

# **Presentation by Leader and Chief Executive of Fenland District Council**

FDC Overview & Scrutiny  
Meeting

12 October 2020

# Sources of further information

Please click on the links below to access further information:

[Annual report 2019/20](#)

[Corporate Priority Reports already tabled at O&S Committee meetings](#)

[Joint Portfolio Holder Reports tabled at Council Meetings](#)

[Brexit pages on our website](#)

Update reports on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic tabled at O&S meetings:

- [Tabled on 08 June 2020](#)
- [Tabled on 13 July 2020](#)

[Budget Update tabled at Council on 06 August 2020](#)

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Communities –

### Supporting vulnerable members of our community

#### Year 2019/20:

- **Council tax support** - we achieved an actual year end result of 6.06 days to process new claims and changes against a target of 8.0 days.
- **Housing benefit** - we achieved an actual year end result of 4.65 days to progress new claims and changes against a target of 8.0 days
- 367 residents attended **Golden Age** events during 2019/20

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Despite the additional pressure on the team caused by the pandemic, we are maintaining performance in this area and have achieved a year-to date result of 7.88 days against an annual target of 8.0 days for **Council tax support**(days to process new claims and changes).
- It is a similar result for **Housing benefit** (days to process new claims and changes) and we have achieved a year-to-date end result of 4.76 days against an annual target of 8.0 days.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Communities –

### Supporting vulnerable members of our community

#### Year 2019/20:

- 390 households prevented from **homelessness**
- **Rough Sleeper Initiative funding** secured (£340k) plus **£50,000** cold weather fund payment
- 52 empty properties brought back into use through **Empty Homes** initiative

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- New **Homelessness Strategy and Rough Sleeper Action Plan** approved by Cabinet on 9 June 2020
- **57 Roughsleepers** accommodated as part of COVID-19 response
- **Next Steps Accommodation funding** - £198k secured from MHCLG with the potential for a further £567,705 to be released.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Communities –

### Promoting health & wellbeing for all

#### Year 2019/20:

- Funding achieved for **Active Fenland** was £196,865 including £31,885 funding in addition to core projects
- Total number of **Active Fenland sessions** delivered was 1,316 and number of attendees was 13,912
- **MJ Rising Star award** – Highly Commended award for Lauren Bremner

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 64 different '**do at home**' **online sessions** available via YouTube. 2,400 views and 25,600 impressions. 26 zoom pre and postnatal sessions made available for participants to log into and take part as a group.
- The **Active Fenland team** took just one week from date of lockdown to deliver the first online activity session.
- **Active-at-home booklets** created for older residents and posted to them with resistance bands
- **Takeaway Fit and Fed** was developed to tackle holiday hunger. Activity and game packs, lunches and extra food parcels were given to those families most in need in the district over the 6 week summer holiday.
- **Active Fenland social media** now has a total of 3,529 followers and has reached 12,372 different people during March-June 2020

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Communities –

### Promoting health & wellbeing for all

#### Year 2019/20:

- **Freedom Leisure** delivered an excellent service to the local communities in Fenland in their first full year of operation
- Improvements in the service included the extending of **Learn to Swim** sessions and increased capacity on the programme.
- New **spin bikes and Technogym equipment** in all facilities
- The successful completion of the **renovation works at the Hudson centre** delivered a new gym, spin studio & exercise class studio. Additionally reception and the dryside changing rooms have been transformed, creating a customer focussed and welcoming facility.

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Leisure Centres** were forced to close during lockdown, reopening on 24 July
- After 1 week, **opening hours were extended**. They are being further extended on October 5.
- Consequently visitor numbers are lower than 2019, but Freedom Leisure are working hard to provide **well managed and COVID-19 secure** centres for customers use

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Communities –

Working with partners to promote Fenland through culture & heritage

### Year 2019/20:

- Successful bid to Arts Council for support to develop a **Culture Strategy** for Fenland
- Consultant appointed with work in the community undertaken to inform the **draft strategy**
- **Draft Culture Strategy** to be reviewed by Portfolio Holder in the Autumn

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- An update on the progress of the **Culture strategy** will be shared with O&S in Nov
- **Coates Conservation Area Appraisal** approved by Cabinet in Sep 2020
- Work continues on the renovation of historic buildings through the **Wisbech High Street Project**

