

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

January 2021
(For performance in December 2020)

Cabinet Members



**Councillor
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Ian Benney**

Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth



**Councillor
Sam Clark**

Portfolio Holder for
Health



**Councillor
Mrs Jan French**

Deputy Leader of the
Council



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**

Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Mrs Dee Laws**

Portfolio Holder for
Planning



**Councillor
Andrew Lynn**

Portfolio Holder for
Licensing &
Community Safety



**Councillor
Peter Murphy**

Portfolio Holder for
Open Spaces, Street
Scene & Waste
Management



**Councillor
Chris Seaton**

Portfolio Holder for
Social Mobility &
Heritage



**Councillor Steve
Tierney**

Portfolio Holder for
Transformation,
Communication &
Environment

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 32 positive interventions during the year to date in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district.

The Council has also investigated 163 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	26	73
March	3	32
Chatteris	0	10
Whittlesey	1	17
Villages	2 Leverington = 2	31 Manea = 3 Leverington = 6 Guyhirn = 2 Wimblington = 2 Murrow = 2 Parson Drove = 2 Christchurch = 2 Coates = 1 WSM = 5 Tydd SG = 1 Fridaybridge = 1 Gorefield = 1 Doddington = 1 Benwick = 1 Elm = 1

	Served 01/4/20-31/12/20	Notice Amount	Final Amount (Post Review)	Income 1/4/20-31/12/20
Improvement Notices	17	£4,080	NA	£4,180
Prohibition Orders	0	0	0	0
Civil Penalty Notices	8	£71,500	£71,500	£27,758
HMO Applications	14	NA	NA	£10,500
Health Checks	4	£264.00	NA	£264.00

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

Case Study

A property was previously owned and occupied by a very vulnerable elderly couple and their son, who were living in unsafe and insanitary conditions due to the lack of funds to repair, maintain and modernise. The case was referred to Private Sector Housing team as it was attracting the attention of the local community and the team were able to engage with social services and the absent extended family to facilitate a very sensitive and challenging move for the family into social rented accommodation.

As a result of this move the property became a long-term empty and the end of terrace had been empty since Feb 2019. The property was purchased by a developer in the late summer of 2020. Since renovations began in Sept 2020 an extensive refurbishment programme has been undertaken; the roof has been replaced, the chimney repaired, the staircase replaced with the interior having been completely gutted and stripped back to bare brick. The exterior has also undergone a full transformation with a large-scale clearance now giving way to a more aesthetically pleasing appearance. The Empty Homes Officer has supported the new owner in ensuring that, whilst meeting the charges expected from being empty, the financial situation was handled in a way to help his cash flow in order to carry out the work alongside meeting other financial commitments linked with the property.

The collaboration of a multi-team approach has been a success for not only the former owners, their family, and the community, but through providing good quality and safe accommodation in our district.

As a result of the learning from the first year of work by the Empty Homes Officer, there is a proposal to offer an incentive to when there is a change in title for who owns a property so that the premium council tax charge can be suspended if a plan of action to bring the home back into use is developed and approved by the Council. If the plan is delivered and the property occupied the premium element can then be withdrawn. This proposal is for consideration in another report to this meeting.

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 Housing Options team has prevented 174 households from becoming homeless since April 2020. The service is anticipating an uplift in approaches once current financial support ceases along with the easing of the extended notice periods and court action.

The team continues to work closely with households, landlords and other partners to resolve issues before notices are served. One area of focus has been our partnership working with Clarion Home Group to undertake early prevention work with cases that they have identified. We are also encouraging early engagement with a number of other partners.

Number of enquiries - 1340

Advice only given - 673

Preventions achieved this year - 174

In response to the pandemic, the Council have been working in partnership to tackle rough sleeping with Ferry Project and Change Grow Live (CGL) outreach. Currently there are 28 people residing in temporary accommodation under the Government's initiative 'Everyone In'. The "Everyone In" programme has been helped recently through securing £50,000 of funding from government for a Severe Weather Emergency Plan. As a result, we offer emergency accommodation every night no matter what the temperature is until March 31st. If the community see a rough sleeper it is important to contact the Council on 01354 654321 or email housingadvice@fenland.gov.uk. This is even if they say they are "banned" as we continue to look at new ways to support these individuals. Each individual has a plan which includes support required and a plan of their accommodation move on. There are currently 7 people who do not have full settled status that we continue to work with and offer our support.

The Council continues to support all these individuals with accommodation, food, mobile phone and support to meet their needs.

The Council has been proactive in leveraging in funding to assist with move on accommodation under the Next Steps Accommodation programme (NSAP) in a joint partnership with Clarion Housing, Ferry Project and Amicus Trust. It will provide places

and support for 40 rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping. Accommodation has already been secured for over 20 of the 40 units and these properties are being prepared to be fit for occupation as soon as possible.

Deliver four Golden Age Fairs across the district (Cllr Sam Clark)

Due to the pandemic, no events have taken place. However, Golden Age partners are continuing to receive up to date communications to ensure the over 60's gain access to support necessary for them to stay safe.

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

Due to the pandemic and lockdowns, parks remain open, but initiatives such as Active Fenland sessions, club and community group use has been limited due to social distancing and then lockdown requirements.

Parks remain well presented and looked after – welcoming the community to take exercise when the weather permits. Nationally, it is clear that open spaces have been valued throughout the pandemic, with use increasing. Studies have been completed using mobile phone data to evidence that this is the case. Fenland is likely to follow the national trend with our open spaces accessible to most of the population.

Other Projects:

Leisure Update (Cllr Sam Clark)

Freedom Leisure Centres remain closed due to lockdown.

The Active Fenland Team continues to post useful physical activity and health information for the 3,357 Facebook followers that Active Fenland has. The team is also putting up online exercise sessions and using recorded sessions that were successful in previous lockdowns.

FDC has applied to the National Leisure Retention Fund for £221,000 financial support for the leisure centres. It is anticipated that we will receive feedback on funding allocations in late February, with any payment being made in March.

I Love Wisbech Update (Cllr Andrew Lynn)

The I Love Wisbech collaboration of the Community and Voluntary Sector and the public sector is meeting regularly to look at delivering projects against the priorities that came out of a community conversation in 2019.

Several collaborative initiatives are underway. As an example, £5k of funding has been secured to pay for a counsellor to offer therapy to patients as part of a Mental Health Care initiative. A possible 6 sessions will be offered but this will be at the therapist's discretion. The patient will be given the option to wait for Community Mental Health Team or see the counsellor.

The brief is for residents suffering any form of loss from COVID-19, such as lifestyle, death/bereavement, anxiety or depression.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Sam Clark)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pride In Fenland Awards were delayed in March 2020. An online event was launched on 12th January 2021 in partnership with the Fenland Citizen and at time of writing has received over 600 views on You Tube. The categories included:

- Volunteer in the Community
- Sports in the Community (Sponsored by Freedom Leisure)
- Group, Club or Association benefitting the Community
- Young Person in the Community
- Special Judges Award

Although we were unable to meet physically, the online event was a great way to still celebrate our volunteers that go above and beyond to help our communities thrive.

To access the online event, please click on the link below:

<https://www.fenland.gov.uk/article/15632/Pride-in-Fenland-Awards-goes-virtual-to-celebrate-district-s-unsung-heroes>

Health & Wellbeing Update (including COVID-19 Outbreak Plan implementation) (Cllr Sam Clark)

Since November, the COVID-19 Outbreak Plan continues to be the focus of health and wellbeing activity.

The Council's action plan is refreshed weekly following a data presentation by Public Health colleagues.

The actions focus on a number of priority areas including regular communication messages, track and trace services, workplace outbreak management, compliance assurance and community support.

