

Overview & Scrutiny

Progress Against Communities Corporate Priority

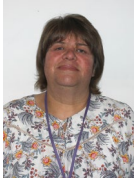
October 2021
(For performance in April to September 2021)

Portfolio Holders



**Councillor
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Sam Clark**

Portfolio Holder for
Health



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**

Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Andrew Lynn**

Portfolio Holder for
Licensing &
Community Safety

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)

April 1st 2021 to July 31st 2021

The Council has undertaken 21 positive interventions in response to new requests for service for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the district.

The Council has also investigated 38 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	20	27
March	1	2
Chatteris	1	1
Whittlesey	0	3
Villages	0	5 Benwick =1 Doddington =1 Eastrea = 1 Elm =1 Manea = 1

Private Sector Housing enforcement 01 April 2021 - 31st July 2021

	Numbers served	Raised charge total £	Income received £
Improvement Notice	0	0	480
Prohibition	2	480	0
CPN (Intent)	10	49,866	N/A
CPN (Final)	1	3,450	0
Other	0	0	0
HMO applications	7	5,250	5,250

In order to recover the outstanding Civil Penalty Notice debts, a new process has been finalised with the High Court Bailiffs, who are now in the process of transferring the oldest court order into a writ to be executed in order for the debt to be recovered.

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 Wisbech:**

Empty from February 2019. Purchased September 2020 by a local builder. In December 2020 we applied to the VOA (Valuation Office Agency) to request removal of the property from Council Tax due to its uninhabitable state and this was refused. Through the enabling work of the Empty Homes officer (EHO) making the new owner aware of potential increase Council Tax premium charges the work was quickened during Covid restrictions and they installed a roof, rewired, plastered, replaced staircase, installed central heating, new doors and windows and new kitchen and bathroom. The EHO then could evidence to Council Tax the property was furnished when purchased and the empty date was changed, if not they would have paid a premium Council Tax charge from February 2021.



Property occupied April 2021

The target for 2021/22 is to bring 70 properties back into use.
Properties brought back into use between 1 April 2021 and 31 July 2021

LTEP - Long term empty with premium charge (2yrs+)	LTE- Long term empty (6-23mths)
13	14

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 134 households from becoming homeless since April 2021.

The service is anticipating a significant uplift in approaches once current financial support relating to Covid ceases along with the easing of the extended notice periods and court action resuming. We have started to notice an increase in B&B use for both June and July.

The team continues to work closely with households, landlords and other partners to resolve issues before notices are served. We are also encouraging early engagement with a variety of partners as a commitment to refer alongside the statutory duty to refer mechanism.

Number of enquiries Year To Date (YTD) – 590 (Q1 – 429)

Advice only given YTD– 342 (Q1 – 271)

Preventions achieved YTD – 134 (Q1 – 109)

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work (calculated as total preventions / prevention and relief duties owed) - 60% YTD = 134 out of 224. Target is 60% (Q1 - 63% [109/174])

Case study

Mr X was living in a private rented property with his wife but she passed away early last year. In November 2020 he had an accident which resulted in life changing injuries. He was in hospital until January 2021. He gave notice on this property as it was no longer suitable for his needs. He was placed in a rehabilitation facility and then when the funding for him ran out he was moved on into a care home which he had to fund himself. It was at this point his daughter submitted a homeless application and we subsequently accepted a relief duty.

Through partnership working with Clarion Housing we were able to source supported accommodation and undertake a suitability assessment with the support of Mr X's daughter. This was supplemented by an Occupational Therapy report which enabled the applicant to swiftly move into settled accommodation. The turnaround time from accepting the relief duty to sign up was 2 weeks.

Rough Sleeping update

The Council continues to tackle rough sleeping and through strong partnership working with Change Grow Live (CGL) Outreach and the Ferry Project, the council

have successfully moved on 21 rough sleeper clients in the period from April 2021 to July 2021 in to secure accommodation. The Council continues to work closely with housing providers such as Clarion Housing, Amicus Trust to support our remaining rough sleeper clients in to move on accommodation.

