

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny	
Date:	7th September 2020	
Report Title:	Progress in Delivering the Communities Corporate Objectives 2020-2021	

1 Purpose / Summary

This report sets out the Council's progress in delivering the corporate objectives from April 2020 to July 2020. This is to ensure that members have the most up to date information possible.

2 Key issues

- Since April we have worked with 79 landlords to improve housing conditions and management standards for people living in private sector properties.
- Since the start of the Empty Homes project in November 2019, 191 empty properties have been brought back into use.
- The work of early homeless prevention continues to make a valuable difference to people's lives and wellbeing.
- Due to Covid-19, we have not been able to hold any Golden Age Fair events.
- We have worked closely with Freedom Leisure during the pandemic and during their reopening from 25th July to ensure that they are Covid secure. All four leisure centres have attracted customers back to the facilities and even secured some new members. Income levels and usage is being closely monitored.
- The time taken to process benefits claims is exceeding targets.

3 Areas for focus

- Covid-19 has impacted on many services across the Council, however most services are operating normally.
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Covid-19 Outbreak Plan details how partners are working together to restrict and contain the rate of infection in our communities.

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Panel considers the progress made by the Council in delivering the corporate objectives in the Business Plan.

Wards Affected	All
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Portfolio Holder(s)	All Cabinet; main responsibilities from: Councillor Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance Councillor Jan French, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Benefits & ARP Councillor Sam Clark, Portfolio Holder for Social Housing & Leisure Councillor Susan Wallwork, Portfolio Holder for Communities Councillor Sam Hoy, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Report Originator(s) And Contact Officer (s)	Carol Pilson - Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk Peter Catchpole - Corporate Director petercatchpole@fenland.gov.uk Phil Hughes Dan Horn Annabel Tighe Sam Anthony Jo Blackmore
Background Paper(s)	Business Plan 2020-2021

Overview & Scrutiny

Progress Against Communities Corporate Priority

September 2020
(For performance in April to July 2020)

Portfolio Holders



**Councillor
Chris Boden**
Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Jan French**
Deputy Leader of the
Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Benefits & ARP



**Councillor
Sam Clark**
Portfolio Holder for
Social Housing &
Leisure



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**
Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Susan Wallwork**
Portfolio Holder for
Communities

Projects from Business Plan:

Work with landlords to improve housing conditions and management standards in the district's private sector, including using the Council's enforcement powers (Cllr Sam Hoy)

The Council has undertaken 9 positive interventions in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district.

The Council has also investigated 70 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation in the same period. Council officers intervened to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to make them safe for the residents.

The geographical spread is as follows:

Town	HMOs investigated	Privately Rented Homes investigated
Wisbech	9	36
March	0	15
Chatteris	0	4
Whittlesey	0	1
Villages	0	14 Manea =3 Leverington =4 Guyhirn = 2 Wimblington =1 Murrow = 2 Parson Drove =1 Christchurch = 1

Private Sector Housing enforcement 01 April 2020 - 31st July 2020

	Numbers since 01 April 2020	Raised charge total £	Income received £
Improvement Notice	7	1680	£720.00
Prohibition	0	0	0
CPN (Intent)	4	38,000	£9,500
CPN (Final)	9	97,000	£5,152
Other	3	180.00	£60.00
HMO applications	2	1,500	£1,500

Support property owners to bring long-term empty homes back into use, helping to address the district's housing needs (Cllr Sam Hoy)

Since November 2019, the Empty Homes Officer has recorded 191 properties over 6 months empty being brought back into use, of which 52 were as a result of the officer's intervention.

Recently the officer has worked successfully with the owner of a 2yr+ property and facilitated the sale via auction and is now working with the new owner to ensure its occupation.

The officer is also focusing on ensuring all council tax data is up to date in preparation for the yearly New Homes Bonus submission in September.

Prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping through working with individuals, families, landlords, housing associations and providers to meet the housing needs of residents in crisis (Cllr Sam Hoy)

The Council undertook a night time rough sleeper count in late July with 5 found on the count. The outreach team will continue to work with these individuals.