Of note this month is the increased number of cases being followed up by the track and trace service locally. Initially the team was set up to respond to between 25 and 30 cases each day. These are cases that have been difficult to contact by the national track and trace service. Since November the number of local cases has increased to more than 200 a day. The track and trace team has increased staffing numbers and should launch a bigger service with additional teams in January.

In order to support our action plan, the Council applied for just over £152,000 in Contain Outbreak Management Funding from the County Council for resources and community support projects. The implementation of this fund will be taken forwards through consultation with relevant portfolio holders.

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	6.49	-1.51
ARP2	Housing benefit – days to process new claims and changes	8 days	8.0	5.01	-2.99
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	602	400	195	105
CELP2	Number of people prevented from becoming homeless	390	300	174	51
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	NEW	Baseline	224(56)	N/A
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	NEW	£43,618	£79,217	£35,599
CELP5	Customer satisfaction with Golden Age events (as per event)	298	200	0	150
CELP6	Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health	NEW	600	N/A	N/A
CELP7	Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland	NEW	80%	N/A	N/A

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
ARP1 – The time taken to assess Council Tax Support new claims/changes Target 1 has been achieved this month, the target has been exceeded by 1.53 days. The time taken to assess claims and changes target for the year has also been achieved, target has been exceeded by 1.51
ARP2 – The time to taken to assess Housing Benefit new/claims Target 2 still exceeds the target for this month by 2.27 days. The time taken to assess Housing Benefit claims and changes has exceeded target for the year by 2.99 days.
CELP 1 – Effect of ability to inspect through 3 lockdowns
CELP6 – ability to hold events affected by pandemic
CELP 7 – effect of ability to hold events with older residents in light of pandemic

Other comments:

- Fenland has managed to spend 49.20% of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funds.
- Benefits staff continue to work from home other than two staff who have elected to return to office

Environment

Projects from Business Plan:

Continue to deliver environmental enforcement using fixed penalty notices and the court process for serious offences (Cllr Peter Murphy)

Fly Tipping statistics for December to date are:

Total fly tips – 59

Chatteris 2

March 7

Whittlesey 5

Wisbech 13

Villages 32

The main type of fly tipped waste was household waste in the form of a collective amount of bulky single items. Numbers were considerably lower over the festive period which historically is a pattern of behaviour. Unfortunately followed by a rise again in the new year.

During these months, officers have attended more than half of these sites to try and find any evidence amongst the rubbish. Evidence was found at 6 of these sites which is not a high conversion rate and maybe due to an awareness of removing identifying information from rubbish before dumping it.

Officers have sent out 4 postal interviews under caution documents relating to waste where evidence was found.

Enforcement work undertaken during this time includes 3 fixed penalty notices for fly tipping and waste offences including:

- 1 Fixed Penalty Notice issued to a chip shop in Peterborough for failing to ensure they disposed of their waste legally. Several old white goods from this premise ended up being fly tipped in Chatteris and as a result of failing to provide officers with details of who the waste was passed to (an presumably was then responsible for the fly tipping) the business was issued with a £300 fine for waste offences.
- 1 fixed penalty issued for fly tipping waste in a Wisbech open space.
- 1 fixed penalty notice for a fly tipping offence in March where evidence was found at the scene.

The Council are taking the next steps towards prosecution for a fly tipper who has not paid their fixed penalty notice. The fine which was issued in September remains unpaid and will be heard for its plea hearing at Peterborough Magistrates Court.

4 parking tickets have been issued to a car parked on March Market on a market day. All have now been paid.

58 abandoned vehicles have been reported to us during this time and a further 23 nuisance vehicles. Upon investigation, this required our contractor to remove 5 vehicles from the highway.

Deliver the Four Seasons events programme in partnership with our four market towns (Cllr Peter Murphy)

As a result of COVID-19, the four seasons events programme for 2020 was postponed.

Due to the Wisbech Christmas Fayre not being able to go ahead in its usual format on Sunday 13th December, the fayre committee were keen to provide the community with an alternative and support the 'shop local' campaign, and so pulled together the 'Wisbech Christmas Crackers' calendar, showcasing all the different festive events and activities that took place throughout the town from December 1 through to Christmas Eve.

This included online craft activities and a cracker colouring competition from Wisbech Library, 'Countdown to Christmas Markets' operated by Wisbech Town Council and static stands at supermarkets by Wisbech Lions where children could say a socially distanced hello to Santa.

'Wisbech Christmas Crackers' was promoted via the Fayre's Facebook page. It was great to see that there was an increase in number of 'likes' to the page, from members of the community who engaged with this alternative.

Review the current arrangements for parking enforcement in Fenland (Cllr Jan French)

Following approval of the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) paper at Cabinet on 21st October, a specialist CPE consultant has been appointed to undertake detailed feasibility works in line with the report recommendations. The initial focus shall be on, but not be limited to:

- 1) Production of a CPE feasibility report for the Fenland area with fully costed enforcement options for on and off street parking areas for Member consideration.
- 2) Undertaking a review of all FDC car park parking places orders for the implementation of a new district wide parking places order for all FDC car parks to enable CPE enforcement to off street areas.

Following receipt of the feasibility works report to include detailed costings (estimated January/February), a further report will be brought before Cabinet Members for consideration and a decision on whether to proceed with an application for a designation order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for the introduction of Civil

Parking Enforcement. The report will include estimated capital and operational/revenue costs, together with the costs of professional fees along with a proposed timetable for implementation. The report would also be used to support the development of a detailed business case for an application to the DfT.

An application to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for capital funding for the implementation of CPE was submitted in December under the Growing Fenland programme. It was approved at the CPCA Board's meeting in January.

Member approval will now be sought for a 'signing & lining' review to be carried out of all the existing Traffic Regulation Orders in Fenland in support of a CPE application to the DfT. These works will be undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with Fenland District Council.

Deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council (Cllr Andrew Lynn)

The CCTV shared service has maintained its 100% service function across a 24/7 period – the CCTV service is the only council service that is delivered across 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and even with the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic has been able to maintain this vital service delivery for both councils with no loss of service to date.

Since April 2020, the CCTV service has been able to respond to 876 incidents across our four market towns including incidents relating to criminal damage, COVID-19 breaches, violent crime, illegal drug use, possession of weapons and theft. As a result of CCTV intervention and support, this has led to 70 arrests being made by Cambridgeshire Police. This highlights the work CCTV services do to support the Council and partners in responding to crime and disorder and helping to make our communities safer whilst also reducing the fear of crime.

The CCTV service also continues to be pro-active in delivering services that helps reduce crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour by delivering regular camera patrols of our four market towns and other key locations. Since April 2020 the CCTV team have delivered 4,859 patrols. All patrols are conducted across the 24/7 period ensuring that, no matter what time of day or night, our local communities are being protected and any issues or concerns are being identified as early as possible.

The CCTV service also provides the Councils 'out of hours' telephone contact services for services dealing with homelessness, stray and lost dogs, cleansing incidents, dangerous buildings and structures, environmental complaints, to name but a few. During April 2020, the CCTV service has responded to over 581 calls for services from our telephone contact service, including supporting our local community with COVID-19 advice and signposting for support where callers identified as vulnerable or shielding.

In November 2020, our Town Council partners were contacted to allow consideration on the renewal of CCTV Service Level Agreements (SLA) which are in place for each market town. The funding provided through the SLA's is essential to support the running costs of CCTV within the town centres. All of the Town Council partners have agreed to continue to commit to CCTV and on the renewal of the SLA's at the agreed financial rate for the period from 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2024.