Despite the 'Everyone In' Scheme ending in June, through the support provided to our rough sleepers, the Council continues to see a reduction in rough sleeping throughout Fenland and our aim is to continue to support our remaining 19 individuals into a successful outcome.

The Council through funding achieved from both the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation programme have secured 39 homes that are ring fenced for rough sleepers as a long term asset. The Council has also secured a further 6 homes to come on stream by April 2022. The homes have been enabled with the support of the Ferry project / Places for People , Amicus Trust and Clarion Housing. All the properties have a support package for the residents to reduce the risk of losing accommodation in the future.

The Council also secured circa 350k for continued support for tackling rough sleeping for the period 2021/22 through a multi agency hub, outreach and tenancy support work.

Rough Sleeping Case Study:

In May 2021, one of our entrenched long term rough sleepers was successfully housed through Housing First programme. This client was known to many services and unfortunately due to their non-engagement, drug addiction and lifestyle choices accommodation options were extremely limited. At one point this client had overdosed and was found by a member of public on the street almost blue in colour.

However, by working in joint-partnership through the Housing First programme funded through Cambs County Council from a Rough Sleeper Initiative bid, the Council were able to successfully introduce the client to the Housing First service and after a few months of in-depth pre-tenancy work with the individual they were able to move into a brand-new property. The client is managing their own tenancy extremely well and becoming more independent. They have built positive relationships with neighbours, their drug use is under control and they are, with the continued support of Housing First starting to plan future goals.

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

The Golden Age Team met during April and May to plan for the year ahead following announcements of restrictions being eased. In between meetings we consulted with external Golden Age Partners to gain their views on how they would like to be

involved in the future. Over 30 partners responded positively, and we subsequently held Virtual Partner meeting on Zoom on 13th July to plan for the year ahead and what Golden Age may look like.

Partners included Alzheimer's UK, Living sport, NHS, Cam Sight, Citizen's Advice, Versus Arthritis, Breathe Easy, Care Network, Age UK, U3A, CPFT, Healthy You, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Bobby Scheme.

During the meeting, partners were split into 5 groups via breakout rooms and given opportunity to feedback about their experiences over the last 18 months during the pandemic, the lessons they have learned, how Golden Age can promote their organisation and feedback on the existing format of Golden Age Fairs.

We look forward to our next event which is taking place at The Whittlesey Big Bash on Sunday September 12th between 2-4 pm at Whittlesey Manor Leisure Centre.

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, this workstream has been impacted with no new activities developed over the past 6 months. The Council will be working with the Future Parks team to open up more volunteering opportunities in Fenland's open spaces in the coming months. Volunteering with other people helps reduce loneliness and improves participant's mental health. Additionally, the Future Parks team is running some health intervention test sites and Fenland will learn from these and see if the Active Fenland team can support effective delivery in Fenland in 2022.