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

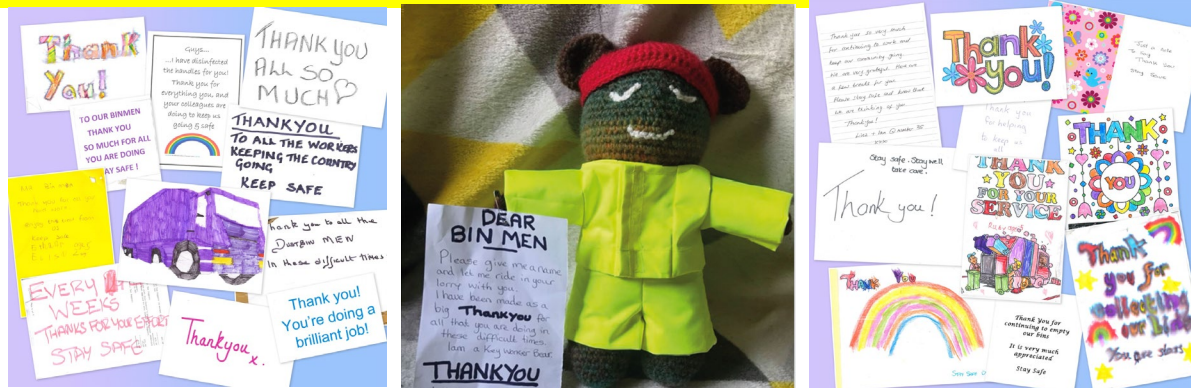
### Delivering a high performing refuse, recycling & street cleansing service

#### Year 2019/20:

- More than **2.9 million bin collections** successfully made across the district, in all weathers. Fenland residents **recycled more than 50%** of their waste through waste collections or by using the household waste recycling centres in Fenland.
- Customer satisfaction with the Fenland Garden Waste (Brown Bin) service remained high at **94%**. Subscriptions rose to **21,300** in 2019/20 allowing members to freeze the fee for 2020/21 for a fourth year.

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Over the past 6 months there has been a significant increases in waste tonnages collected, 30% more than usual for some services at some points. Almost **1,500 tonnes of extra waste** have been collected by the team since the end of March.
- **Messages of thanks** received from across the district in appreciation of Council services delivered during lockdown but with a particular focus on Refuse and Cleansing.





# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

### Delivering a high performing refuse, recycling & street cleansing service

#### Year 2019/20:

- The 40 trained Getting It Sorted volunteers delivered **113 recycling events** and generously volunteered for more than 1,500 hours promoting recycling, including launching a new recycling website [www.gettingitsorted.org](http://www.gettingitsorted.org) that has seen **23,715 hits** in the first three months, along with a primary schools recycling project that raised more than **£5,600 for local schools**.
- **Cleansing and Rapid Response** teams responded to over 1,422 service requests in 2019/20, with **95%** on the same or next day. Of the more than 1,000 quality inspections made, **99%** of areas met cleansing standards first time.

#### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- With the exception of Bulky Waste collections, **no waste or recycling services have been cancelled or suspended** as a result of COVID-19
- The **Getting It Sorted** website has been active, supported by regular social media in relation to recycling issues. A teacher's pack and colouring competition was developed by the volunteers **to support children learning from home**, with more than **500 packs** sent out to disadvantaged families in Fenland.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

**Working with partners & the community on projects that improve the environment & our street scene**

### **Year 2019/20:**

- Local Authority Support (previously called Kingdom) supported the **environmental enforcement contract** with 265 fixed penalty notices being served. This cost neutral service was financed by fines paid. Contract ended in January 2020.
- **Fly tipping enforcement** - 3 prosecutions taken to court with a total of £26,138 of fines issued with all costs awarded.
- **Fly tipping fixed penalty notices** - 3 notices served
- **Tivoli** have delivered the **grounds maintenance service** as contracted in a professional and timely manner. The use of shrubs has helped to maintain excellent displays throughout the year.

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- **Fly tipping enforcement** – 6 fixed penalty notices served
- **Environmental enforcement** – 3 fixed penalty notices served
- **Tivoli** have helped to maintain the **open spaces** that became even more important to residents during lockdown.
- An '**In Bloom**' award was won for the Council managed spaces in Chatteris
- The Council has committed to a **5 year contract extension term with Tivoli** commencing Nov 2020

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

Working with partners & the community on projects that improve the environment & our street scene

### Year 2019/20:

- **Green Dog Walkers** initiative launched in all 4 market towns and 3 rural villages to tackle irresponsible dog ownership. Over 150 volunteers signed up.
- **Markets** remained fairly stable.
- 249 community **Street Pride** and **Green Dog Walker** events supported