The CCTV service continues to operate under its Business Continuity Plan (BCP), which has been in operation since mid-March 2020. The local BCP protective measures continue to be reviewed and adapted to changes in the virus and the local infection rates. As such, the CCTV service is operating under a heightened level which includes the wearing of face coverings when operating during double crew periods. This approach will continue forward with guidance and support from PCC health and safety officers and Public Health to ensure the operators and service delivery is protected as much as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other Projects:

Open Spaces and Grounds Maintenance Contract Update (Cllr Peter Murphy)

FDC's open spaces team and Tivoli have continued to deliver a full service for our communities this year. Core works, the bulk of which is grass cutting (Mar-Oct), have been delivered on time. Quality and standards have been good and the level of complaints from the community are at an all-time low.

Substantial amounts of new trees have been planted in Whittlesey and March cemeteries, along with much clearance of vegetation and hedge-lines.

Play areas, apart from one enforced period during lockdown, have remained open.

In November the contract with Tivoli was renewed for a further 5 years.

The Council has also delivered a new and popular skate park in West End Park, March and recently opened the much-extended play area at Snowley Park in Whittlesey. Projects in the pipeline include play areas in Doddington, Parson Drove, Chatteris and Wisbech.

A number of successful funding bids will help to improve our Parks and Open Spaces areas. This include funding from the CCC's £5m Capital Communities Fund as shown below:

- £75,000 for improvements to West End Park (improving the Park Run surface, tarmacking the path from park entrance to the bandstand, enhancing the junior play area and installing a skate park fence). Tenders were received in December and work commenced in January 2021.
- £240,000 for the Wisbech Pavilion project in Wisbech Park.

Burial rates in the Council's 5 open cemeteries have remained relatively stable but additional resources have been acquired in the event of a possible spike due to COVID-19.

FDC remains a member of the Cambridgeshire Future Parks Scheme. Useful work from this project includes Open Space information to assist with the Local Plan preparation, with more nuanced information expected in the coming months.

Street Lighting (Cllr Jan French)

Street Light Repairs & Maintenance

During the months of November and December, 77 street light faults were reported to the Economic Growth & Assets (EG&A) Team and forwarded onto FDC's street light contractor for rectification. In addition, 41 street light quotation requests were received from various Parish Councils for street light replacement or upgrade works.

The Council's street light contractor has continued to maintain a service for all street light emergency, and routine repair and maintenance works during the COVID-19 restrictions. A reduced service was, however, in place for a 2 week period during the Christmas holiday period whereby attendance was limited to emergency call outs.

The number of street light faults reported to the EG&A team saw an increase at the start of the winter period as anticipated, coinciding with the clocks going back in October. However, the number of District Council street light faults reported so far has still been lower than would ordinarily be expected for this time of year. This is likely to be attributed to both the current capital street light replacement works and the recent local COVID-19 restrictions.

Capital Street Light Replacement Works

The replacement of the Council's defective street lights has been ongoing. However, progress has been much slower in recent months than anticipated or than would ordinarily be expected. The Coronavirus outbreak has certainly played a big part in this as the manufacturing and supply chain has been forced to operate a reduced workforce and in some cases, furlough staff. This has subsequently seen material lead-in times increase significantly as production rates have reduced. In addition, more recently Brexit has impacted on manufacturers who are awaiting luminaire components from Europe as suppliers implement the new transition arrangements.

Whilst these extraordinary circumstances have impacted greatly on both the delivery of materials and the way in which the installation works are being undertaken, fortunately there has been little impact so far financially or in terms of operative health and safety. It is anticipated that this position is unlikely to change until the furlough scheme comes to an end and the vaccine roll out enables the safe return of the manufacturing industry's workforce.

Since commencing the replacement works in March 135, of the 275 identified

defective FDC street lights have now been replaced and a further 60 replacements are scheduled for completion before the end of March. It is anticipated that the replacement works will be ongoing until the Summer.

Deliver the Recycling Action Plan (Cllr Peter Murphy)

In readiness for Christmas, all households in Fenland received the winter calendar via their green bin. This set out the Christmas collection arrangements along with how to access collection reminders via the smart phone app, advice on improving the quality of recycling and advertised the coming season's garden waste service.

The Fenland Bin App has proven to be popular with customers, downloaded more than 100,000 during 2020 and more than 160,000 times overall. Listening to customers we have added links to key waste services such as reporting a missed collection, booking a bulky waste collection and the [Getting It Sorted website](#), where customers can check what can be recycled locally.



The recycling message has also been shared online and via social media. A planned series of posts have ensured that customers are provided with up to date recycling information and links to relevant online resources.

The Getting It Sorted volunteers have helped our teachers and home schoolers by developing a teacher pack for each of the Key Stages which have been sent to 41 schools and are available on the council's [website](#).

Overall, the quality of the recycling is increasing slightly, but food waste remains the largest issue within the blue bins and communications remain focussed on this issue to help customers continue to improve the materials they present.

Getting it Sorted Volunteers Update (Cllr Peter Murphy)

The volunteers have continued to encourage the local community to recycle, but throughout the pandemic this has had to be through virtual means. They developed online resources for parents and teachers, competitions, refined the Getting It Sorted website and created a series of social media posts and videos.

Since April, the 32 volunteers have worked hard to continue to promote recycling and as a result there have been:

- 64,000 contacts through the programmed social media posts;
- 13,000 new website hits to www.gettingitsorted.org;
- 2,600 orders for additional recycling sacks;
- regular emails to the network of 1,450 registered recycling pledgers;
- 1,060 activity boxes to local families;
- 800 downloads of the summer recycling competition;
- teacher recycling lesson packs shared with 41 local schools;
- 2 online recycling tutorials;
- started working with Cambridgeshire Skills on accredited recycling training;
- and completed more than 1,200 hours of volunteering completed to support all this.



Garden Waste Service Update (Cllr Peter Murphy)

The garden waste service continued in a reliable and consistent fashion throughout the pandemic, creating higher than ever waste tonnages at times and the highest levels of subscribers, at just over 22,750.

As a result, the recently performed customer satisfaction survey shows that 99% of the 642 customers responding (from the 3,300 contacted), said they were satisfied with the garden waste service provided this year.

This year, 77% of the 22,750 subscriptions were purchased by direct debit and these will renew automatically in February 2021. Customers who have in previous years paid by cash have been supported with direct communications as part of the annual communications plan to make their payment at their local shop or Post Office, via the PayPoint system, this year. Card payments and direct debit remain available online and by telephone to allow customers to pay in the most suitable fashion for them.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) (Cllrs Peter Murphy & Steve Tierney)

The RECAP Partnership continue to work together to ensure continuity of waste collection and disposal across the area, diverting resources to key areas and coordinating communications to assist customers and deliver these key services in the most appropriate and responsive way.

Regular member board meetings have taken place virtually and business has continued to progress, including shared marketing via social media and the development of a [local circular economy](#) project.

Community Safety Partnership Update (Cllr Andrew Lynn)

Essentials by Sue Project

Academies and colleges report that 'Essentials by Sue' continues to be used to support their students. Through donations from their school community, they are mostly at a point of self-sustainability to fulfil the needs of their individual projects.

With the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the development of academies and colleges becoming more self-reliant has enabled the projects to continue as donations from the community coming into the external donation points significantly reduced if not stopped all together.

During the last quarter, academies and colleges have also reported some link-up with foodbanks. Families who use the Foodbank, can opt in to allow Foodbanks to share information with schools connected to Foodbanks, and this has enabled their young people to receive support through Essentials by Sue in school.

Community Engagement Session - Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control

Community Engagement Event



On the 10 November, the Community Safety Partnership held an online Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control awareness engagement event. It was held in partnership with Refuge and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership. Questions were answered on identifying domestic abuse and coercive control and the options available for reporting and accessing further support. The description that accompanied the published video made available a number of website links and there is an option for translation to a wide range of different languages.

The finished video was made available on the Fenland Council YouTube Channel and shared amongst partners through the Councils Comms Team and Partnerships social media account. The video has registered 150 views in 6 weeks.

