












Fenland District Council

Annual Report
2022/23



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Welcome to Fenland District Council's Annual Report for 2022/23

As we look back on the past year, we're both pleased and immensely proud to share that Fenland has experienced another year of strong performance as we continue to put residents at the heart of everything we do.

Despite wide and well-documented challenges affecting everyone the length and breadth of the country, it's great to see how much we have been able to achieve to support our communities while preparing for what the future holds.

It's fair to say that 2022/23 was perhaps the first year back to normality following the Covid pandemic. The last government coronavirus measures were imposed in December 2021 to tackle the Omicron variant and there was a welcome end in sight when the government published its 'Living with Covid' guidance in February 2022.

Although the economy bounced back, aided by government support for workers and businesses, after a brief period of relative respite, the war in Ukraine combined with the global aftershocks of the pandemic to push up prices. Inflation has risen to levels not seen for 40 years and is well above average wage increases, leaving many households facing a cost-of-living crisis.

Despite the strain on our own finances, the Council has remained determined to continuing supporting residents through the most difficult years in recent history.

After four years of council tax freezes, the council might have been expected to raise its portion of the bill for the first time since 2019 to help pay for its public services. But instead, members reduced Fenland's portion of the bill by 2% to lessen the financial burden on taxpayers – and reaffirmed their commitment to freeze council tax for a further four years thereafter, through to 2027/28.

We also continued to invest in our parks and open spaces, supported our leisure centre provider and ensured our much-loved community events were not only re-established after the pandemic but came back bigger and better.

We supported vulnerable members of our community; prevented and tackled homelessness; helped people to live in good quality, safe housing; brought empty homes back into use; worked with the police to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour; encouraged residents to live healthier, more active lifestyles; cleaned streets and collected almost 9,000 tonnes of recycling; promoted and lobbied for infrastructure improvements; improved our air quality; and secured even more investment into the district.

We also continued our transformation journey to further modernise and improve customer services, enhance customer experience, embrace smarter and more resilient working practices and, despite reduced budgets, provide even better value for money each year.

In March, this work saw the council shortlisted for the prestigious, national MJ Awards, which acknowledge local government authorities which dedicate themselves to supporting local communities and "never give up in the face of adversity".

We hope this Annual Report provides a snapshot of the key developments and achievements of the past year, and a flavour of what goes on behind the scenes to make a positive difference to our residents, and our district, every day.



Paul Medd
Chief Executive



Chris Boden
Leader of the
Council

About Fenland

Fenland is a district in North Cambridgeshire with four vibrant market towns and 29 characterful villages. Between the villages and towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech are swathes of rurality. Fenland benefits from close proximity to the major economic centres of Peterborough, Cambridge and Norwich.

- Fenland covers approximately 211 square miles.
- Over 200 miles of beautiful waterways.
- Over 135 hectares of open green space.
- The population increased by 7.6 per cent between the 2011 and 2021 census – to around 102,500*.
- Population density is low, at around 1.3 people per football pitch-sized piece of land*.
- The average (median) age of people in Fenland is 44*.
- Average property price is £237,493, compared to £352,732 in the East of England**.
- Over 3,160 businesses in Fenland.
- Key sectors: Agri-food, manufacturing, financial and business services, wholesale and retail.



Fenland covers approximately
211 square miles



Over 200 miles of
beautiful waterways



Over 135 hectares of
open green space



The population is
around 102,500*



Average property price
is £237,493**



Over 3,160 businesses
in Fenland

* Office for National Statistics
** UK House Price Index

Cabinet



Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
Whittlesey East
and villages



Jan French
Deputy Leader of the Council
March South



Ian Benney
Chatteris South



Peter Murphey
Chatteris South



Chris Seaton
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



Alex Miscandlon
Whittlesey East
and villages



Dee Laws
Whittlesey North West



Sam Hoy
Wisbech South



Steve Tierney
Wisbech South



Susan Wallwork
Wisbech South

Other Councillors



James Carney
Chatteris North
and Manea



Alan Gowler
Chatteris North
and Manea



Charlie Marks
Chatteris North
and Manea



Anne Hay
Chatteris South



David Conner
Doddington and
Wimblington



Maureen Davies
Doddington and
Wimblington



Dal Roy
Elm and
Christchurch



Matthew Summers
Elm and
Christchurch



Brenda Barber
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



Sam Clark
Leverington and
Wisbech Rural



John Clark
March East



Stuart Harris
March East



Mark Pursar
March East



Steve Count
March North



Kim French
March North



Paul Hicks
March North



Gary Christy
March South



Tim Taylor
March West and
Benwick



Andrew Woollard
March West and
Benwick



Gavin Booth
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Dianne Cutler
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Michael Humphrey
Parson Drove and
Wisbech St Mary



