

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2020 - 1.30 PM



**PRESENT:** Councillor D Mason (Chairman), Councillor A Miscandlon (Vice-Chairman), Councillor G Booth (until 3.30pm), Councillor D Connor, Councillor S Count, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor M Humphrey (until 3.20pm), Councillor M Purser, Councillor R Skoulding (until 3.47pm), Councillor D Topgood, Councillor R Wicks and Councillor F Yeulett.

**OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor C Boden, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor A Hay, Councillor Mrs K Mayor (until 2.50pm), Councillor P Murphy and Councillor C Seaton.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Sam Anthony (Head of HR and OD), Peter Catchpole (Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer), Anna Goodall (Head of Governance and Customer Services), Phil Hughes (Head Of Leisure Services), Carol Pilson (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer), Mark Saunders (Chief Accountant)

**GUESTS:** Briony Tuthill (Anglian Water), Jo Dacombe (Arts Reach), Liam Wiseman (Arts Council), Paul Corney (Head of Anglia Revenues Partnership) and Adrian Mills (Anglia Revenues Partnership)

Councillor Mason welcomed members of the public and press watching the livestream of the Overview & Scrutiny meeting via YouTube due to Government guidance on social distancing. The meeting was held in accordance with the provision set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 and with Fenland District Council's Virtual Meeting Protocol.

## **OSC25/20 PREVIOUS MINUTES.**

The minutes of the meeting of 9 November 2020 were confirmed.

## **OSC26/20 UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTIONS.**

Members considered the update on previous actions and made comments as follows:

1. Councillor Booth referred to the outstanding actions and an item he raised earlier in the year on the Council looking to increase rents for Early Years Services, which was supposed to be ongoing, but seems to have disappeared off the action list and can this be reinstated. The Chairman agreed that this could be reinstated and thanked Councillor Booth for pointing out this oversight.
2. Councillor Booth also referred to an item regarding speeding, which was supposed to be an ongoing item and could this also be reinstated.
3. Councillor Mason made reference to the suggestion to convene an additional meeting to further scrutinise colleagues from Clarion. However, as Councillor Sam Clark is on the Regional Clarion Scrutiny Board, which has a focus on monitoring performance, he feels there is no requirement for an additional meeting at this time and updates can be provided by Councillor Clark. Councillor Booth said he believes this issue was raised because members were not satisfied with the response provided at the last meeting from Clarion,

which was lacking in quite a lot of detail. Whilst some information has since been forwarded to Members he still feels there are questions that need to be answered and due to issues that have arisen with heating and repairs, particularly at this time of year, members need to keep a watching brief to ensure issues residents are having are not overlooked. Councillor Mason agreed but feels this approach can be undertaken by keeping in contact with Councillor Clark. Councillor Booth reiterated that he still feels that the Panel needs to see Clarion; although Councillor Clark is on this Overview and Scrutiny meeting at regional level, he is still not satisfied that Members are getting all the answers.

4. Councillor Miscandlon agreed with Councillor Booth on some of his views but feels that Councillor Clark can be pressed to obtain those answers for Members in a more direct manner than waiting for Clarion to come before the Panel. Councillor Clark is in an advantageous position that she is now part of that Board in getting answers for Members. Any questions from Members to Clarion should go to Councillor Clark to press Clarion on our behalf.
5. Councillor Cornwell agreed, but as well as passing our issues to Councillor Clark, Members should at the same time use the e-mail address that they been provided with for a Regional Director, copying in Councillor Clark. The Chairman agreed this was a sensible solution.

### **OSC27/20 DISCUSSION WITH ANGLIAN WATER**

The Chairman welcomed Briony Tuthill of Anglian Water (AW) to the meeting and thanked her for attending to answer Members questions, which is appreciated as it recognised that as she is under no obligation to appear before the Panel.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Yeulett asked on behalf of Councillor Sutton about the status with the sewage system in Christchurch, which was amended 14-15 years ago and there was some discussion about Anglian Water being involved with that and taking over responsibility, with The Croft experiencing a lot of difficulty with sewage. Briony Tuthill responded that AW is aware that there is a private water recycling site in The Croft at Christchurch, and it is currently in liaison about how it can support residents of that site, however the site is not under any formal adoption process. AW has recently audited the site and as it currently stands it would not meet AW standards for adoption. AW can investigate specific locations as to whether sewers have been adopted, but adoption of sewers under Section 104 of the Water Industries Act would have to be initiated by the developer for that to proceed.
2. Councillor Yeulett referred to a heavy storm in March around four years ago, particularly in the March East area where the Green Street and Morton Avenue area and Upwell Road and Eastwood Avenue area suffered from tremendous flooding and he asked for any guidance on what measures have been taken to mitigate against further occurrences of this flooding. He stated this is general across March, there are areas where when there is a lot of rain it floods and what ongoing measures are AW going to take with March? Briony Tuthill stated that it is her understanding that March does suffer with flooding in periods of heavy rain and having spoken to various colleagues in AW and with the flood partnership it is a very complex situation. Following the significant flooding in 2014, AW undertook some extensive CCTV surveys of its sewers and de-silted where they found sewers that had a level of silt within them. It also conducted a survey of the out course of the Old River Nene, it has updated its hydraulic models for March to help inform future investment and an attenuation pond has also been de-silted. A lot of the work undertaken in March is in partnership with both County and District Councils and the relevant flood risk authority, which she feels is important given the complex interplay of surface water and flooding issues. She understands that the County Council are currently trying to pull together a bid to access some resilience innovation funding through Defra and the Environment Agency and AW is supportive of this bid and she hopes that March will be one of the focus areas for this funding. She would ask for Member support with this as part of it is around some

resilience measures that can be put in place supporting residents making areas more permeable and exploring the use of more sustainable drainage systems.