This event was published during the national '16 days of action 2020 Domestic Abuse Awareness' campaign.

CSP Workforce Development

Training themes for CSP workforce development are linked to the priorities within the CSP action plan. Frontline staff from statutory partners and the voluntary sector are invited to attend these free training sessions.

Those attending include staff from housing providers, FDC teams, police, probation, traveller teams, young people workers, family workers, children centres, food banks, volunteers, schools, healthcare workers, faith groups, community organisations and citizens advice.

On 24 November, the partnership held a Domestic Abuse development session which was delivered via MS Teams. Topics covered were Coercive Control and recommendations from a Domestic Homicide Review. Refuge and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership once again worked with the Partnership to deliver the session. It was attended by 24 front line professionals and staff from third sector organisations.

Loan Shark Awareness

A loan sharks engagement session was held on 21 January. Questions and enquiries were invited from Fenland residents via the FDC Facebook page and using Survey

Monkey prior to the event.

Fenland Op Gripped – Loan Shark awareness Project 2021

Fenland Community Safety Partnership were successful in a funding application to the national Illegal Money Lending Team to deliver an awareness project during the summer of 2021.

There will be some specific work conducted in areas of high deprivation and three local primary schools have agreed to participate in the project. Those schools are Orchards and Ramnoth in Wisbech and Burrowmoor in March.

It is also intended to deliver a Fenland wide awareness and education campaign. The third and final element of the project is a workforce development session which will be delivered by key staff from the Illegal Money lending Team. This is intended to improve the knowledge of front-line professionals and volunteers to help identify victims of loan sharks and how to sign post for support and reporting.

Community Safety Partnership Newsletter - Edition 5

The CSP newsletter provides an update on the partnership activity of the Fenland CSP, along with useful information and links to reporting options. The latest edition was published in November 2020 and shared through CSP and FDC communications and partners. To read this edition please follow the link: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/csp>

New CSP Volunteering Webpage

Development is underway to create a webpage directory of organisations that offer volunteering opportunities in the Fenland area. It's intended to categorise the opportunities into subject areas for example: -

- Children & Youth
- Environmental
- Historical Interest
- Road Safety
- Community Safety

Details of any Fenland voluntary organisations that could feature on this webpage should be emailed to rcooke@fenland.gov.uk

Support

Fenland CSP has worked with both East Cambs CSP and Littleport Council to help them develop a community survey for Littleport.

The Council also supported the delivery of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Against Scams Partnerships virtual booth at the Cambridgeshire's Local Councils Conference in October. The event was able to provide a wide range of information and advice to the attendees, recruiting 'friend against scams' and new recipients of the CAPASP newsletter.

Partnership meetings continue to provide a focus on street drinking and associated ASB. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reduction in the number of incidents being reported by the community and observed occurrences of street drinking by partners. This reduction is very likely to reflect the COVID-19 accommodation support provided to vulnerable people.

The fewer street drinkers being observed and the need to comply with social distancing requirements has meant the delivery of some on the ground support services has been reduced, for example CGL substance misuse outreach service.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 20/21	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP8	Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	95%	90%	96%	
CELP9	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards (including graffiti and flyposting)	99%	93%	100%	
CELP10	% of household waste recycled through the blue bin service (1 month in arrears)	28%	28%	28%	
CELP11	Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services	99%	90%	96%	
CELP12	Customer satisfaction with our garden waste service	94%	85%	99%	
CELP13	Number of Street Pride, Green Dog Walkers, and Friends Of community environmental events supported	204	204	69	
CELP14	% of those asked who are satisfied with FDC's events (May, July, October, January)	96%	96%	N/A	N/A

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
CELP 13 - Due to COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers have not been able to undertake as many events this year. Most of these events were undertaken during the summer months.
CELP 14 - The four seasons events calendar has been postponed so this indicator is not being measured.

Economy

Projects from Business Plan:

Continue to review council land and property assets to ensure they are fit for purpose and optimised to deliver better public services, improve efficiency and release surplus land for residential and commercial development as outlined in our Commercial Investment Strategy (Cllr Ian Benney)

The surplus asset disposal programme will be reviewed in line with the now adopted Commercial & Investment Strategy. Whereupon sites with development potential will be evaluated against a set of criteria which will assess whether such sites are likely to produce greater returns if they are developed by the Council.

Of the surplus sites approved for sale by Cabinet, there are 6 sites remaining to be sold either at auction or by private treaty. Currently these are on hold, however the EG&A Team have been able to successfully appoint a new temporary member of staff to take this work forward and the disposal project should begin again in February.

Further disposal of surplus sites may also include transfers to Fenland Future Limited where there is an opportunity to take forward a viable development site, which is likely to lead to an enhanced outcome, over and above receiving a capital receipt.

Continue to lobby for improvements to our transport infrastructure, including the A47 economic corridor (Cllr Chris Seaton)

Wisbech Access Strategy

There is no specific update on this project for January 2021

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. The latest information about the project can be found on the County Council website from the following link:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/wisbech-access-strategy>

A Wisbech Access Strategy Phase 1 delivery report was presented to the County Council Highways and Transport Committee on 7 July 2020. A copy of the agenda, minutes and accompanying papers can be found from the following link:

https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1529/Committee/62/Default.aspx

Key points to note are as follows:

- Projects at Broad End Road (BER2), Elm High Road A47 Roundabout (EH1) and Weasenham Lane/Elm High Road roundabout (EH7b) are fully funded

- Construction of the above three projects are due to start on site in 2021. The projects are due for completion in 2021 and 2022.
- Land acquisitions and utility diversions are key current areas of work for the CCC Project team. Commencement of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) have been given approval by CCC Highways and Transport Committee should they be needed.

Kings Dyke Level Crossing

This is primarily a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. The Project is currently in its construction phase. The new road will be open to the public by the end of 2022.

An update information paper went to the CPCA Transport and infrastructure Committee in early January 2021. This can be found at the website link below.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1972/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

The above-mentioned paper included a latest update on the construction process in the form of a drone video. Here is a link to the video on You Tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpfZkEtIYRk&feature=youtu.be>

The County Council website includes significant detail about this project including technical reports and questions and answers. This webpage can be accessed from the following link. [Kings Dyke Crossing](#).

March Area Transport Study

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council.

In early November 2020 a report was tabled at the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. The Committee agreed to go forward to construction with the quick win schemes. The timetable for which is set out below as an extract from the CPCA paper. Outline Business Case work for the larger schemes that make up this project will be ongoing during 2021. A copy of the paper which includes the quick win scheme details and a construction timetable can be found from the following website link:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1971/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Table 1: Quick Win Construction Delivery

Quick Wins	Construction Start	Construction End
QW1A - Improve safety for pedestrians. Provide a zebra crossing	January 2021	March 2021
QW2 - Introduce gateway feature at edge of town, introduce 40mph speed limit buffer and revise deflections on Cavalry Dr roundabout	July 2021	August 2021
QW15 - Improve safety for school children. Provide a zebra crossing	November 2020	December 2020
QW16 - Improve signage for HGV drivers to reduce poor route choice	December 2020	February 2021
QW21 - Complete footway on southern side of Norwood Ave	February 2021	March 2021
QW22 - Introduce traffic calming on three sections of Norwood Rd	August 2021	August 2021
QW23 - Complete footway on eastern side of Hundred Rd including build out feature	March 2021	April 2021

Technical details and feasibility study work associated with this project can be found on the County Council website from the link below

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/march-transport-study>

March to Wisbech Railway Line

There is no specific update on this project for January 2021

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council.

The full business case was submitted to CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee for its 1 July 2020 meeting. The papers relating to the business case can be found from the following website link. Item 2.7

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1969/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

In November 2020 CPCA gave an update to FDC Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Wisbech railway project. A copy of the report to support the meeting can be found in the link below.