Rough Sleeper Case Study

The Ferry Project and CGL Outreach were aware of a rough sleeper with a broken leg who refused to engage with their services. During the peak of COVID-19 the individual would still not engage with any authority figure and would not accept any medical support for his leg. The client refused accommodation and there were growing concerns around the individual's welfare as the plastic cast had been on their leg for several months.

However, with persistence and continued support from CGL Outreach they brought the client food and went to see the individual on a regular basis. Since this, and with the new Outreach worker coming in to post who spoke the same language as the individual, the client accepted accommodation and is engaging well. Since being placed in accommodation, the client's alcohol misuse has greatly lessened and they are also hoping to find work once their leg is healed. This was a great outcome for the client after several weeks of concern and the client's support continues to finding long term suitable housing.

Housing Options Team

Alongside the rough sleeper project the Council have also prevented 73 families from becoming homeless.

As an example of their work; a homeless family (one who was pregnant and a baby of 1 year old) approached the Council Housing Options team. The investigation established that they were potentially being exploited.

The family have engaged well with multi agencies including operation pheasant with regard to the allegations of exploitation.

They have recently been rehoused with tenancy support.

The Ferry Project (FP) was contacted as the family had very few clothes and no furniture for their new home. The FP, within a matter of a couple of hours, had provided the family with all the donations they had available – this included white goods, beds, settee, crockery, cutlery and a food parcel. They were successful with a Cambs Local Assistance Support grant as part of this. The family has been so thankful for all the professionals involved in resolving their homelessness and are now happy in their new home.

Deliver four Golden Age Fairs across the district (Cllr Susan Wallwork)

As a result of the pandemic no events have been held.

The Council is holding a virtual Senior Citizens Advisory Board meeting in September to explore the use of the brand and to work to support the community impact from Covid-19.

Increase the use of local open spaces and collaborate with local activity providers and other partners to address health inequalities (Cllr Sam Clark & Cllr Susan Wallwork)

Since 2003, a number of wind turbine developments have arisen in Fenland, whereby the Council has negotiated annual contributions from these developments. Volunteer committees are established for three of the funds; Glassmoor, Whitemill and Ransonmoor, where residents are engaged in judging applications made by community organisations for these funds.

There are 8 further Section 106 agreements which relate to wind turbine developments from which an annual payment is given to the Council from the owner. Although the amount received from developers is too small to warrant establishing a grant committee, there was a need for the Council to ensure that these funds are spent in accordance with the original agreements so these contributions were pooled in order to procure an annual environmental education programme within Fenland.

In order to achieve this, the Council advertised for provider(s) of environmental education services to deliver a one-off programme within the localities of the turbines.

Following the success of previous environmental education programmes, a tender was advertised in March 2020 for a new programme to run over the next 2 years. Five organisations were successful, and contracts were awarded in July for projects to start in the coming months once project plans are finalised and where COVID-19 government guidelines allow. Three of these contracts focus on local open spaces and improving wellbeing:

Groundwork East will be running a series of **Community Tree Planting Days** in the Parish of Elm and North Ward of March that focus on creating new pocket woods or orchards. Other activities may include conservation tasks, such as: coppicing and scrub clearance, general green space improvements, re-wilding, bulb planting and path creation.

Peterborough Environment City Trust's 'Caring for Nature' project will upskill young adults and the unemployed in land management skills. Four 6-week courses will be run; two will be open to unemployed adults and adults not in work, with two focussing specifically on young people not in education or training (NEETS). Each group will create a taskforce of 10-12 learners that will learn about and restore the natural environment in the project area.

Froglife's 'Green Pathways' project is an outdoor therapy project working with vulnerable and / or disadvantaged young people up to age 18 or 24 if they have a learning disability and with people living with on-set dementia.

The weekly 2.5 hour sessions will be held in local green spaces. Kings Dyke Nature Reserve & Rings End Nature Reserve are current suggested sites. Participants will be involved in long-term projects and work as part of a team to achieve an outcome with wildlife and community benefits. Knowledge of wildlife is recorded at the start of the project and learning experiences evaluated through the project's lifespan.

It is hoped that these programmes will lead to an increase in use of local open spaces, additional volunteers for groups that manage such sites, and improve wellbeing.