3. Councillor Miscandlon asked why it took AW 10 days to react to the reports of a water leak on the A605 which eventually led to the closure of the road for a few days and today there is another leak in virtually the same place with traffic lights. He drove through it at 11.00 this morning and Councillor Wicks drove through it at 11.30am, there are no men working there but there is water pumping out, what is being done and why are we getting so many burst water mains within the villages and within Fenland as a whole; it is becoming an increasing embarrassment to AW with these leaks that are occurring and the infrastructure repairs that are carried out are not sufficient as two weeks later the problem occurs again. Briony Tuthill responded that she would need to clarify with colleagues the information regarding the issue on the A605, it was unsure whether it could have been a water leak or a leak on the pumped main. In terms of water leaks, AW views water leaks as a priority, it works tirelessly in terms of its leakage programme and with the leaks that it experiences AW is sector leader on the number of leaks that occur on its network in that the water loss is half of the industry average, having beaten their regulatory target for 9 years running and it undertakes significant investment in leak detection, with leaks becoming increasingly difficult to locate, but there are around 200 employees who are dedicated to leak detection. In relation to the frequency, AW conduct and maintain investigations into leaks so every time a burst or leak occurs along a main, that is recorded and logged to that asset so there is a comprehensive database on the performance of all of its infrastructure and this is fed into a mains relaying programme in which AW prioritise around performance of the asset. Particular to the issue with the A605, Briony agreed to pick this back up with internal colleagues and come back to Members directly.
4. Councillor Miscandlon stated that the question was why did it take 10 days, he knows that this was reported by himself and Councillor Wicks, and one of AW engineers came out but could not find it and the reason he could not find it was because he came out when it was pouring with rain, eventually it closed the A605 for some considerable time and caused tremendous traffic problems for the village of Coates. It seems to be an on-going problem, as it has occurred again, there are four-way traffic lights, but no operatives in attendance and the water is still pumping out into the road. Briony Tuthill acknowledged the frustration, but sometimes the work is carried out off site, such as water quality and pressure checks elsewhere within the system.
5. Councillor Miscandlon asked that if Briony was unable to answer some of Members questions that they be answered in writing so that they could be distributed to the Panel. Briony Tuthill confirmed that she was able to do this.
6. Councillor Booth made the point that residents have been asked to let members know about any issues and a lot of it has arisen because of the low water pressure that people keep experiencing. He has been told by someone that knows some AW engineers that the system cannot cope with any more new builds that are being erected in the area and have said the pumping house at Friday Bridge cannot cope with all the villages it serves because it serves such a large area, it is now out of date and cannot maintain the pressure that it used to provide because of the strain on the infrastructure so asked what is happening with Friday Bridge pumping station and are there any plans to update it to improve its resilience and improve the pressure it is providing to such a large area? Briony Tuthill responded that there are no current plans to increase the pumping capacity at Friday Bridge pumping station, modelling has been undertaken and that has indicated that the most effective option at the moment is to complete sections of mains reinforcement, which will allow water to pass through the system further down the network and increase the pressure within the network. The modelling indicates that the Friday Bridge site will receive some on-going maintenance investment and AW are currently assessing both storage and pumping capability to make adjustments within the network at that site, which will happen over the Winter and will increase pressures for customers over the coming Spring/Summer peaks. Future strategic resilience schemes in the area within the Water Resource Management Plan where modelling is undertaken at a strategic level across the whole of the Anglian

network and within the public water supply zones, which will identify where there is surplus and deficit within those zones and whether some significant supply resilience options are required not only to meet growth demands but also to mitigate against the impact of climate change, so AW is investing in a strategic grid, which is being delivered through a Strategic Pathline Alliance of around 500 kilometres of interconnecting grid from the north of the region down to the east and south of the region, which will also provide future resilience within the Fenland area.