Dr Haq Nawaz
Whittlesey East and
villages



Jason Mockett
Whittlesey Lattersey



Elisabeth Sennitt Clough
Whittlesey North West



Roy Gerstner
Whittlesey South



Kay Mayor
Whittlesey South



Lucie Foice-Beard
Wisbech North



Nick Meekins
Wisbech Riverside



David Oliver
Wisbech Riverside



Sidney Imafidon
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken



David Patrick
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken



Billy Rackley
Wisbech Waterlees and
Walsoken

Conservative 
Independent 
Liberal Democrat 

Money Matters

Where your Council Tax goes

In 2022/23, the Band D Council Tax bill was set at £2,062.62 (plus Parish amounts). In 2023/24, this increased to £2,162.55 (plus Parish amounts). Fenland District Council collects money through Council Tax on behalf of other authorities, as shown on the diagram.

Fenland District Council froze its element of Council Tax in 2022/23 for the fourth year running. Members decided to further reduce the financial burden on taxpayers in 2023/24 when it cut its element of the Council Tax bill by 2%. Just 11.5% of each household's Council Tax bill goes to Fenland District Council, with the remainder going to the other authorities.

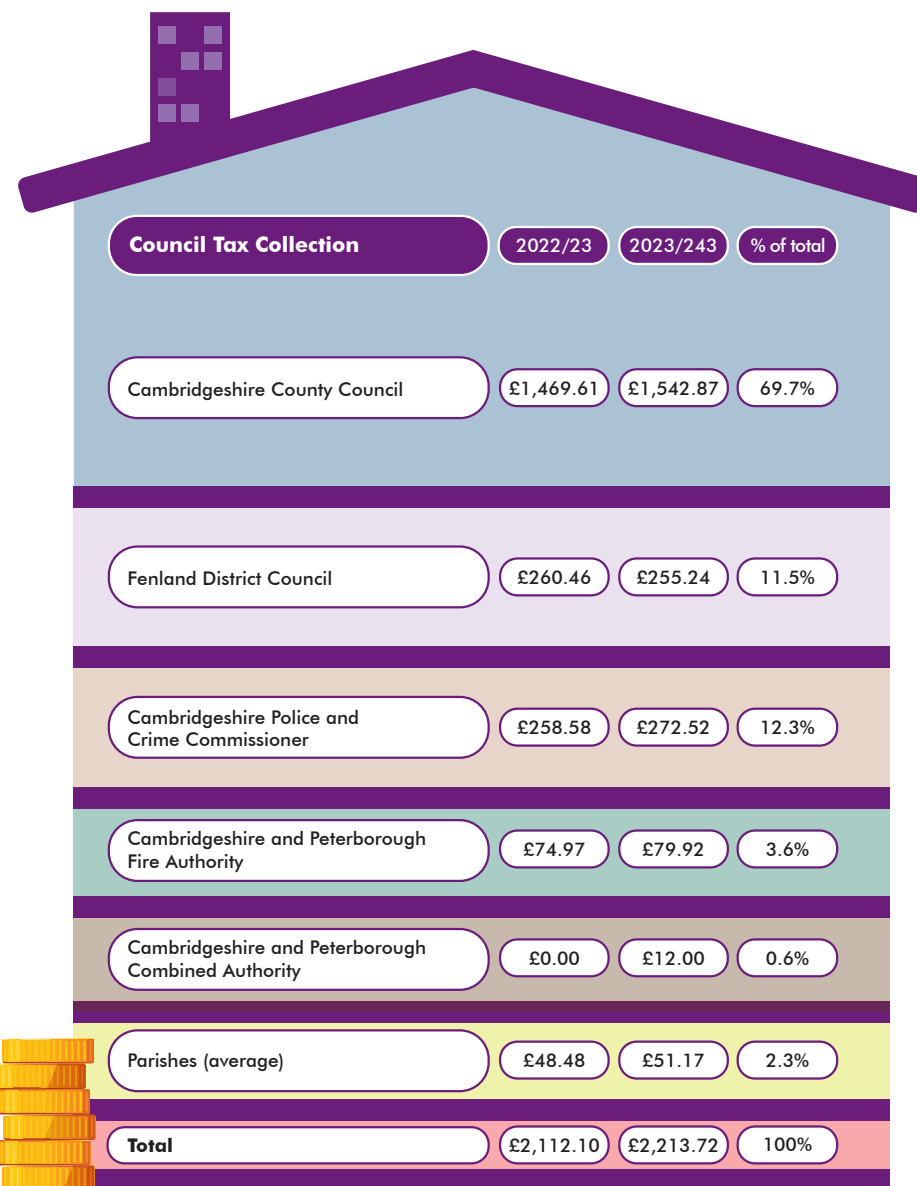
The numbers above relate to a Band D property. However, 83% of properties in Fenland are in Bands A-C. The average Council Tax per property in Fenland was £1,415.21 in 2022/23 and is £1,492.10 in 2023/24 and is the lowest average per property in Cambridgeshire. This also compares to an average Council Tax per property of £1,578.32 in 2023/24 across all English authorities.