Other Projects:

Leisure Update (Cllr Sam Clark)

Freedom Leisure

The past few months have been particularly tough on leisure centres across the UK. The closure and subsequent crash in income has impacted the industry heavily. Vivacity in

Peterborough has handed back their contract to Peterborough City Council, with another smaller trust doing similar further south.

Freedom Leisure is a healthy business and has reserves in place that they have had to access – despite financial support from all 19 local authority partners. Fenland is fortunate to be working with a large partner that has a management team with the skills and depth of knowledge, along with the financial wherewithal, to weather the Covid crisis.

Whilst leisure centres have reopened, capacities are limited and income is impacted accordingly. If there are no further closures and social distancing measures are relaxed in coming months, income is expected to continue to climb, matching 2019 levels around the new financial year. This means that there will continue to be a financial deficit within the contract with Freedom Leisure for several months. No agreement has been considered (at the time of writing) for the leisure centre operations from October onwards, with discussions taking place in late August.

All four leisure centres continue to attract customers back into Covid secure facilities. In the past week family swims (socially distanced in a family bubble) have been restarted and are proving popular, meaning that young people can access the pools during the holidays. Laned swimming continues for adults. Wisbech Swimming club are back at the Hudson, with March Marlins Swimming Club back at the George Campbell.

Gyms and exercise classes continue to attract customers. Capacities are reduced to allow for social distancing with occupancy rates remaining steady following the week 2 slight increase in opening hours. August is traditionally a slower time for gym and group fitness due to both holidays and the heat, but signs remain positive. The facilities are even picking up new members since reopening.

Current average occupancy rates across the four facilities since 25 July are:

- Group exercise 78.3%
- Gym 70.8%
- Swimming 41.2%

Early indications regarding membership direct debit uptake rates appears to indicate that memberships are approximately 31% lower than the March Direct Debit run. This comparison EXCLUDES swimming lesson direct debits that remain suspended, with lessons not returning until September at the very earliest.

August's promotion (1/2 price monthly payment) will have positively impacted on retention levels, but had a negative impact on overall income. However, retention of members is critical to the health of the overall business, with an income deficit in August being recovered by that better member retention rate (and corresponding income) in the following three months.

I Love Wisbech Update (Cllr Susan Wallwork)

A number of organisations are committed to working together in Wisbech. Feedback from funding bodies has been that in order to apply successfully that they wish to see agreements in place that illustrate that bodies are working together collaboratively across a range of organisations rather than in isolation. Therefore a number of interested organisations are prepared to sign up to a partnership agreement to illustrate a commitment to collaboration across the town which will hopefully lead to greater external investment.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Susan Wallwork)

The Pride In Fenland awards were postponed in March as a result of Covid-19 and will be rescheduled as soon as Government advice allows such an event to take place.

Health & Wellbeing Update (including Covid-19 Outbreak Plan implementation) (Cllr Susan Wallwork)

In April Upper Tier local authorities, and in particular Directors of Public Health, were tasked by central government with the publication of a Covid -19 Outbreak Plan.

In Cambridgeshire this plan was approved at the end of June by a newly formed Public Health Board. The plan is a public facing document and explains how Covid- 19 will be monitored and how outbreaks will be managed in certain high-risk settings (schools, workplaces, health and care settings and within more vulnerable communities).

The plan focusses on Prevention, Surveillance and Response and specific protocols exist for cases identified in high-risk settings.

Delivery of the plan is overseen by the Public Health Board and supported by the Programme Delivery Group, Local Resilience Forum Strategic Coordinating Group and the Member Led Engagement Board.

The plan can be found by following this link:

[-https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Cambridgeshire-and-Peterborough-Local-Outbreak-Control-Plan-v12.pdf](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Cambridgeshire-and-Peterborough-Local-Outbreak-Control-Plan-v12.pdf)

District Councils have a role to play in the successful delivery of the outbreak plan in several ways; through the implementation of a community hub, through safe

workplace advice including enforcement and through their public health responsibilities to investigate and control outbreaks of infectious disease.

Early in the year Covid-19 was added to the list of diseases which council environmental health staff may need to investigate. The outbreak plan sets out this role more fully. Between April and July, the role of the council within this wider partnership agency structure has been developed and is now fully embedded within daily service delivery.