7. Councillor Booth queried whether AW had a closed system and was not connected, for example, to the Yorkshire, South East or East Midlands. Briony Tuthill responded that the strategic pipeline that AW is developing is predominantly within Anglia's region, it effectively operates closed systems, but there are some transfers that it does between the regions, e.g. a transfer between Severn Trent up near Rutland Water and a transfer with Infinity Water down from the Grafham site. There are some interconnectivities, and, under Water Resources East, AW is developing a more strategic view of a regional picture of water supply in order to make sure it is meeting the demands of both growth and the impact of climate change.
8. Councillor Booth referred to feedback received from a resident who knows a retired employee of AW where residents would receive 30 litres a second per metre, but now the Government minimum is 10 litres and at times residents are struggling to get this, particularly in Parson Drove, which raises a question about infrastructure and AW are stating that they are not going to upgrade Friday Bridge, but just undertake pipe relining, but is this sufficient and when are AW's plans to upgrade this pumping station as this is where people perceive the problem to be? Briony Tuthill responded that there are no immediate plans to upgrade Friday Bridge pumping station, it is more around work that AW can do within the network that can help support the pressure in supply zones. In terms of where this pumping station will fall into with future investment, she was unable to answer that directly now, but would seek the answers and report back to members, however, it falls back into AW's investment process which is funded on a five year cycle and prioritised along with other things.
9. Councillor Booth asked, in relation to the strategic level of development, how is AW going to cope with large scale developments that are being proposed in Fenland, e.g. there is a proposal for Wisbech Garden Town, and also with the new Local Plan that is being developed and the Government recent White Paper stating Fenland needs to build twice as many houses than it is currently building each year and how is AW engaging with Fenland to ensure the capacity within its existing system can cope with this if we are experiencing issues currently. Briony Tuthill stated that, in terms of Local Plan, AW is a statutory consultee and there is a dedicated team that work with the local authorities on drawing up these local plans and in Fenland AW are helping to prepare the Water Cycle Study, which will identify any implications for water supply infrastructure and also the water recycling side as well. AW has also been involved with working with the Council with the Wisbech Garden Town bid and is supportive of this and sustainable growth and development and that is how AW works with the local authorities across the region. AW has a duty to ensure that the infrastructure is aligned with the anticipated scale and timing of that growth. When AW works with local authorities on this, it strongly encourages that integrated water management issues are being incorporated within new developments and that they have wider community and environmental benefits, e.g. that sustainable drainage systems are considered and used within new developments, a key driver is also water efficiency within new developments and re-developments and ensuring down to the fittings and fixtures that developers are putting in water proficient measures.
10. Councillor Booth asked that, when AW comes to its five-year plan, would it be allocating additional resources to the Fenland area because there are major proposals for housing in the future? Briony Tuthill responded that AW interact with the Local Plans and the work that goes into that informs its Water Resource Management Plan, which is AW's strategic plan undertaken every five years in terms of water resources, and this cascades into its price determination.

11. Councillor Booth referred to a 3-4 inch main supply in the area and AW mentioned relining the supply, does that involve replacing that with better or wider stock, what does this mean and what are the plans to improve the capacity in particular in the rural areas? Briony Tuthill advised that the mains leaving the supply points are much larger than 3-4 inches and as the network travels away from the supply points it reduces, which is due to water quality to ensure an adequate turnover is maintained of the water in those mains. There are plans currently being developed to upsize sections within this network to reduce the impact of higher demand, some of this will also result in the upsizing of some of those mains where we can do it without impacting on water quality.
12. Councillor Booth referred to an incident at Wisbech St Mary whereby during the Summer there was a barn fire and the Fire Service were in attendance, but unfortunately could not get enough water from the mains and ended up going to a natural water source and using that to combat the fire. He expressed his concern that there is not enough water in the supply to tackle a fire, but asked what obligations AW has in relation to this? Briony Tuthill stated that AW's obligations are set out in the Water Industry Act 1991, which sets an obligation to provide fire hydrants and to ensure they are maintained and serviceable and the Fire Service have a right to take water from AW's network to tackle a fire. There is no duty imposed on maintaining the pressure or the supply, but clearly it is both the interests of AW and the Fire Service to work together and at a strategic level this is facilitated by the Local Resilience Forums and there is an emergency planning team. In terms of a tactical level, there are protocols in place where the Fire Service have AW's Duty Manager's number as AW asked to be informed whenever they are drawing from the network due to the implications of pressure and water quality and a conversation can happen at that point if AW is aware of any issues within the network and could potentially re-direct to another main.
13. Councillor Booth thanked Briony Tuthill for coming to this meeting. He thinks it would be useful if the Panel could continue this type of activity as not only does it serve for AW to get good feedback on thoughts from customers, but it is also educational to members on what the plans are for the future and it demonstrates the good working relationship needed going forward, particularly in light of some of these large scale future development plans.
14. Councillor Wicks referred back to the water leak on the A605, whilst he appreciated that Briony Tuthill would not be in the position to answer the question, he stated that on Saturday he reported the leak and the follow up information he was given was that an engineer would come out and assess the leak as a trickle of which his comment was that it was more like a flow and sometime after this the traffic light system was put in place and he was assured at the time that engineers would be on site on Monday to carry out the repair and at 11.30am he visited the site and there is nobody in attendance.
15. Councillor Wicks expressed the view that the number of failures that seem to be occurring at the pumping station at the end of South Green, Coates is becoming a more frequent event and it does have a drastic impact on at least one resident. He asked if he could have an indication on whether there was going to be an upgrade due to the amount of building taking place within Coates or what the way forward is? Briony Tuthill responded that this is one of the questions where she has been unable to contact the Site Manager as he is on annual leave, however, she is aware of issues with that pumping station and asked if it was affecting water recycling or water. Councillor Wicks stated it is a foul in-reach pumping station. Briony stated that she would have to report back the situation to Councillor Wicks but assured him that it was being investigated. Councillor Wicks appreciated this but asked for further consultation on it due to the impact it is having on at least one of the residents and it has been on-going for a considerable amount of time.
16. Councillor Wicks referred to the mains supply to Whittlesey and the number of burst water mains on this mains supply that have taken place within his ward; two cases at Kings Dyke where residences have been flooded and a third major incident at Kings Delph where the A605 had to be closed so that extensive road repairs could be undertaken. As this is a mains supply to this area, he asked why are there so many failures? Briony Tuthill responded that having spoken to the Manager that operates that area they are aware of

some failures along that main and there is a programme in place to replace old water mains, but has asked for more information to clarify what bursts are being referred to and how far back in time and, therefore, she will report back to Members.