<https://www.fenland.gov.uk/localgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=2490&Ver=4>

Key points to note are as follows:

- The full business case concludes that the most commercially viable solution is a heavy rail service serving a station centrally located within Wisbech
- The CPCA Board agreed to continued engagement with the Department for Transport, and other central government departments to explore the future funding of this project through the Restoring Railways Fund
- In June the Mayor met with Chris Heaton – Harris, Minister of State for Transport, to highlight the importance of both Wisbech Rail and Ely Area Capacity Enhancement. The Mayor and Minister agreed that further work would take place between Combined Authority officers and departmental

officials. The Mayor and the Minister are expected to meet again following that engagement between the Combined Authority and the Department for Transport (DfT)

- The Combined Authority has made representation to the Treasury as part of the Spending Review 2020 submission. This includes a case for funding Wisbech Rail as a priority.

A47 Dualling (CPCA Project)

There is no specific update on this project for January 2021

It was reported in the last update that the Highways England Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) announcement did not include the A47 dualling project. Discussions between CPCA and Highways England have since continued and negotiations are ongoing. Highways England have agreed to undertake a review of the stage 0 work completed by CPCA. This review is to determine if there is any further work needed with a view to Highways England adopting the development work into their own programme.

Considering the above mentioned RIS2 announcement, a progress update was provided to the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee in early November 2020. A link to the paper from that meeting is below.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1971/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

A47 Guyhirn (Highways England Project)

The latest information we have been provided with confirms a start on site for this project in February 2021 with the scheme being open to traffic in 2022. Further information can be found in the Highways England [Winter 2020 information leaflet](#).

Full details about this scheme and the latest updates can be found on the [Highways England website](#).

Support the delivery of interventions listed within the four market town 'Growing Fenland' socio-economic masterplans (Cllr Ian Benney)

The CPCA are committed to unlocking economic opportunities in each of our market towns. They have provided financial assistance to draw up masterplans and recently announced that each town will now be able to bid for up to £1m of capital funding to turn these plans into a reality.

Following approval of the four 'Growing Fenland' masterplans at a number of Council meetings in late 2019 and early 2020, Town Teams are continuing to meet to prioritise

projects to be taken forward to bid for funding from the CPCA.

Projects which have so far been approved for funding from the CPCA are as follows:

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING APPROVED BY CPCA
Chatteris Town Centre Renaissance Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishment of street furniture & ornate streetlamps • Grant funding available for town centre properties to make improvements to visual appearance 	£100,000
Whittlesey Interactive Flood Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive signs to signal when the B1040 is closed due to flooding 	£56,500
Whittlesey Heritage Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage walk around the town of Whittlesey • Links to Whittlesey Heritage Visitor Centre • Provides residents & visitors with background information on the town 	£218,169
Whittlesey Heritage Visitor Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New visitor centre to showcase local artifacts and tell the story of Whittlesey 	£500,000
Whittlesey Business Capital Grants Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants scheme for Whittlesey businesses to help mitigate against the effects of COVID-19 pandemic 	£124,331
Wisbech Market Place Enhancement Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications to Wisbech Market Place as part of a town centre improvement initiative 	£200,000
Wisbech Business Capital Grants Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants scheme for Wisbech businesses to help mitigate against the effects of COVID-19 pandemic 	£200,000
Wisbech Footfall Counters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of additional footfall counters for Wisbech Market Place 	£19,500
Wisbech Replacement Shopwatch Radios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement of existing Shopwatch radio scheme with digital system 	£33,800

Project bids due to be submitted to the next CPCA Board meeting in March are currently as follows:

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING TO BE REQUESTED
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		FROM CPCA
Chatteris Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for ICT hardware and software to support skills development 	£36,178
Wisbech Water Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build children's water park in Wisbech Park 	£147,500

Continue to prepare a new Local Plan document, which will determine how the district will grow in the future (Cllr Dee Laws)

The Government has confirmed the methodology to be used to calculate the housing requirement for the District. A different method was proposed previously which would have resulted in an unrealistically high figure (844 pa). It has been reduced to a similar level to the existing local plan (538 pa).

The Council recently had it confirmed that we have 'passed' the latest housing delivery test (by achieving 98%).

Following the second round of call for sites, the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Assessment document has been updated and published:
<https://www.fenland.gov.uk/shelaa>

The team are working towards the preparation of a draft local plan for consideration by members prior to public consultation in the spring.

Deliver railway projects with CPCA support through the Manea, March and Whittlesea Stations Project Boards (Cllr Chris Seaton)

Manea Station
Approval for the car park scheme was given by FDC Planning Committee in September 2020. The detailed design work is now complete. The land acquisition is complete. The procurement to select a company to build the scheme is in progress with the winning contractor due to be announced in February 2021. Work is ongoing to discharge the planning conditions for the project with most conditions either resolved or in detailed discussion and nearing completion.

March Station
The tender process to secure a company to build the car parking and platform 1 building scheme is due to complete during January 2021. The winning contractor will be announced in February 2021. The projects are due to be completed in late 2021/early 2022.

Whittlesea Station

Greater Anglia and their consultants are finalising a revised scheme design for the car park. This is expected to be a phase 1 scheme and will use existing railway land. A revised single option design is expected to be reviewed in January 2021. Following any review and feedback from the Project Board it is expected that a timetable to progress the Whittlesea Station car park can be taken forward.

Work with partners to deliver property improvements and the activity plan as part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded Wisbech High Street Project (Cllr Chris Seaton)

Despite the COVID-19 epidemic, the project has continued to progress with the physical works with minimum disruption.

Property Updates

The Gap – 24 High Street

A project manager has been appointed to deliver the revised scheme at No 24 on behalf of the Council. A press release relating to this was released in October 2020. At present we are assessing quotes for architects' services following a competitive tendering exercise. This will allow for a scheme and programme of redevelopment for the site to be finalised and presented to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for approval.

11-12 High Street

The developer has been required to review and reissue the tenders for the main build contract which has added a slight delay to the formal funding application. Once the application for funding has been agreed, the build lease can be signed. The demolition works were completed in December. All remnants of the derelict structure and the façade have now been removed. Hoarding and propping will remain to ensure site safety until building works commence.

13-17 High Street

Following cabinet approval, the legal agreements were signed and exchanged in December. Scaffolding and hoarding were immediately erected on site and internal clearance works commenced. The project manager appointed for the scheme has provided a full schedule of works and significant structural works will commence in January.

18 and 19 High Street

A grant has been agreed for these two properties to assist with extensive roof and brickwork repairs, window repairs and appropriate replacement of some windows and doors as well as a full redecoration of the facades and new signage. Work is anticipated to commence in the Spring when the weather is more suitable.

Other Properties

The project is currently working with owners and tenants of a further 2 properties who

are in the process of applying for a grant for building improvements. Both of these are historic properties. With a generous grant proportion available to assist with the repairs, the owners/tenants are in the process of gathering quotes, applying for statutory consents where applicable and completing their applications. COVID-19 has impacted on the operations of the businesses and the availability of the owners to obtain quotations.

Other Activity

The planning enforcement and legal teams are now preparing to contact owners of buildings who had previously been advised of the Council's intention to serve S215 notices.

Activity Plan:

Due to restrictions on meetings and public gatherings following the outbreak of COVID-19, most of the planned activities have needed to be amended or postponed. However, a number of very successful virtual events have recently taken place.

Wisbech Underground

This has been one of the most anticipated activities and has attracted a lot of public interest. Working with the University of Lincoln, we have recently undertaken 3D surveys of three underground locations in the town (The Rose and Crown Hotel, Market Place and the Sessions House). The surveys, which will be available to access via the project's website will allow virtual tours of these important historic locations which are ordinarily not open to the public. The project also commissioned the university to undertake some historic interpretation of these locations. Despite efforts, other popular locations have remained inaccessible, however there remains time and finances available to survey more locations. Results will be available on the website in January.