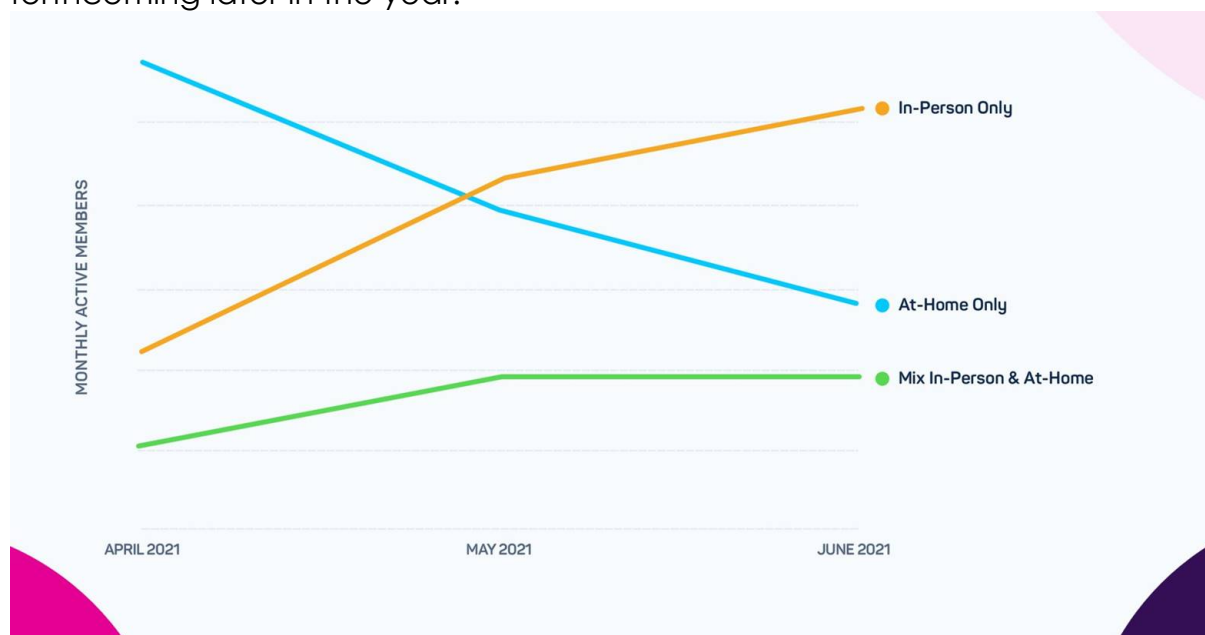
Other Projects:

Leisure Update (Cllr Sam Clark)

As Members are aware, FDC continues to support Freedom Leisure as the company continues to recover from the pandemic. The Council remains certain that the continued support offered by FDC to Freedom Leisure is the most financially beneficial approach for the Council that also ensures that our local communities continue to be able to access good quality, well-managed, leisure centres.

Nationally, trends in exercise have been tracked and the following chart highlights the changes. It is clear that the initial rapid return of customers to leisure facilities in April, flattened in May and June. At-home exercise levels have dropped dramatically, with

a similar flattening on the line. The continued decrease in at-home exercise and the increase in facility-based exercise is expected to continue. More information will be forthcoming later in the year.



Leisure Centres in Fenland

Since the reopening of the leisure centres much has changed, with the outlook looking more positive than initially expected, but still with some way to go until the contract is running, financially, at pre-covid values.

A significant component of the financial challenge is the price being charged by PureGym in Wisbech Tesco. Reopening at an initial £9.99 / month, the price is now up to £19.99 / month. This is a far more competitive price than Freedom can offer at the Hudson and is attracting price sensitive people from the town. The service offered at the Hudson is significantly different from that at PureGym. PureGym offers a good gym space, limited classes and no instructor support (unless additional charges are paid). This does appeal to many and is impacting on the Hudson's ability to attract back members at the same rate as Freedom's other facilities in Fenland.

Across the Fenland / Freedom contract the situation is as follows;

Pay as you go Swimming;

Initially social distancing meant laned swimming with limited numbers in the pool, socially distanced from each other, no showering afterwards and strict session times. Family swims were allowed after a period of time – but within specific spaces for your own family. As the country's Covid procedures have changed, so have those in a swimming pool. Sessions are more or less back to business as usual. Income levels are reflecting this with income continuing to rise. As at 19 July, across Freedom's local authority contracts, Fenland's pay as you go swimming income performance is mid-table at 90% of target income levels.

Learn to Swim (LTS)

Following a year of disruption in swimming lessons for young people, the current performance in Fenland exceeds expectations considerably. Learn to swim income is helping to offset some of the deficit still remaining from fitness memberships.