17. Councillor Skoulding thanked AW as on 1 December AW came out to West End, March and with the local highway team undertook an investigation which showed the cause of the roadway sinking and damage to the houses beside it was due to several water leaks. However, the residents have been complaining about this, to his knowledge, for the last five years and it is hoped that the issue will now be resolved quickly. Briony Tuthill stated that she is aware that AW attended the trial holes that highways dug on Monday last week, the report that AW has received back from highways is that there is no evidence of any leaking mains. Councillor Skoulding stated that he was told there was water leaking. Briony reiterated that the report AW has received shows no leaking mains.
18. Councillor Cornwell referred back to Friday Bridge Pumping Station, which is one of the main water supply routes into March and if the pumping station is not going to be re-invested in it causes concern as this is the original main from the original water supply into March and March is now suffering more and more breakdowns with that particular main. He asked have investigations been carried out as to why there are so many breakdowns and are there any plans to replace it? Briony Tuthill confirmed that there are no current plans for replacement of this mains, however, what AW is doing is developing further contingency re-zones within the wider network, which minimises the impact of any failures. There are currently plans to reinforce the area, especially around Wisbech St Mary and surrounding villages, including some mains relaying and reinforcement. Councillor Cornwell made the point that Wisbech St Mary is nowhere near March in relation to water supply, he is talking about the mains that comes in from Friday Bridge and the infamous pumping station into March so heads south from Friday Bridge. Briony reiterated that the information she has on this is that there are no current plans on replacing that main, but there are plans and work developing for contingency re-zones within that network.
19. Councillor Cornwell asked if the links to a new railway line between Wisbech and March happen would AW seize those engineering possibilities to upgrade this main? Briony Tuthill stated that if it is in AW's interest to do so it would work in collaboration with others.
20. Councillor Cornwell stated that residents complain bitterly at times that when the mains burst and roadworks and traffic works are put in place that they do not see anyone undertaking any work, which really annoys them when this happens. He asked if there is a way that the actual traffic control can be streamlined more with actual work undertaken? Briony Tuthill agreed that there possibly is as AW always strives for improvements, it has a dedicated highways liaison team who work across all the different highway authorities and when planning work in the highway, safety is paramount. There are various initiatives that are being developed to reduce the impact and part of it is about AW investing and developing in a smarter network as it wants to reduce the amount it works in the highway not only from a disruption point of view, but from a safety point of view and whilst there is a lot of work taking place in this area, unfortunately there are instances when traffic management does have to be put in place.
21. Councillor Cornwell asked why it is necessary for AW to transport large quantities of foul and nauseous smelling waste from/to the March sewage works to the disgust of many residents in the North of March? He further asked that if modern technology cannot be deployed to change this why cannot handling be accommodated so that such haulage occurs overnight? Briony Tuthill responded that it is obviously a natural byproduct of AW's processes and there is a need to transport it around its region from its smaller satellite recycling water centres, it does transport slush into large sites for processes and in terms of adjusting hours of operation it is undertaken in daylight hours for the safety of AW's staff and access, and equally haulage at night could be disruptive to residents in terms of traffic noise and lights. Unfortunately, it is an evil necessary of waste byproducts, but contact has been made with the Site Manager to see if there is anything more that AW can do in minimising the impact on residents. Councillor Cornwell reiterated that it is a vile smell, especially in the Summer, there is actually unease from residents of his ward in the route

that the lorries travel to the sewage works and the lorries are not even washed down after coming out of the site.

22. Councillor Cornwell asked, compared to total income, what percentage is re-invested in water networks and infrastructure; sewage networks and infrastructure; and shareholder dividends? Briony Tuthill advised that all this information is readily available in AW's Annual Integrated Report, which is published on its website and it has a commitment to ensure that there are fair charges and fair returns for its investors. The money raised from bills, along with how much AW can reinvest into its services, is decided through its price control mechanism, which is decided by Ofwat every five years. As an example, the average bill in 2020/21 is £1.13 a day of which 40p is spent on people and materials, 24p on maintaining the equipment, 17p on building new assets, 14p paying back interest, 8p paying taxes and its licence, 6p on energy and 4p is net profit. It has a pension fund providing pensions to public sector workers across Canada, Australia and the UK, very much in it for the long term in terms of its investment and they have not taken the dividend out of the business over the last few years and have committed not to do so for the next five years to reinvest that within the business to ensure future resilience. Councillor Cornwell said that the cost information should be highlighted in the public domain.
23. Councillor Count thanked AW for the work it has been doing in The Croft at Christchurch, which was mentioned earlier. AW have been actively engaged with the District Council and County Council but reiterated that this is a private system and not actually AW's responsibility. Councillor Count referred to the response provided to Councillor Cornwell in relation to the waste that travels through the north of March to the sewage site and he completely agrees with Councillor Cornwell's description of the unacceptable nature of this as when the trucks come through they leave a stench that forces people indoors in the middle of Summer having to shut all the windows and doors and what he has heard in response is that this is a natural biproduct and that AW needs to do this, and it seemed to come across as a necessary evil, but in his view it is not acceptable for these trucks to come through these neighbourhoods which are highly residential and he would describe it as anti-social behaviour. He expressed the view that what may be necessary is the transportation, but how you transport it does not necessitate the stench being suffered by local people, for example, if AW used sealed units more or washed down in between that would get rid of the smell, but he can only assume this is not done because the investment in vehicles is too great or there is unwillingness to spend money or time in washing and he does not accept that this is a necessary part of AW's industry to inflict this on residents. He knows there were some results where the curtain-backed vehicles were put down, but more attention needs to be paid to the manner it is transported so it is completely sealed and hosed down in between trips. Councillor Count referred to some responses earlier about the problems with March and they are extensive and well known and to do with the catchment and the water flows and there was mention that an officer from the County Council was putting in a bid to Defra and this is a partnership project with AW, Middle Level Commissioners, Fenland District Council and the County Council, which did come across as a County Council issue, but all parties are working together to solve this and he hopes this bid will be successful and get to grips with some of the problems in March.
24. Councillor Count asked about the network grid upgrade which will deliver more capacity and no timeframe was provided and asked how long this will be before it makes a difference to the people? Briony Tuthill responded that the strategic grid is due to come online by the end of this asset period, 2025.
25. Councillor Mrs Mayor referred to an issue that arose with a major sewer collapse in March 2020 at the junction of the A605 with Bellman's Road where there was three way traffic lights for nearly 6 months, although it is appreciated that the Covid situation added to the problems, however the A605 is a major route and she asked if that sewer collapse at that junction was also the cause of the overflowing sewage that was deposited in Kingfisher Road all over residents gardens and tankers had to pump the sewage from the drains and AW had to cleanse the gardens, which then reoccurred and had to be rectified a second time. She feels it must have been vastly expensive for AW and not pleasant for the