Gutter Clean

The annual Gutter Clean was undertaken in November 2020. This Activity offers cleaning of gutters, parapets and downpipes of all High Street properties free of charge. This aims to encourage good maintenance practices.

Construction Training

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on educational establishments, the College of West Anglia are no longer able to commit to their involvement in the conservation/repairs training programme. With the support of the NLHF, an alternative activity has been approved which will involve a series of public training events (online and practical) to be delivered by an appropriately experienced external provider to be appointed in the new year following a competitive tendering process.

Window Wanderland

We were delighted to be able to work in partnership with the Wisbech and Fenland Museum to fund a Christmas event called "Wisbech Wanderland". This COVID-compliant event encouraged local residents and businesses to decorate their windows for an illuminated display over two evenings. The event was hugely successful and over 40 participants signed up to be included on the trail map. Local primary schools were involved in creating decorations for a display in Wisbech High

Street, utilising an empty shopfront.

Heritage Open Days (Sept 2020)

An online exhibition of photos from the Borough Engineers archives was incredibly popular and a physical display in the window of the former Bon Marche shop on High Street attracted a lot of interest. The exhibition comprised around 50 images from a photo album which we believe have never been published or publicly available before now. The photos were taken by the Wisbech Borough Engineers between the 1940s and 1960s and include war damage and new housing development schemes. Dozens of messages were received from residents who wanted to share their stories and memories, making this a really successful event. NLHF were very pleased with the outcomes.

Photo Book

Following on from the popularity of the photo exhibition, it was decided that there was enough interest to publish these images in a book. The book, which contains around 85 images will be available for sale in the new year. This activity has replaced another event which was undeliverable in the current climate and achieves the same objectives of celebrating local heritage and making it available to residents as well as potentially further afield.

Project updates available on the website: www.highstreetwisbech.org.uk

Support local businesses to achieve regulatory compliance through a 'better business for all' approach (Cllr Sam Hoy & Cllr Ian Benney)

The Better Business for All (BBFA) group was established before the COVID-19 crisis and its purpose is to bring Compliance Teams (Environmental Health & Licensing) together with Economic Growth/Development Teams within Councils across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to engender closer working relationships and improve the interface with businesses.

The BBFA group meet virtually, as regularly as is necessary, but continue to share important intelligence and trend information, enabling FDC Teams to respond where issues are identified.

Other Projects:

Economic Growth Team Activity (Cllr Ian Benney)

Government COVID-19 Grants

Following the Government's announcement regarding a further national lockdown

and requirement for certain businesses in the hospitality, retail and recreation sectors to close, additional grants have been made available. From 26th December, Tier 4 Restrictions grants are available including “wet-led” pubs grant and a Supplementary Winter Lockdown Grant (SWLG).

A significant collaborative effort across a range of Council teams is ongoing to process and make grant payments in as efficient way as possible. The Economic Growth Team has undertaken a key role across all the COVID-19 grants and in particular the creation of the SWLG application process, assessment of applications and, where required, engaging with applicants.

Open For Business

Following the announcement of the national lockdown, the Economic Growth Team commenced the re-marketing of the existing ‘Fenland Open For Business’ webpages on the Fenland for Business website (www.fenlandforbusiness.co.uk). This service promotes businesses who are able to continue to provide a service such as a takeaway service whilst complying with the requirements of the lockdown.

Investment Projects

The Economic Growth Team continue to engage with a number of commercial investment projects with businesses located in the district wishing to expand or consolidate and those outside the district considering moving into the district. The team works closely with agents/business owners to understand timescales, issues and any barriers to ensure that the required support is in place to enable successful delivery.

Commercial Development Forum

The Economic Growth Team have created a forum of private sector developers/agents to discuss the commercial workspace market and specifically how more commercial workspace could be brought forward to meet the existing and future demand. A first virtual meeting has taken place with a number of outcomes:

- I. To consider the existing portfolio of land available for commercial development and the potential cost of infrastructure to create 2/3 “ready to go” sites.
- II. To consider how it might provide online an up to date list of all the currently available commercial land and property and include what has been proposed through the local plan.
- III. To bring together two sector groups to facilitate discussion around the attraction of business expansion and new investment into Fenland from those sectors such as the farming/agri-tech sector and engineering sector.
- IV. To consult with planning colleagues on the support provided by Middle Level Commissioners on planning applications
- V. To provide an update of the role and remit of Fenland Future
- VI. To co-ordinate a quarterly meeting of developers and agents to discuss commercial land and property.

MHCLG announced in-principle funding for the March Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) Project on Boxing Day.

FDC bid for a sum of £9.3m to transform March, supported by £2m of additional funding from the Combined Authority. Realistically, given the very competitive nature of this fund, our expectation was a grant in the region of £5m - £6m from MHCLG.

The in-principle offer received from MHCLG is £6.447m - exceeding expectations. This sum will allow the Council to achieve most of the workstreams from our proposal including;

- Transformation of Broad Street
- Opening up the riverside area
- Market place redevelopment
- Vacant units activation programme
- Elements of Acre Road improvements

This will be the biggest transformation in March for generations, ensuring that the town remains vibrant for the future.

The next steps to secure the funding are to finalise project streams to fit them with the revised funding envelope, whilst also changing the delivery schedules (initially funding was expected to be confirmed in September). This work is progressing and, with support from MHCLG officials, moving the funding offer from in-principle to confirmed should take place in March.

FDC has submitted formal bids to the Combined Authority Board for confirmation of the £2m match funding support. The CPCA Board approved these bids at their board meeting in late January.

When both sets of funding are confirmed, FDC will work with the March Area Transport (MATS) team and CCC Highways to deliver the FHSF workstreams. The FHSF and MATS projects are closely aligned, with FHSF work taking place adjacent to public highways, with CCC being best placed to push this work forwards.

Skills Update (Cllr Chris Seaton)

Internally, the Council offers a range of development opportunities to its workforce. This includes apprenticeship qualifications. We already have:

- 1 x HR Apprentice;
- 3 x Management Apprenticeships;
- 1 x Accountancy Apprenticeship (Finance);
- 1 x ICT Apprentice;
- 1 x GDPR Apprentice (Member Services);

3 x Planning Apprentices

In addition to this, we are actively seeking apprenticeship opportunities in a number of teams, such as Project Management, Customer Services, Leadership and Management.

We are currently exploring further opportunities, as part of the My Fenland Programme, to develop a wider apprenticeship offer to maximise apprentice posts being offered by the Council.

Integration with the [CPCA's Skills Strategy](#)

The Skills Strategy will be delivered by the new CPCA Growth Service. It was expected that the winning bidder for the service would be announced on 1 February 2021 but, at the time of writing, the announcement has not yet been made. CPCA will arrange a virtual meeting with the winning bidder as soon as they are established.

In the intervening period the Council are working with a number of partners to develop and promote skills and apprenticeships. These partners are either funded by the CPCA or are part of the CPCA Skills Pillar. Proposed actions include:

- Virtual meeting with the new CPCA lead on skills to discuss delivery of the skills agenda via the Growth Service
- Virtual meeting with DWP and DoE Opportunity Area Lead regarding the Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Opportunity Area. A steering group will be established to develop a project to build confidence and motivation for care leavers with the aim of preventing NEATs
- Virtual meeting with the Enterprise Advisor Network regarding Enterprise Advisors. The Fenland and East Cambridgeshire Enterprise Adviser Network is looking for professionals to become Enterprise Advisors, particularly in Wisbech. Advisors visit schools to help students understand employment opportunities and employer expectations. It is a national programme set up by the Careers & Enterprise Company and is funded in Cambridgeshire by CPCA. The vacancy featured in the 'Fenland for Business' newsletter and specific companies have been targeted by personal email.
- Connections made with a company that won the delivery contract for the North Cambridgeshire Training Centre. Working with the company, the Council plans to survey Fenland companies to establish which courses and apprenticeships local companies would like to be delivered at the centre.
- Connection made with the company that will run the skills pillar, Gareth Preece Consulting Ltd, part of the Gately team that won the Growth Service contract. A meeting will be arranged with the awarding of the contract is announced.