As at 19 July, the LTS scheme in Fenland was performing second best across the 19 Freedom local authority contracts, with the Fenland LTS scheme standing at 124% of the pre-covid size. i.e. Fenland's swimming pools have more pupils learning to swim now than pre-Covid. This is a tremendous result and reflects the local managers' flexible approach to operating LTS and their pro-active recruitment of more swimming teachers. It also highlights pent-up demand from parents who wish to see their children safe in the water. There continues to be growth, with an 8% rise in the 4 weeks prior to 19 July. This will have levelled off somewhat over the summer holidays, but Freedom will be pushing any spare capacity to the local community as young people return to school.

Gyms

Gyms initially opened with every other piece of equipment closed and lower numbers allowed in the rooms. Air conditioning was off and windows (where available) were open. We are now in a position where a gym is open as you would normally expect, with capacity back to normal. This is reflected in the rise in membership levels, with the exception of Hudson where memberships are not rebounding as well due to the local, low-priced, competition.

Across the 19 Freedom contracts, Fenland's performance sits at 4th, reflecting top quartile performance. Having reopened at 66% of pre-Covid membership levels, the contract is now 83% (as at 19 July), with a recent summer holiday induced 2% drop in memberships. Membership levels continue to rise at a slower rate than the first initial burst.

Exercise Classes

Initially classes did not take place. They were then allowed, but with restricted numbers and specific space required per individual. Outdoor classes were utilised during the good weather where possible. Running classes that were a fraction of the usual capacity means potentially higher costs, with some customers missing out due to capacity. The relaxation of social distancing has brought class sessions back to near normal capacity.

Summary Monthly Paying Membership Financial performance (incl. LTS subscriptions)

Since May 2021, monthly growth in income has been at a rate of 8.5% in June, 15.25% in July and 5% in August. Overall membership income has grown by 31.5% from May to August. Whilst this is very positive the current monthly income represents 85.5% of the January 2020 (pre-covid) level. That said, it is worth noting that January is a 'boom' month for membership sales, with people looking to improve their health following Christmas and New Year's resolutions. In financial terms this is a deficit in income of approximately £22,500 per month.

Love Wisbech Update (Cllr Andrew Lynn)

The collaboration of statutory organisations, Voluntary Community Sector and business in Wisbech continues to explore opportunities to consider issues that need additional support and then what opportunities exist to secure new funding and inward investment into the town to address it.

Word of the group is getting to partners who are proactively asking to present information to the group and the group then agree what can be done to support.

Example projects have included:

- A mental health support project to work with residents suffering mental health issues whilst waiting for an appointment to secure a service to help them.
- Received some communication advice to help increase the awareness and impact of the work which includes changing the name from I love Wisbech to Love Wisbech.
- Exploring how the collaboration can assist in reducing the number of smokers during a pregnancy.

The partnership supported the 'Walk a Mile in Their Shoes' event...Both women and men can suffer from Domestic Abuse. The event took place in Wisbech park on the 8th August with the Wisbech Mayor leading the walk.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Sam Clark)

The Pride in Fenland Awards will be held online again this year in November 2021 and volunteers can be nominated for the following categories; young person in the community, community group and good friend. Pride in Fenland will be launched in the Fenland Citizen using photographs of winners of the 2020 awards and will take place on 25th August.

There is no separate COVID-19 category however each category will be open for COVID and non-COVID related nominations making sure that volunteers who continued helping others despite the pandemic, rather than because of the pandemic, are given the opportunity to be nominated and recognised. There will of course be a focus on volunteers during the pandemic at the event itself.

Trophies have been presented by Cllr Sam Clark to the winners of last year's event and photo's will be published to launch the 2021 in the Fenland Citizen.

We encourage all members to market in their wards the opportunity to nominate local volunteers for this years awards.

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

(Cllr Sam Clark)

Outbreak management

Since early 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Countywide Health and Wellbeing Board have suspended their usual meeting diary so resources may focus on the pandemic.