residents of Kingfisher Road, many of which are elderly and ill. It seems incomprehensible to residents that Kingfisher Road is connected to a pumping station off Station Road, which is what she has been told, which is so far away and so many houses in between is incomprehensible. Briony Tuthill gave apologies for the situation that occurred at the sewer collapse and confirmed that the flooding experienced was linked to the collapse of the sewer on Bellmans Road and as they were undertaking the repair they were trying to minimise and mitigate the flows and managing those flows on a live asset is difficult hence the tankering operation, which unfortunately resulted in the flooding to those residents. In relation to Kingfisher Road, the issues appear to be within the network and not in the pumping station, but she would like to take this issue away and do a proper investigation with the Site Manager who is currently on leave. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that the operatives on the ground were extremely helpful and kept her updated despite the conditions they were working under.

26. Councillor Mrs Mayor asked if AW were aware of the development of 220 properties on the Showfield site at East Delph in Whittlesey, which is adjacent to Kingfisher Road, and it is indicated that some of these properties will also be connected to the sewers in Teal Road and she is concerned that this will exacerbate the problems as she believes it is going to be a significant number of properties going into this system. Briony Tuthill advised that AW is aware of the proposal and commented on the planning application whereby a condition was put on the planning permission to ensure that a foul surface water drainage strategy was submitted and approved. This condition has been discharged and AW was consulted on the submitted drainage strategy, which was acceptable to it. The connection point for part of the site is off Teal Road, which does have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional flows. Councillor Mrs Mayor begged to differ with this view but appreciated that AW were the experts and expressed her concern with the system in this area altogether. Briony stated that when AW looks at the implications of planning proposals, the history, previous incidents, its own modelling and the views of the operatives on the ground are all taken into account.
27. Councillor Mason referred to the Lake Close development, which was completed over 6 years ago, but there are still issues with incomplete work continuing and there seems to be a blame culture with Clarion blaming AW and AW blaming Highways and asked for an update on this issue. Briony Tuthill responded that she understands there have been some long running issues and also some structural issues with the sewers, some were repaired and other relined, with the sewers now ready for adoption and one of AW's Drainage Engineers will carry out a final inspection, which includes a CCTV survey of the sewers, and it is believed that AW will be in the position to adopt the sewers in the first quarter of next year.
28. Councillor Connor referred to the villages of Doddington and Wimblington, which are both growth villages in the Local Plan, Doddington had two sites one down Eastall Lane and one down Cooks Green and because of a lack of capacity at the treatment centre in Wood Street, Doddington the affluent is being taken away by road tanker to the March Treatment site and asked what is going to happen to alleviate this situation, bearing in mind the reference to smells mentioned by other councillors, which is only exacerbating the problem.
29. Councillor Connor stated that when a planning application is received for these villages, AW is a statutory consultee and when it says in the report there is sufficient capacity to approve these planning applications, he is at odds with this as he has seen at first hand that there is not sufficient capacity and asked when the infrastructure at Doddington going to be updated? Briony Tuthill agreed to provide responses to Councillor Connor's questions following the meeting.
30. Councillor Booth requested that AW be invited back on an annual basis to give Members an update and track progress on some of the projects that have been mentioned and also give Members the opportunity to provide feedback from residents.
31. Councillor Miscandlon asked would it be advantageous for AW to announce those good news stories to Councillors so the residents that they represent are fully aware of what is going to happen in the near future. Briony Tuthill indicated in the affirmative.



Briony Tuthill thanked the Panel for inviting her and giving her the opportunity to answer Member's questions, it is extremely helpful for AW to hear what is happening within Members' communities, which is very much her role to co-ordinate this information back into AW. She has spoken to many colleagues in obtaining answers to Members' questions and hoped that she has satisfied some questions and will report back on those that she needs to take away to obtain further information. She also welcomed the opportunity to come back and happy to share those good news stories for them to be cascaded into the communities.

The Chairman thanked Briony Tuthill again for attending and providing Members with a wealth of information and for her time, and he hoped that this relationship can be maintained for the future.

*(Councillor Mrs Mayor attended the meeting as an observer and was granted the permission by the Chairman to ask questions of Anglian Water)*

## **OSC28/20 CULTURE STRATEGY UPDATE**

Members considered the Council's approach to developing a draft Creativity and Culture Strategy for Fenland and the key outcomes as well as the approach to delivery that the Strategy will address.