Companies are regularly updated on training and skills opportunities both directly and via the 'Fenland for Business' Newsletter. These include national and regional opportunities from providers and universities.

Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, business and job creation and skills diversification (Cllr Ian Benney)

The effects of lockdown are continuing. However, all of the remaining businesses operating from our industrial portfolio have continued to operate and remain open.

The office sector has been less resilient and as anticipated some businesses are deciding to release space as homeworking makes the case for keeping an office less robust. Some have been forced to terminate their tenancy due to the effect the pandemic has had on their business sector.

Our two business centres remain closed during lockdown and conferences have ceased. However, as the buildings are designed for tenants to have unimpeded access, we have kept a reception presence in each building. At each business centre a small number of tenants continue to work from their offices, but the majority have not been in attendance as staff worked from home.

The business centre most adversely affected has been South Fens offices in Chatteris. Historic occupation levels of 60% have dropped to 52%. One tenant went into liquidation in December 2020 and this was as a direct effect of the pandemic as they work in the events industry. Another tenant has served notice and is due to leave in March 2021; they are relocating to Huntingdon as travel links are better and they host a number of trade visitors travelling from abroad.

At the Boathouse occupancy levels remain high at 97% with just 3 vacant suites with 2 'under offer'.

The demand for industrial units remains relatively strong and estate occupancy remains high at 91%. Venture Court has 2 empty units, one industrial and one office (Venture House). The industrial unit is under offer with terms agreed but the large office at Venture House remains empty. We are pursuing an interesting lead with a veterinarian who would like to take Venture House for a vet practice, subject to a planning change of use. Although they have a strong interest in the property, terms have not yet been agreed. If Venture House was let, occupancy would increase to over 96%.

Our other industrial estates in Wisbech, March and Chatteris are fully occupied. A tenant is due to leave South Fens Enterprise Park in Chatteris in March 2021 with the business downsizing and relocating to the north of the country to cut costs. This space though will allow an existing tenant in a smaller unit to take on a larger space and free up their smaller unit for marketing.

As reported previously, it cannot be anticipated if more tenants will decide to serve notice. By the nature of the tenancies which promote 'easy in and easy out terms', we are always at risk of tenants leaving on 2 or 3 months' notice. This is likely to affect our office premises more than the industrial premises.

Affordable Homes (Cllr Sam Hoy)

Work has commenced in December on the development of 137 affordable homes near the College in Wisbech. The Registered Provider "Platform" have not developed in Fenland before and a link was made following a shared learning visit made by the Portfolio Holder with Officers to Boston Borough Council.

The breakdown of properties for the community is as follows:

<u>Type</u>	<u>m2</u>	<u>Affordable Rent</u>	<u>Shared Ownership</u>	<u>Total</u>
1b2p Flat	46	6	-	6
2b3p bungalow	57	9	-	9
2b4p house	70	26	20	46
3b5p house	84	46	30	76
	Total	87	50	137

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Sam Hoy)

The Council's statutory food programme has been affected by the Covid pandemic particularly because of the lockdown requirements where premises have been shut. For the first third of the year the direction from the Food Standards Agency was that they did not want the Local Authorities doing any proactive food inspections unless it was urgent, such as following a complaint or intelligence. Since October 2020 inspections could be carried out on a priority basis as they were aware that Local Authorities' Covid response took priority and staff should not be going into premises where the risk is not outweighed by the need to inspect, for example, low risk premises. This has created difficulties in delivering the programme.

To date 108 food interventions have been completed ((these include physical inspections and questionnaires).

There are 81 more businesses to inspect as priority although currently approximately 70 of these are closed due to business closure regulations.

Of 17 businesses recently surveyed all of them reported the inspection was helpful and fair.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 20/21	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks (or within extension of time)	100%	75%	100%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks (or within extension of time)	94%	80%	94%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks (or within extension of time)	99%	90%	97%	
EGA1	% occupancy of the business premises estate	87.8%	89%	86.7%	
EGA2	% of customers satisfied with our business premises estates (quarterly)	100%	95%	98%	
MS1	Number of berth holders / occupancy of berths at Wisbech Yacht Harbour (85 berths)	85	85	83	96%
CELP18	Number of local businesses supported and treated fairly (quarterly)	96%	96%	100%	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
EGA1 Cumulative figures not recorded. Historically reported as a year-end figure. For June 2020 the figure is 87.8%
EGA2 Annual figure based on survey Oct 2019
<p>Planning Applications: The team continue to perform exceptionally well in difficult circumstances, and we are comfortably exceeding our local targets.</p> <p>In relation to the national targets: Major applications – 100% of applications were decided on time against a target of 75% (as measured over a 24 month</p>

rolling period)

Minor / Other applications – 96 % of applications were decided on time against a target of 70% (as measured over a 24 month rolling period).

In terms of appeals performance, over the Government's 24 month monitoring period, we lost no appeals relating to major development and in relation to minor / other applications, our performance was 1.4% (the target being not more than 10%).

Quality Organisation

Projects from Business Plan:

Launch our Commercial Investment Strategy (Cllrs Chris Boden & Ian Benney)

The process around the Commercial and Investment Strategy has now bedded in and the Investment Board has met three times in total with two schemes being approved for further due diligence to be carried out. Fenland Future Ltd have appointed, via FDC's Procurement Team, both Design & Architectural Services and Commercial Agency & Development Feasibility Services to work up a full appraisal for presentation at a future Investment Board.

Fenland Future Ltd has held its inaugural Board meeting and the directors are in the process of producing the first draft business plan to be presented to the Investment Board.

Deliver the 'My Fenland' project to modernise customer service arrangements across the district (Cllr Steve Tierney)

The My Fenland programme focuses on modernising the way the Council delivers all aspects of our services to our customers. Current processes, wherever possible, are being streamlined to improve consistency and efficiency across the organisation. Technology is being utilised to improve the process for both staff and customers. The key focus is ensuring we are putting the customer journey first and providing the best possible customer experience.

We have made significant progress with the project, despite the current COVID-19 restrictions. Phase 1 of the programme has been successfully delivered, which has included:

- The successful implementation of Pay Point functionality across the district, which allows our customers to pay their Council bills at an increased number of locations, such as Post Offices, garages, convenience stores and so on. Utilisation of these facilities has been buoyant.
- The creation of new My Fenland team, includes all of the following teams:
 - The Customer, Environment and Leisure administration team
 - The Customer Services teams
 - The Assets and Projects administration team
 - The Business Centre administration team
- In addition to the teams coming together, we have also successfully introduced the teams working together and co-locating where possible and in line with government guidelines around safe working practices and capacity restrictions in some offices.

- A full review, update and relaunch of our website and access points for customers new website.
- Implementation of the telephony upgrade and associated training for employees, which will enable us to provide a web chat service to our customers
- The development of new forms to enable customers to self-serve via our website (e.g. missed bins) removing the need for back office intervention. This has seen a 78% reduction in the manual intervention needed to progress these requests as well as enabling customers to self-serve where possible.
- We have process mapped a number of activities from a number of customer facing and administration teams, including our Licensing functions, our Corporate 3Cs process (complaints, compliments and correspondence), our Freedom of Information request (FOI) process, environmental service requests (e.g. how we process Missed Bins reports), to name just a few. We have streamlined and automated these processes to make them more efficient and customer focused.