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Community groups were unable to meet, however **Green Dog Walkers** have continued to maintain their routine during dog walks as permitted by COVID-19 guidance.
- Annual **Street Pride** event postponed following consultation with groups.
- **Markets** have seen a resurgence since retail reopened in June. March has welcomed 5 new stalls and 1 new stall is trading in Whittlesey.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

**Working with partners & the community on projects that improve the environment & our street scene**

### **Year 2019/20:**

- 5 successful **Four Seasons** events; St Georges Fayre, Chatteris Midsummer Festival, Whittlesey Festival and March & Wisbech Christmas Markets attracted more than 15,000 visitors. Visitor and stallholder satisfaction was high at 97%.
- **Community groups** continued to access Council support to hold safe and successful events, receiving advice on keeping events safe and access to services such as waste collection and road closure management.
- Programme of visiting **Fairs** resulted in thousands of visitors to the attractions.

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Since late March 2020, **Four Season** event committees have all agreed to postpone their events.
- **Wisbech Christmas Market** will go ahead in a new format with Christmas themed stalls.
- Guidance issued in the summer has enabled small local COVID-19 safe **community events** to go ahead.
- **Community groups** are being supported to ensure all relevant COVID-19 guidance is being implemented through regular updates & contact with groups.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Environment -

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

### Year 2019/20:

- **Fenland Community Safety Partnership** delivered in accordance with Police Crime Commissioner funding requirement
- 148 **ASB** cases investigated and addressed
- **Controlling Migration Fund** projects successfully delivered

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Funding Secured from the **Illegal Money Lending Team** to deliver engagement project in schools
- **Wisbech Public Spaces Protection Order** for street drinking reviewed
- Coordinated work through **Diverse Communities Forum** to provide support for district during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

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

### **Year 2019/20:**

- **Food Safety Statutory Service Plan** – 417 business visits completed and support interventions completed. 96% compliance rate with requirements.
- **Health and Safety Statutory Service Plan** – specialist support to 35 registered beauty / tattoo and close contact services with changing safety guidance.
- **Better Business For All** approach provided opportunities for collaboration with regulatory partners across Cambridgeshire & joint materials/referral mechanisms

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- **COVID-19 regulations** introduced new requirements for closure or amended operating protocols (take-away/delivery permitted to trade). More than 700 business supported through interventions to advise on COVID-19 compliance requirements.
- FSA recommenced the **food safety delivery plan** in September 2020.
- £90,000 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) accessed for **High Street Opening Project** including public realm signage and advice.
- **High Street Project Officer** appointed & supported more than 270 high street business to become COVID-19 compliant identifying 430 businesses who needed support.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

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

### **Year 2019/20:**

- 81 **affordable homes** developed
- New 60 home **extra care scheme** in Whittlesey
- Grant secured by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) for the '**Sail the Wash**' project. Working with FDC, BCKLWN will enhance existing and create more opportunities for leisure craft wanting to visit The Wash, creating a destination sailing experience.
- to Hydro surveys completed at Sutton Bridge for the 'Sail The Wash' project

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Funding secured for over **200 new affordable homes** in March (CPCA)
- Hydrographic survey program continued in order for information to be handed over to the '**Sail The Wash**' scheme
- Occupancy of berth holders at **Wisbech Yacht Harbour** remains high (96%)

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

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

### **Year 2019/20:**

- Speed of determination of **planning applications**:
  - Major – 100% decided in 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant
  - Minor – 96% decided in 8 weeks or time scale agreed with applicant
  - Other - 97% decided in 8 week or time scale agreed with applicant
- **Appeals** allowed over 2 year rolling period (Govt perf target):
  - Majors – 1.2%
  - Other applications – 1.5% (max allowed 10%)
- Emerging **Local Plan** – Issue and options consultation including call for sites

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Speed of determination of **planning applications**:
  - Major – 100% decided in 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant
  - Minor – 93% decided in 8 weeks or time scale agreed with applicant
  - Other - 98% decided in 8 week or time scale agreed with applicant
- **Appeals** allowed over 2 year rolling period (Govt perf target):
  - Majors – 0%
  - Other applications – 1.4% (max allowed 10%)
- Emerging **Local Plan** - Additional call for sites consultation



# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

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

### **Year 2019/20:**

- Successfully recruited Economic Growth Manager and Business Account Manager to the newly created **Economic Growth Team** (March 2020)
- Disposed of 11 **surplus property assets** (just under £340,000 in capital receipts)
- Played a key role in helping to shape the adopted Cambridgeshire & Peterborough **Local Industrial Strategy**
- Formed Town Teams, comprised and adopted the **Growing Fenland** plans for our Market Towns, enabling the Teams to begin developing formal project proposals