The Chairman invited Councillor Seaton as Portfolio Holder to present the report. Councillor Seaton advised Members that the Council has worked with Arts Council England and Arts Reach to produce the Strategy to support the development of creativity, culture and heritage activities in Fenland's local communities for the next 10 years. He stated that at the meeting today were Liam Wiseman from Arts Council England who has supported the development of the Strategy with his advice and direction as well as the Arts Council's financial support and also Jo Dacombe from Arts Reach who is the Consultant who has worked with creative practitioners across Fenland to assess what is happening in the area at the moment, identify strengths and weaknesses and put the draft Strategy together and he thanked them both for their assistance with this project.

Councillor Seaton stated that the document before Members today is really needed, especially to support the recovery from the impact of Covid has had on everyone across Fenland. He made the point that the document is about the culture, places and people and their ability to be creative and the rich heritage in Fenland. Culture is about people and communities, it's about what we do and who we are, how we live and the way we live our lives, it is a broad range of activities which bring people together. He referred to some of highlights in Fenland and that one of the Council's overarching Corporate priorities is to work with partners to maintain Fenland's culture and heritage to ensure that Fenland remains to be a great place to live and to work in, there is strength in communities, there is improved community health and local economy and the cultural sector plays a vital role in regeneration, community cohesion and residents well-being.

Councillor Seaton informed Members that the issues that the Strategy development work uncovered was that there was no co-ordination of cultural activities across Fenland, there were negative preconceptions to creativity and culture by both locals and visitors, but there is lots to be proud of in Fenland's natural and heritage assets. He made the point that the Strategy is a community strategy and a steering group of local creative and cultural practitioners along with support from the Arts Council and other bodies will move the Strategy's actions forwards and it is anticipated that a development role will be established funded by Arts Council, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Fenland District Council, with the Strategy supporting the upskilling of the local community giving them confidence to develop funding support for local cultural events and improving communications across Fenland and linking cultural groups together. It is expected the Strategy will be used across the District to develop regeneration, place making, engagement, employability, community cohesion and resident well-being.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that the introduction from Councillor Seaton shows the breadth of the subject being discussed and as a true Fenman, in his opinion, you cannot beat the Fens as it has so many attributes. He is slightly concerned due to the enormous breadth of interest, how this is going to be reduced into bite sized pieces for delivery as it is a massive subject, it cannot be done all at once or with the same people. Councillor Seaton responded that all the threads of the cultural and arts opportunities need to be pulled together, there are a lot of functions that occur and individual arts groups, but they are all in their own silos and there is a need to create something which is unique to Fenland and what people want. Jo Dacombe agreed that culture is a very broad term and she likes to think of it as creativity and heritage, which people probably understand more readily. She referred to delivery and queried who Councillor Cornwell meant in 'we', as she sees it as everybody, with there already being a number of people in the community delivering interesting things, but those things could have a lot more potential. Jo Dacombe stated that the Strategy focuses on connecting things better as once people work together they have more power to actually grow, empower and learn from each other and draw down bigger resources and she sees a lot of potential for things to grow, a few things need to start that are missing, but not necessarily creating too many new projects, but building on what is already there and enabling people to do it for themselves. She advised that when undertaking the consultation there was a huge excitement, interest and enthusiasm from people, they had ideas, but just need some support or facilitation or connecting to make those ideas happen. She acknowledged that not everything can be done at once, but this is a 10-year Strategy so a vision for the future which builds in steps, but the first part is getting the infrastructure right, getting people connected in the right way, giving them the skills that they need to take things on themselves and move it forward, with perhaps the District Council's role being to start that facilitation in joining things together and getting things moving. Councillor Seaton made the point that this is not a Strategy for Fenland District Council, this is a Strategy for the community, the Council will be facilitators, but it is a steering group with help from all areas. Councillor Cornwell stated that he did not think it was purely a District Council Strategy as it has to be on a wide partnership basis to work. He feels it is a massive challenge and he will be interested to see how things develop.
2. Councillor Booth asked if it is a statutory duty for the Council to undertake this and hearing that this is not for the District Council why is it before the District Council, are we in effect the lead partner in this process? Jo Dacombe advised that the Council has been given some funding from Arts Council England to undertake this study and make recommendations, but it is definitely for the whole community and what she has written has been based entirely on consultation. Most of the consultation was undertaken in January to March, it felt like it was starting to build momentum, but the pandemic has really slowed this down and hopefully launching the Strategy as soon as we can will start that enthusiasm in the community again. The District Council have that role in facilitation, but there is already a Steering Group of other organisations which can be expanded and built upon, which could be the leadership model and the Council may have to facilitate this by pulling the meetings together, but there are people with the skills and expertise on this group already who could be the leaders and the drivers of the Strategy. Councillor Seaton added that the Council is looking to engage an officer to work for 2-3 years on pulling this altogether, which will be co-funded from various sources. He stated that there has been great support from Arts Council England, and they are committed to continue with this. He feels that people do want some form of culture and arts within Fenland, it is just pulling it altogether, so everyone has the opportunity to be involved. Liam Wiseman stated from an Arts Council perspective it wants to provide this money and this opportunity to Fenland as it knows it is an area of low engagement for arts and culture, it is committed to providing opportunities and funding them, and will continue to provide support for artistic creative cultural activity in Fenland. He feels that it has to be a two-pronged approach with the Council coming up with the Strategy and promoting the strategic overview and outcomes, but also wants this to be a Strategy by

Fenland people for Fenland people, which is where the heavy consultation came in to make sure it did not feel part of the Council or another body telling people what to do, but ensuring people have the opportunities and the right resources.