The Contact Centre remains open on Saturday mornings and customers are increasingly making use of the Saturday morning Contact Centre facility, with call volumes exceeding the numbers of customers previously seen face to face during the same time.

During August, following the initial national lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we successfully resumed the face-to-face service in all 4 locations via an appointment scheme initially, to ensure we were able to successfully evidence COVID-19 compliance to customers and staff.

The payment machines in all locations remain closed. Since the second national lockdown which commenced on 05 November, we remain open to customers wishing to make urgent appointments and a press release and postings on social media and the FDC website has communicated this to our customers. To date (since August 2020) we have delivered just over 40 face to face appointments, as all other customer queries have been successfully resolved over the phone or by offering a telephone appointment.

Phase 2 of the My Fenland project is now well underway with a proposal for a revised structure and revised job descriptions currently out for formal consultation with staff. The final proposal will be considered by the Sub Committee of the new Audit and Risk Management Committee in March 2021.

Identify and deliver projects that support us to become a 'Council For the Future' (CFF)
(Cllrs Chris Boden & Steve Tierney)

Several projects are in full flow including "My Fenland" which is detailed in full above. Other successful projects include Empty Homes work, Private Sector Enforcement, Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and the new website, details of which are contained elsewhere in this report and feature in the draft Business Plan for 2021-22.

Other Projects:

Elections Update (Cllr Chris Boden)

A Polling District Review was successfully completed during the autumn of 2020. The focus of the review was to look forward to the elections scheduled to take place during May 2021, which include County Council, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. All of those electoral events are scheduled to take place whilst the COVID-19 pandemic remains a consideration and therefore the review provided the opportunity to focus on Polling Districts which serve the greatest number of electors, to ensure the locations are COVID secure and electors have confidence about casting their vote in a manner of their choosing. The results of the Polling District Review were endorsed by full Council in December 2020 and the results of the review have now been reflected in the electoral register, which was successfully republished on 4 January 2021. Legislation would ordinarily require the electoral register to be republished on an annual basis every December, however the timescales for 2020 were revised to reflect the impact of the COVID pandemic.

The annual Postal Vote Identifier refresh has commenced. This proactive project involves writing out to electors who have a registered postal vote, whose signature on record is more than 5 years old. These electors are required to provide a refreshed signature in order to keep their postal vote.

3Cs Update (Cllr Steve Tierney)

Performance for the 3C's service during December 2020 was as follows:

- 100% of correspondence was responded to within the published 10 day response target
- 144 complaints were received during December, 97% of which were responded to within the published timescales exceeding the 90% target
- 0 complaints were referred to the Ombudsman.

Communications Update (Cllr Steve Tierney)

News update:

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in November = 12 and December = 7

Monthly update on FDC social media sites:

The number of social media updates added to the FDC twitter and Facebook accounts in,

November;

Twitter = 123

Facebook = 96

December;

Twitter = 126

Facebook = 123

We currently have 4,340 likes on Facebook and 8,634 followers on twitter.

Consultation Summary:

- Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Proposals – 28 September – 20 December 2020
- Licensing Public Consultation – 20 October to 3 & 5 November 2020
- Polling Districts and Polling Places Review – 20 October to 13 November 2020
- Business Plan and Budget – 5 January – 2 February 2021

COVID-19 comms update:

We continue to follow and publicise national Government and Public Health England (PHE) advice and guidance in respect of COVID-19.

The latest information is being shared through our Council's COVID-19 web page at: www.fenland.gov.uk/coronavirus and the Council's social media accounts. In total, we have had over 70,000 Coronavirus web page views since their launch.

We are also publicising press releases for all key Council news and service information relating to COVID-19.

We also continue to circulate comms to staff via our What's Breaking emails and the intranet.

Better Online Access – CFF Project update

Online form submissions via the council's website www.fenland.gov.uk were at a record high during 2020 (1 January – 31 December) and saw the most significant increase in uptake to date.

In total, we received 14,578 online form submissions (excluding Garden Waste Subscriptions) – a 50% increase compared to 2019 (9,864).

A number of factors have contributed to this – namely the shift to online services during the Coronavirus pandemic, the launch of our new improved corporate website and the development of new online forms. Total website usage has increased by around 30% this year.

Data suggests that people's behaviour is starting to change and that more users are choosing to use our website to access a service as opposed to just browsing. This is a really important step in appropriately moving residents to engage with us via digital channels and provides a good platform for us to build on as part of the My Fenland project.

Our website now offers a total of 53 online forms; 9 new ones were developed this year. Highlights to note include:

- 5 Coronavirus business grant application forms enabled over 900 businesses to apply for funding.
- In December, we launched the new Missed Bin (Bartec integrated) reporting form. This received a total of 300 reports in its first month. The form prevents reports being incorrectly being made through querying data from Bartec. Valid Missed Bin requests are automatically added to operative's in-cab workpacks without the need for human intervention
- Services are increasingly asking for the development in online forms which shows that their confidence in the website (and its associated benefits) is increasing
- Of our existing forms, the biggest increase in submissions has been seen in 'Order Recycling Sacks' and 'Report a Missed Bin'
- Of our existing forms, the three that are used the most are 'Report a Missed Bin' (2,900 submissions), 'Order Recycling Sacks' (2,700 submissions) and 'Contact the Council' (1,847)

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 20/21	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
PRC1	% of customer queries resolved at first point of contact	95%	Rolling monthly target of 85% per month	96.6%	+11.6%
PRC2	% of customers satisfied with our service (March 2021)	96%	90%		
PRC3	% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	64%	Rolling monthly target rising to 46.5% by March 2021	84.32%	+44.32%
PRC4	% of contact centre calls handled	92%	Rolling monthly target rising to 80% by March 2021	97.77%	+27.77%
ARP3	% of council tax collected	96.84%	96.8%	83.13%	-0.81%
ARP4	Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£58,820,245	£57,913,023*	£48,651,700	-£979,761*
ARP5	% of NNDR collected	97.7%	97.51%	82.30%	0.16%
ARP6	NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,988,241	£16,182,693*	£14,405,039	£827,948*
PRC5	Number of visits to our website	684,190	718,000	91,000 (Dec) 651,000	
PRC6	% of staff who feel proud to work for FDC (every 2 years)	84%	85%	95%	+10%

*Amended to reflect changes due to COVID-19

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
COUNCIL TAX

Across the Anglia Revenues Partnership at the start of the month there were 8903 outstanding processes, and this has increased to 8957 based on stats generated on 4 January 2021. These stats generated on 11 January 2021 have reduced to 84840. We continue to see a large volume of moves being received each week.

Council Tax collection is below target but the position at the end of December improved with collection being down 0.81% compared to October has improved compared to down 0.92% at the end of November.

The first Court of the year was held on 2 December.

BUSINESS RATES

The team has worked incredibly hard to reduce processes – there are currently 105 items of post outstanding for Fenland (1605 across ARP). Focus has been on urgent work for grants, which does mean that the % of older work is higher across the partnership than previously. Focus is now turning to the older processes and ensuring that as things begin to stabilise, work is dealt with in a timely manor whatever the process.

Collection remains on track and recovery has commenced. During December the following recovery documents were issued:

- Reminders issued: 65 with a value of £205,242.92
- Final notices issued: 67 with a value of £229,324.84
- Summonses issued: 47 with a value of £200,890.51

At the first court on 2nd December 2020, 39 liability orders were granted.

Work has commenced to introduce individual performance monitoring across the team. This will involve identifying and categorising all types of work, performing an 8 week trial to create baseline for required output and development of appropriate supporting reports from various systems used.

From 1st January, work will also start on the annual billing process. It remains to be seen what reliefs/grants/reductions the Government may put in place for NNDR in 2021/22 depending on how the COVID situation continues to develop.