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board is a key part of the pandemic response and meets to support the outbreak management plan and met in April, July and October to receive information in relation to the current epidemiology, vaccination and economic issues.

The meeting papers can be found on the County Council website here:

[Council and committee meetings - Cambridgeshire County Council > Meetings \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Earlier in the year the Board received an update about the Cabinet Office visit to Peterborough and Fenland, and a summary of the refreshed 2021-22 local outbreak management plan (LOMP), which is a statutory responsibility of Upper Tier Authorities.

The Outbreak Management Plan can be viewed here:

[Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Outbreak Management Plan. Version 4](#)

The District Council is a key partner to this plan and as a provider of statutory environmental health and wider services such as private sector housing have a role to play in delivery of the LOMP.

Key priorities agreed for the refreshed plan are:

- Focus on prevention including take up of the vaccine and providing information on reducing risks from covid – the council is working actively with partners in the clinical commissioning group to identify sites for vaccination centres and in particular workplaces where the Cambridgeshire vaccination bus may attend, alongside the valuable vaccine hesitancy work being delivered.
- Ensure testing, contact tracing and support for self-isolation works effectively – environmental health staff take part in contact tracing, working with a Cambridgeshire team and also through workplace investigations. Council staff are also working very closely alongside the county wide lateral flow test team to identify locations where testing should be made available, where test devices can be distributed, and community needs met.

- Respond swiftly to any rise in infection rates
Since last March the council has implemented a response group model to tackle priorities. The group meet weekly to address the epidemiology and support these priorities

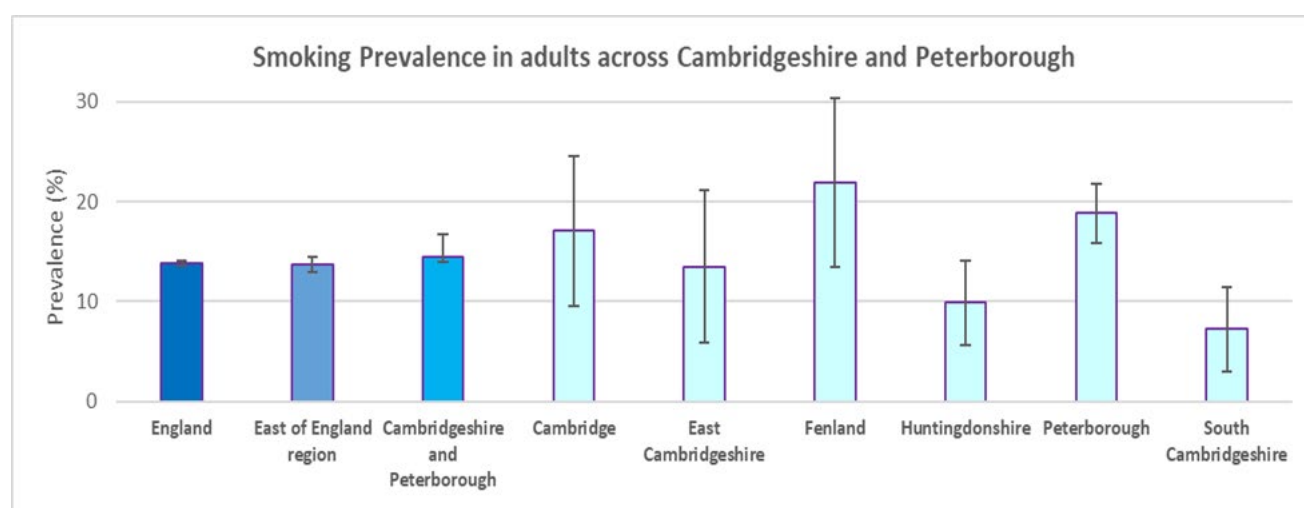
Actions include; support to every positive covid case, business support in all sectors to advise about testing availability and support available for staff who need to isolate, reviewing relevant communication material, translation needs and ensuring information is available within the towns and shopping areas.