3. Councillor Booth asked if the Strategy is just for Fenland District Council's area? Liam Wiseman advised that it has been working across the four market towns.
4. Councillor Booth referred to the mention of Town Councils, but there is no mention of Parish Councils as one of the key partners and he feels they have a role to play as 25% of the population live in the rural villages. He stated that, whilst it is alluded to, the links from the towns to the villages is not expanded upon as there are issues with isolation and people not being able to get to towns to events so it is very town orientated as that is where a lot of the facilities are, but if you want the whole of Fenland to come along you have got to be able to recognise the villages, although possibly not in the remit of this Strategy. He asked whether the Strategy was Fenland specific as there is a picture of a windmill on Page 27 of the Strategy, which he believes is Wicken Fen and not in Fenland. Councillor Seaton agreed with Councillor Booth about the rural communities and whilst you cannot make the Steering Group too large as things do not happen, he has suggested that sub-groups be formed made up of people from the parishes as local input is needed. Liam Wiseman advised that another project funded at the start of the year with Cambridgeshire Acre was the Rural Touring Network, which sadly did not happen due to the pandemic, which was to tour some of the rural areas of Cambridgeshire, which included parts of Fenland, and there are things that are being investigated to support the parishes and can come out of the Steering Group as the work is expanded that has already been picked up by Arts Reach. Councillor Booth made the point to not forget the village halls that parishes have, which are a great resource crying out to be used and the Management Committees of these should be incorporated within the Strategy.
5. Councillor Wicks referred to events that are in the process of being organised in the villages and what support the Arts Council can provide to villages in getting these events off the ground? Liam Wiseman advised that the way that Arts Council works is that funding has to be applied for, a number of grant funding advice sessions were held before the pandemic hit and it had started to see some good results coming from this, and he would be happy to undertake some virtual sessions. Councillor Wicks stated that he would like to take up that offer on behalf of his village as there are number of things he wants to investigate.
6. Councillor Yeulett stated that he attended the Members' Seminar where this Strategy was presented, and his concerns were initially about Fenland District Council's role in the Strategy. He is of the opinion that the people should take ownership of it and he is pleased to hear that this is the intention and welcomes the broad range across the community. Councillor Seaton reiterated that the Council is there to facilitate and to support, but it needs to be driven by the community.
7. Councillor Miscandlon advised that Whittlesey Town Council embarked on a venture for a Heritage Centre in Whittlesey, which is now going ahead. This is community driven as a survey was taken of all residents of Whittlesey and around 82% of the residents said they would support a Heritage centre, which is for a Heritage Centre for the Fens not just Whittlesey and tells the story of the Fens and primarily Musk Farm. He would welcome any input from anybody on this project, paying praise to Phil Hughes attending the meetings on behalf of the District Council.
8. Councillor Count highlighted the Fens Biosphere and whilst the Strategy can move forward it cannot be automatically assumed that either Fenland District Council or Cambridgeshire County Council are in favour or against the Fens Biosphere, there are positives associated with it and potential negatives and it seems to be rolling along at its own steam without it actually having an endorsement or otherwise.
9. Councillor Count expressed the view that the structure of the Strategy is missing public art and he feels that it has an important role to play in driving up creativity. He stated that the public art that is already in the District tends to be historic rather than new, with the best display of current public art being in the flower displays undertaken by Fenland in Bloom. Jo Dacombe agreed that public art could be one of the longer term aims and there is more

scope for outdoor events inspiring people and then can start to introduce the idea for more permanent creative artworks into public spaces. Councillor Seaton added that the public art that Councillor Count is referring to is usually undertaken by an individual person and what is trying to be achieved now is where everyone can get involved in a majority of things, which is productive for them, but over the next few years of this Strategy it can branch out into other areas. Jo Dacombe stated the Strategy is a 10-year vision, but it is a living document so as perceptions change it needs to follow the community lead and if public art is something that people are looking for then the Strategy should adapt to include this.

10. Councillor Cornwell supported the bottom up approach for assisting continuity. He made the point that some years ago Fenland facilitated a Tourist Board, which ran quite successfully for some time until Fenland began to reduce the amount of facilitation and the group found it difficult to continue it for various reasons and asked if something could be developed to ensure there is enough support going into these volunteers who are undertaking specific projects to enable them to continue as often they rely on one or two people. Councillor Seaton stated that one way of monitoring it would be to report back to the Panel at intervals, so Members are aware of what is happening and how it is going. Also, if a support officer is employed that will be another channel of monitoring. He agreed that the Tourist Board approach did work well and then started to fade mainly due it being run and financed by the Council.
11. Councillor Miscandlon stated that in formation of these groups the youths of today need to be encouraged to participate.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Seaton, Liam Wiseman and Jo Dacombe for attending the meeting and answering Members questions.

## **OSC29/20 ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP MEMBER-LED REVIEW**

Members considered the findings of the Member-Led Review of Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) to ensure it continues to achieve value for money for Fenland in comparison with the other member councils.

The Chairman invited Councillor Hay, as the Co-Opted Chair of the Review, to present the report. Councillor Hay informed Members that the first meeting of the Review took place on 12 February 2020 and she was very much aware at that time that her fellow members who formed that review group had not all had direct access to ARP or realised how it was set up so prior to this meeting she asked officers to provide some information; a structure chart of ARP, the number of Fenland District Council employees working for ARP and how this compared to the other partnership authorities, where all these employees were based, clarification on the roles of the different committees and boards of ARP so Members could clearly see how each of these committees represented each of the partnership authorities and the audit trail, with all this information contained with the report.