### **March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Created web pages on the **Fenland for Business** website enabling residents and businesses to access COVID-19 related information about local retailers
- Provided regular COVID-19 **'e'newsletters & Twitter updates** regarding funding opportunities & support for businesses impacted by COVID-19
- Worked with the CPCA to develop and adopt the **Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS)**, which is being used as the work plan to target interventions that will accelerate the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Established the Council's new trading company **Fenland Future Limited** to begin delivering the ambitions within the Commercial Investment Strategy
- Worked with Town Teams to submit applications to the CPCA's market towns initiative (**Growing Fenland**)

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

Year 2019/20:

- **Hereward Community Rail Partnership (CRP):**
  - achieved national accreditation status (and now meets national standard set for CRP's)
  - New website and improved comms
  - Over 3,000 line guides given out to the public
- Highways England Stage 0 technical report completed for **dualling of A47**. Now a new proposal for dualling across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Use of S106 funded **Wisbech Tesco Bus** allowed an extra 12 months of support for the service until March 2021.

**March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- **March Area Transport Study** feasibility & technical work completed included virtual public consultation
- **Wisbech Access Strategy** short term schemes now in detailed design stage for implementation on site in 2021 & 2022
- Work to commence shortly on **Kings Dyke Level Crossing Scheme** (to be opened in Spring 2022)

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Economy -

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

Year 2019/20:

- **Fenland Railway Stations**

- All 3 Fenland stations have new information screens and help points
- New waiting shelters installed at Manea and Whittlesea Stations
- 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Friends of March Station recognised by Greater Anglia
- Electrical upgrade to allow new lighting installation at Whittlesea Station. New station planters have also improved appearance.
- New cycle parking at March station (50 additional spaces)

**March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- All feasibility, technical and outline design work for the **March Station Project** now complete
- Successful virtual consultation held to choose a preferred design for **March Station** Platform 1 building
- Full business case work has been completed making value for money case for the **Wisbech Railway Line** project including a station location
- **Emergency Active Travel** tranche 1 funding secured for temporary cycle racks and new speed warning signs for schools in March

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Quality Organisation -

### Year 2019/20:

- The target for **Council Tax collection** in 2019/2020 was 96.92 %, and the actual achieved was 96.76 %; (margin of deficit was only 0.16%). The in year collection finished slightly below target although recovery of the outstanding balances remained a focus. The small deficit in collection was due to certain outstanding debts which could not be collected in year due to the amount of benefit deductions falling below the level of the debt.
- **Net Council Tax Receipts** payable to the Collection Fund. The target for Net Council Tax Receipts payable to the Collection Fund in 2019/2020 was £56,185,753.00; and the actual achieved was £56,585,398.70. The target was exceeded by £399,645.70.

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Council Tax collection** is currently below the target set prior to COVID-19; this is due to customers taking up the option payment breaks set by Government. In addition to this, Courts have been shut due to the prolonged lockdown, which has delayed recovery.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Quality Organisation -

### Year 2019/20:

- The target for **NNDR collection** in 2019/2020 was 97.88%, and the actual achieved was 96.84%; (margin of deficit was 1.04%). Collection was down on target for the year; however the total Rateable Value increased by over £137k since April 2019. The income for March 2020 was down by approx. £200k compared to previous year, which is attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The target for the net **NNDR Receipts** payable to the Collection Fund for 2019/2020 was £24,663,273; and the actual achieved was £24,137,938. (Margin of deficit was £525,335, which is within the tolerance threshold).

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **NNDR collection rates** have been impacted as a result of COVID-19, due to Government implemented Business Rates Holidays and allocations of Discretionary Business Rate Relief. These schemes have also included an increased administrative burden on the teams.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Quality Organisation -

### Year 2019/20:

- **Wisbech and March One Stop Shops** were relocated to The Boathouse and Fenland Hall.
- **Customer satisfaction** rate for Customer Services remained high at 96%
- Elections team delivered three major **elections**, including the unexpected European Parliamentary Election (23 May) and the General Election (12 Dec)
- **Customer Service Excellent** award reaccredited

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **New Pay Point** service launched on 13 July enabling customers to pay for Council services at anywhere displaying the Pay Point logo. Over the past 2 months, 1245 Pay Point payments have been made (£187,374)
- All customer facing services can now be accessed via the **My Fenland** team, through the website, contact centre or via face to face appointment. Customer Service Centres and Community Hubs are currently operating on an appointment only system in light of social distancing measures.
- **Upgraded telephony software** in the process of being launched which will allow web chat functionality