Vaccination levels in Fenland are good with increased levels of vaccination across all age groups. Council staff are actively supporting colleagues from the clinical commissioning group to ensure efficient uptake of the third vaccine and vaccines in schools as they are available.

Further information can be viewed here: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

Smoking cessation – a refreshed approach

The local tobacco control alliance for Cambridgeshire (of which Fenland Council are a partner) has refreshed plans to address the prevalence of smoking with an early focus on smoking in pregnancy. The local tobacco treatment programme has identified that smoking in Fenland remains high at more than 20% of the adult population.



The proposal is for the NHS to make a significant contribution to making England a smoke free society.

Suggested initial prioritisation plan:

1. Maternity smoke-free pathways across acute providers
2. Mental Health and prioritised acute hospital pathways
3. Remainder of acute hospital pathways

Information about the project, including updated data will be made available through the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Enduring Transmission

The Enduring Transmission pilot project launched in May and this is a key part of the Local Outbreak Management Plan. The pilot is a joint project between Peterborough, South Holland and Fenland and is funded directly by the Treasury to the value of £2.6 million.

The project focusses on the following areas:

- Ensuring that workers will not experience financial hardship if they are self-isolating, through providing additional payments to workers, that for some, will be in addition to the £500 grant available to those on benefits, if they are able to demonstrate hardship. Many workers are not entitled to company sick pay and have to rely on statutory sick pay.
- Payments channelled through a trusted third sector organisation with the support of local authority staff and systems.
- Increase job security for employees. Many employees fear they will lose their jobs if they self-isolate. Work with key agencies such as the Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) that have regulatory powers, to engage with agencies and employers to support them to increase job security for workers self-isolating.
- Supporting 'safe' transport. We will pilot a limited network of COVID-safe public transport links across Peterborough, Fenland and South Holland for the transportation of agency workers and those living in rural areas to the workplaces that we are targeting.
- Many workers are unable to meet rent payments or for some, pay their mortgages. In certain circumstances, payments will be made to ensure arrears are not incurred or homes lost.
- Some people have accommodation where it is difficult to self-isolate. Covid safe accommodation will be available – where needed, for people who test positive to allow them to self-isolate, particularly if they live in an HMO.

The project has been given treasury approval to continue to the end of the year due to rising case numbers. The project has supported more than 400 individuals and their families. Many of these people required a significant amount of help to complete their application and benefitted from the support offered to them by the Rosmini staff. More than 75% of applicants would have received statutory sick pay or no pay during their isolation period.

29 companies (Fenland (12), Peterborough (10), South Holland (7) - employing over 4,500 people) have signed up to the programme. These employers represent a range of sectors. Some have mainly employed staff, whilst others have a higher dependency on agency and seasonal workers.

In July, the programme extended to include the hospitality sector due to increased infection rates reported in this sector. All sectors are suffering with resource limitations due to the reduced influx of seasonal labour.

From October – and following a small project exploring safer transport options - South Holland will be leaving the project group. The project will then be available for anyone on low pay or zero hours contracts working or living in Fenland or Peterborough. Low pay is defined by their level of income based on a need's assessment.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 21/22	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	226	250	59	
CELP2	NEW INDICATOR The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	N/A	Baseline	60%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	87	70	27	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£79,217	£50,000	N/A (December 2021)	N/A
CELP5	Customer satisfaction with Golden Age events (as per event)	298	200	0	
CELP6	Number of Active Fenland local sessions per year that improve community health	NEW	600		
CELP7	Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland	NEW	80%		

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

Comments CELP1 = Profile on track to meet target with increase in reactive enquiries to the team over the winter period.
CELP5 = First event in September – Target may not be met due to COVID restrictions up the July and the vulnerability of the target audience.
CELP 6 – reported annually
CELP 7 – reported annually