Councillor Hay pointed out that ARP has generated £680,000 of savings for Fenland over five years and collected since July 2015 £13 million in Council Tax and Business Rates arrears of which £1.7 million has been for Fenland, She stated that the contribution Fenland makes to ARP is less now than when we first joined in April 2014.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Miscandlon thanked, on behalf of himself who was Chairman of the Panel when the review was instigated, Councillor Hay for all the hard work she has undertaken along with the other members of the review in producing this very comprehensive report. Councillor Hay made the point that it was a team effort and well assisted by officers.
2. Councillor Mrs French also thanked Councillor Hay and her review team for the in-depth review undertaken. She made the point that at 7.6 it was noted that at one time the County

Council provided funding, which was stopped, and when she took over portfolio responsibilities from Councillor Hay, although she knows that Councillor Hay had been asking why the County Council were no longer contributing, she pursued the issue and the County Council have now agreed to contribute. Councillor Mason stated that this is encouraging as this was one of the recommendations of the review.

3. Councillor Mason thanked Councillor Hay for the hard work undertaken on the view and to officers, in particular Anna Goodall.
4. Councillor Cornwell thanked, being a member of the review team, Councillor Hay and also to the County Council as it looks like we have been successful in obtaining something that has been of concern for some time.

Members agreed that when ARP is considered on an annual basis within the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's programme that a broader context of the partnership is provided to help inform their understanding and associated discussions.

### **OSC30/20 ANNUAL REVIEW OF ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP**

Members considered the annual review of Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), which updated the Panel on the performance of the Council's Revenues and Benefits service since it became part of ARP on 1 April 2014. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs French to the meeting in addition to Paul Corney and Adrian Mills from ARP.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Miscandlon said that it is a very comprehensive report and shows the benefits to Fenland District Council and its residents over the period it has been operating and for the future.
2. Councillor Yeulett referred to the challenges that have been faced by organisations due to Covid, such as FACT and Freedom Leisure, and asked if there was any likelihood of similar challenges to ARP going forward? Peter Catchpole responded that he does not feel that ARP are comparable with Freedom and FACT in that they have not been forced to close or curtail their operation, but a lot of officers are now working from home and the workload for ARP has risen because there are more claims coming in due to the pandemic. He made the point that the budget contribution required to ARP from Fenland District Council is lower than it was in 2014/15 and continues to fall and the Council is not expecting to make any further contributions at this time. Peter Catchpole stated that the impact on ARP has been the volume of work related to the pandemic, but it has some real successes in automating 50% of Universal Credit changes, which has been critical in managing this increased workload and the KPIs are all on track and performing well, with him not being aware of any other councils achieving these sorts of levels. He said that ARP have really worked well in the pandemic and have embraced the new flexible working arrangements.
3. Councillor Cornwell said that ARP is doing remarkably well under some difficult circumstances, but asked if it was going to make a change to their operation overall as a result of the things they have had to do in the pandemic, such as less hard accommodation required due to more home working? Paul Corney responded that a survey has been undertaken with all the staff looking at the new pattern of working and all core councils themselves are investigating what accommodation will be needed for the future. He said that productivity is certainly not reduced by home working in fact the evidence is that it has improved and now that ARP has access to Microsoft Teams it is finding the communication side, which was the big problem, no longer exists and it will be looking long and hard at what the accommodation requirements will be needed moving forward working with all the partners. He stated that in terms of learning they are looking at soft reminders for customers, trying to give customers an opportunity to make payment before statutory reminders are sent, and also how well partners have worked together around the business grants and all of the returns from HMCLG.

The Chairman thanked officers and ARP for the very encouraging report.

### **OSC31/20 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members noted the Panel's future Work Programme and in particular the items programmed to be considered at January's meeting.

### **OSC32/20 EXERCISE OF URGENCY POWERS**

The Chairman advised Members that he had exercised his urgency powers as Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel to waive the call-in period on two issues providing his rationale behind his decision to utilise his urgency powers. The decisions were as follows:

1. The purchase of land in Manea to form a future car park for Manea Station as the land sale was agreed subject to completion on a set date and had the completion date been exceeded this may have put the sale at risk bringing into doubt the wider project.
2. Cabinet are due to consider a report at their meeting on 14 December 2020 in which they will be asked to approve Fenland District Council's entry into a funding agreement which will enable the passporting of Heritage Lottery Funding from Central Government to the owners of 13-17 High Street, Wisbech. Notification of this forthcoming decision has been on the Forward Plan since late October so the required 28 day period will have elapsed by the time the decision is taken, however, the owners of the property had not understood that they would then have to wait until 5 clear working days had elapsed before the funding arrangements could be finalised and thought that they would be able to start work as soon as they had signed the agreement making various arrangements with contractors for that to happen in the hope that they could get started before the New Year. If the 5 day call-in period is waited for this will mean the implementation cannot take effect until at the earliest 23 December 2020 when the opportunity to commence work this calendar year will have been lost and also as the contractors are in high demand they may well take up another job in the intervening period.

The Chairman pointed out that he did have concerns as this is now the third call-in waiver that he has made in a short period of time and also earlier in the year the previous Chairman, Councillor Miscandlon, had also had to use his urgency powers in relation to Freedom Leisure. He stated that he has written to the Chief Solicitor and asked that administration be speeded up before matters get to this stage, whilst recognising that with Covid and working from distance it is not easy, however, it is becoming frequent and he would not want anyone to think that the process is being bypassed.

3.51 pm

Chairman