunch, supported by Cross Country, the Hereward CRP (Community Rail Partnership) have been raising their profile and improving community engagement by holding 'pop up' stands in 5 local stations, engaging with over 2,000 people. The Wisbech Tesco Bus, supported by Section 106 developer funding, has been successfully extended until July 2021.
- 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. Works are expected to finish in 2022
 - £32 million to deliver the A605 Kings Dyke crossing, with construction due to start in 2020 and complete in 2022
 - £10.5 million for Phase 1 of the Wisbech Access Strategy which will deliver improvements around Weasenham Lane/Ramnoth Road, Broad End Road, Elm High Road, Newbridge Lane/Cromwell Road
 - £9 million to improve March, Manea and Whittlesea stations
 - £1.5 million for recent feasibility work and a business case for a March-Wisbech Railway line. Options are being explored for the project's next stage
 - £1 million for a March area transport study to improve local transport issues, with proposals due for public consultation in 2020/21

Performance

	Target 2019/20	Performance	Variance on target
% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	75%	100%	33%
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks	80%	96%	20%
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks	90%	97%	8%
% occupancy of our Business Estates	87%	88%	1%
% of customers satisfied with our Business Estates	92%	98%	7%
% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	85%	95%	12%

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



Staff at our Melbourne Avenue Depot helped to provide over 300 meals to those in need at Christmas after holding an alternative 'reverse advent calendar' festive food appeal

Our Wisbech Customer Services Centre, replacing our previous Wisbech One Stop Shop opened in the Boathouse Business Centre in July



The verification and count of the votes cast in the UK Parliamentary General Election took place during the early hours of the morning at the Hudson Leisure Centre, Wisbech

Our Chairman, Cllr Mrs Kay Mayor, in our Council Chamber with Macmillan Cancer Support Volunteers at our Macmillan Coffee Morning in September



Achievements in detail

- We collected just over £56million of Council Tax and £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.
- More people are using our website than ever before. We received nearly 685,000 visits in 2019/20 and nearly 10,000 online form submissions (excluding Garden Waste subscriptions) across 50 different topics. Dedicated Coronavirus webpages were set up to signpost to government support and business grant information; these received over 16,000 hits within 4 weeks. Work is currently underway to develop a brand new website that will be launched during 2020. This will deliver valuable improvements to its design, quality of content, search facility and its ‘Find My Nearest’ postcode look-up system.
- Our Social Media following continues to grow, with 8,570 Twitter followers and 3,368 Facebook followers. We use these channels to advertise council services, local events and partner organisations. Some of our Tweets have been ranked in the top 50 ‘Great UK Gov Tweets’ which ranks the most 50 engaging tweets everyday based on retweets, likes and potential reach. One such example is a tweet in January about boxing professional Jordan Gill’s visit to Fenland, which ranked 32nd and was estimated to reach 115,250 people. Our Social Media channels have proved particularly effective in engaging with residents and businesses about Coronavirus, offering us the ability to quickly publicise and signpost emerging information.
- Our Elections team continue to work hard to allow everyone to exercise their right to vote. 2019 was a busy year for the team who successfully delivered three major elections – two of which were unexpected. On May 2nd, the all-out elections were held involving 24 District Councillor wards and 39 Parish/Town Council wards. Both the European Parliamentary Election (May 23rd) and General Election for the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency (December 12th) were successfully held at short notice, and for the General Election, at an extremely unusual time of year. There was significant interest in the General Election, with unprecedented numbers of local residents coming forward to register on the electoral roll in order to participate in the voting process.
- Due to decreasing footfall (-81% in 15 years) and increased online service uptake, we relocated our Wisbech and March One Stop Shops to existing Council sites (The Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech and Fenland Hall, March). This has reduced the cost to the tax payer whilst still offering face-to-face help to those who need it. The most common queries received by our Customer Services team related to Council Tax, Refuse and Benefits. Over 96% of customers surveyed said they were satisfied with the service they received.
- Well managed businesses make Fenland a safer place to live, work and socialise. Last year we issued 562 licenses. These relate to a variety of services with examples including Taxi, Premises, Alcohol, Scrap Metal and Animal Licensing. In response to customer feedback, and to streamline the applications and renewals process, we revised our taxi licensing procedure. This has received positive feedback and ensured applications are managed in the most effective way.
- 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. Last year we consulted on a variety of topics which included our Business Plan, the Local List (related to our emerging Local Plan), our Council Tax Reduction scheme and proposals relating to the Gambling Act.

- Our Chairman hosted another very successful Macmillan Coffee Morning in September, raising £753 in proceeds from cake sales and a raffle. During December, she held her Community Carol Service in St John's Church (March) which was well supported by Dignitaries, Civic Heads and the community.
- We were reaccredited with the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award last year. This is a Government standard that recognises the high quality, customer focused services we provide. In particular, our assessor praised the 'can-do' attitude of our staff and the effectiveness of the partnership working surrounding health, crime reduction and social deprivation.
- In December, we were shortlisted for a national LGC (Local Government Chronicle) award within the 'Community Involvement' category. This recognised our work within the Diverse Communities Forum, a cross-sector partnership aimed at supporting local areas facing challenges linked with migration such as poor housing conditions, exploitation, language barriers and discrimination. The LGC received over 700 entries for the 2020 awards, so to be shortlisted was a very positive achievement.
- Our Environmental Health team continues to provide a wide range of regulatory services to support businesses and protect the public. Last year they inspected 364 food businesses, licenced 84 Animal Welfare Establishments, permitted 29 Industrial Processes, consulted on 716 planning applications and licensed 14 skin piercing establishments. They undertook a variety of nuisance investigations which involved monitoring noise, assessing odours and resolving drainage issues. As part of their Air Quality Action Plan, which strives for better air quality in the district, they successfully bid for £7844 to purchase real-time monitoring equipment. In addition, they worked with external agencies (such as Public Health England) to take court action for infectious disease control and prosecute prolific food safety issues.

Performance

	Target 2019/20	Performance	Variance on target
% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact	85%	95%	12%
% of customers satisfied by our service	90%	96%	7%
% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	46.5%	64.8%	39%
% of contact centre calls handled	80%	92.48%	16%
In year % of Council Tax collected	96.92%	96.76%	0%
Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£56,185,753.00	£56,585,398.70	1%
In year % of NNDR collected	97.98%	96.84%	-1%
NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,663,273	£24,137,938	-2%
Number of visits to the FDC website	620,000	684,190	10%
% 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%)



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Documents prepared by Fenland District Council are available in large print, Moon, Braille, on audio cassette and electronic format upon request. We can also arrange to have documents translated into community languages.
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