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Quality Organisation -

### Year 2019/20:

- Our **website** continues to grow in popularity, receiving nearly 685,000 hits and 10,000 form submissions across 50 different topics.
- Our **Social Media** following also continues to grow, totalling 8,570 Twitter followers and 3,368 Facebook followers.
- % of staff who feel proud to work for FDC (Taken from the **Staff Survey** which is undertaken every 2 years). The target was 84% and the actual result was 95%

### March 2020 to August 2020 including response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- We launched the Council's **new website** in August 2020. Its design, quality of content, search facility and postcode look-up system has been significantly improved and form a strong platform for future developments. Although early days, changes have been very positively received by our residents.
- Our dedicated **COVID-19 webpages** host important Council, Public Health and Government information and have received 33,000 hits within six months.
- A large number of press releases and social media posts have also been crucial in communicating key, and often time-sensitive, **COVID-19 messages**.

# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Response to COVID-19 Pandemic-

The Council and its workforce responded to significant changes in a very short space of time, which included:

- Enabling over 60% of our workforce to **work remotely** (from home) effectively within a matter of weeks;
- Effectively **redeploying and re-training** a proportion of our workforce to meet essential existing and new business needs;
- Enabling and encouraging our customers to successfully access all our services remotely via **electronic or alternative channels**;
- Creating and implementing brand new services within a matter of weeks to respond to the needs of our customers (**COVID-19 hub, Small Business Grant payments**), and a move to new operating models based on the recognition that we are playing a role other than service deliverer or commissioner, such as matching and signposting customers/stakeholders to third party services;
- Circa 2000 households supported through COVID-19 **Community Hub** for shielded & self-isolating residents. Over 700 calls for support (both businesses & residents) were fielded and guidance on COVID-19 safety rules provided.
- Responding to, and delivering, massive **changes in legislation/regulations** within a matter of days;
- Responding to and delivering a hugely demanding **communication and engagement process** with our Members, workforce, stakeholders and all members of our Communities;



# Key Achievements & Performance

## - Response to COVID-19 Pandemic-

The Council and its workforce responded to significant changes in a very short space of time, which included:

- Creating and working with **new methods of communication and engagement**;
- Working in an increasingly collaborative way within the Council and across all services, and also with our partners, with more **strategic partnerships** being developed and established with other local organisations;
- **Sharing and utilising data** to achieve better outcomes for those most impacted in our communities.
- All of the above has been achieved whilst we **have continued to deliver all services** and with minimal impact on performance
- Coordinated and established a **mobile COVID-19 testing facility** at the Chapel Road car park in Wisbech, providing much needed testing capacity to our residents
- **Workplace outbreaks** have been managed and a **local contact tracing** role undertaken.
- A total of £19.9m was paid to 1833 businesses as part of the Government's **Business Grants** scheme.
- The Council's current **financial forecast** shows a potential net negative impact of around £1.3m by the end of the year.

# External Funding Received

- **£1m** ringfenced for each of our 4 market towns through the CPCA's market towns initiative (**Growing Fenland**)
- A number of successful bids submitted to the **CCC £5m Communities Capital Fund** including:
  - £234,000 for March Town Rugby Club
  - £75,000 for West End Park, March
  - £35,000 for Estover Park, March
  - £240,000 for Wisbech Park Pavillion
  - £150,000 for Wisbech Market Place
  - £198,000 for Gorefield Parish Council Pavilion Extension
  - £15,000 for Christchurch Community Centre
  - £36,000 for Tower Hall, Friday Bridge
- The CPCA has awarded £997,000 as a 50% match-funded capital grant towards the construction of phase 3 - light industrial 'move on' space at **South Fens Enterprise Park** in Chatteris.
- **£150,000** funding successfully applied for to support the new public health role in managing **workplace outbreaks** and providing **local contact tracing**.
- £90,000 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding successfully accessed for **High Street Opening Project** including public realm signage and advice.

# External Funding Received

- **Next Steps Accommodation funding - £198k** secured from MHCLG with the potential for a further **£567,705** to be released
- **£130,000** received from central Government for administering the **Small Business** and the **Retail Hospitality & Leisure funds** in light of the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Future High Street Fund** application for March - **£150,000** received to develop bid with the aim to attract a further **£11.3m** to regenerate the High Street area
- **£2,285,898 Controlling Migration Fund (CMF)** received from MHCLG to assist with Migrant Outreach services and community projects
- **£340,000** received for **Rough Sleeper Initiative** in 2019/20, plus **£50,000** cold weather fund payment
- **£1.9m** from the Heritage Lottery Fund continues to assist with improvements to **Wisbech High Street**