In order to resource the plan's requirements, the council, as well as all District Councils, applied to Cambridgeshire County Council for £150,000 cover additional staffing costs. This grant has been awarded and currently £75,000 has been transferred to Fenland.

There are 3 main areas of work within the plan:

1. Community hub

The Fenland community hub was set up very quickly in March 2020 as one of a network of national hubs. The hubs were designed initially to support shielded members of the community and were closely aligned to the county council hub which provided food parcels to those who could not access deliveries. The community hub helpline was able to support callers with various enquiries and between April and July helped more than 1,900 residents with issues such as food deliveries, delivery of prescriptions and many services being offered by registered community volunteers.

2. Outbreak management responsibilities

The outbreak plan sets out specific responsibilities for each partnership agency in a set of Memorandum of Understanding. The Council's role during April to July has focussed mainly on workplaces (for which environmental health staff are the lead agency) and residential settings such as houses in multiple occupation. The response service operates from 8am to 8pm 7 days a week.

Staff have supported 4 workplace outbreaks, all of which required daily contact with businesses, assessing safe working practices and advising on best practice. For some businesses who produced or packed food the officers advised about food safety and worked with the food standards agency and other agencies to ensure the businesses remained in production during this challenging time. Officers can be a local support and point of contact, which is appreciated by those businesses affected.

In all cases the businesses have had good covid secure measures in place and the investigations identified likely behaviour outside of the work environment (such as car sharing or socialising) as having been the likely cause of the cases. In these situations, public health colleagues have supported by drafting advice and guidance. For example, on car sharing or living safely with other households.

3. Individual cases within the community

Environmental Health and housing staff have received contact tracing training and several cases have emerged where local assistance has been requested. At the

current time this assistance has focussed on contacting tenants and landlords of houses in multiple occupation or providing information for public health England to complete risk assessments in relation to certain cases whom they have found difficult to contact through the national contact tracing system.

It is possible the council's role will expand to include contact tracing to support the national system however this work is currently only in the pilot stage within England.

In July government announced new local lockdown powers for upper tier local authorities to implement in partnership with partners within the local resilience forum. These powers would be called upon if local infection rates were increasing for example as in some north west areas of the country. The Cambridgeshire Covid19 outbreak control plan will be updated in August to incorporate these new local powers.

Prevention is a key workstream to the outbreak plan and a Fenland response group made up of officers from a variety of council services has been set up. The group are developing a prevention action plan taking account of local information about case numbers and locations and making sure staff are briefed and aware of what the council can offer in terms of community support.

Wisbech 2020 Update (Cllr Chris Boden)

Although the Covid-19 epidemic has impacted on the original timescales, plans are still in place to review the various Council projects being delivered in the town of Wisbech (including the Wisbech 2020 Vision), with a view to aligning them more closely. Discussions will be held with the Wisbech 2020 Core Vision Group in due course.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 20/21	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Council tax support – days to process new claims and changes	8 days	8.0	7.9	
ARP2	Housing benefit – days to process new claims and changes	8 days	8.0	4.5	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	602	400	79	
CELP2	Number of people prevented from becoming homeless	390	300	73	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	NEW	Baseline	October 20	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use (Annual)	NEW	Baseline	TBA	
CELP5	Customer satisfaction with Golden Age events (as per event)	298	200	N/A	
CELP6	Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health	NEW	600	N/A	
CELP7	Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland	NEW	80%	N/A	

Comments

ARP1 – The time taken to assess Council Tax Support new claims/changes target has been achieved this month, with the target being exceeded. The time taken to assess Council Tax Support claims and changes target for the year has also been achieved, with the YTD figure exceeding the target by 0.10.

ARP2 – The time to taken to assess Housing Benefit new/claims target still exceeds the target for the year by 3.50 days.

Fenland has managed to spend 19.80% of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funds. The Council is working with Fenland's Housing Team to ensure that DHPs continue to be promoted as an option for customers.

All Benefits staff to continue to work from home due to Covid-19.

As a result of recent remote recruitment exercise three candidates have been appointed as Council Tax Billing Officers. These officers will help to assess Council Tax Support entitlement and establish liabilities and discounts for customers.

CELP5-7 – No data collected during Covid-19