Our finances

The Council's net spending on services in 2022/23 was £13.086m. This sum is financed by the Council's share of Business Rates (£5.855m) and Council Tax (£8.031m) which resulted in a surplus of £800k being returned for 2022/23. At the budget meeting in February 2023, a net surplus of £69k was forecast at the year end. The surplus of £800k has been transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve. This reserve represents the amount taken in tax which has not been spent and now stands at £1.867m.

Full details of the Council's Budget for 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Strategy can be found at: www.fenland.gov.uk/finance

You may also wish to read our Business Plan. This explains our organisational priorities for the next financial year: www.fenland.gov.uk/businessplan



Council for the Future

Our Cabinet members have selected a number of projects to contribute towards our 'Council for the Future' agenda. These projects have a variety of aims; from tackling areas of particular need within Fenland, to sustainably transforming services and our organisation to be fit for the future. Projects vary in scope and complexity, with some requiring close partnership working with external organisations and changes in policies before their aims can be delivered.

Modernising Council services Councillor Steve Tierney

- ❶ Over 54,500 answered phone calls to contact centre and 99% of customer queries resolved at first point of contact.
- ❷ We continue to develop our My Fenland team, with 2 new service areas supported by the team and 112 officers trained over 30 topics.
- ❸ Our Transformation team has completed 75 new and existing processes, including 11 processes redesigned. These benefit either staff, our customers or both.

Safer homes for tenants Councillor Samantha Hoy

- ❶ 246 properties where positive action from the team helped resolve issues.
- ❷ Our Housing Options team received 2051 requests for homeless advice and assistance; 1,228 of these approaches were resolved through the advice provided.
- ❸ 275 households were prevented from becoming homeless through various forms of intervention.

CCTV service Councillor Susan Wallwork

- ❶ Service delivered 24/7, 365 days a year, providing key outcomes for our community.
- ❷ 1,247 incidents captured on CCTV to support police outcomes, leading to 107 arrests being made.
- ❸ 4,492 (12 per day) pro-active camera controls completed, supporting early detection of community issues and crime reduction.

Planning for the future Councillor Dee Laws

- ❶ Completed the evidence base to enable consultation on a draft Local Plan.
- ❷ Consulted on a draft Local Plan between August and October 2022.
- ❸ Oversaw the making and successful referendum of the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan.

Better online services Councillor Steve Tierney

- ❶ Our website received over 345,000 visits and over 21,500 webforms were completed online across 48 different topics.
- ❷ Fenland For Business website developed with new branding and updated content, and brought back in house, with content hosted on the FDC website.
- ❸ Launch of two Idox web digital journeys for Licensing and Events which enable customers to supply information or apply for a licence via our website on a 24/7 basis.

Bringing empty homes back into use Councillor Samantha Hoy

- ❶ Intervention advice and assistance to help two long-term empty residential properties (LTEP - 24mth), and two long-term empty properties (LTE 6-23mths) properties which have now been fully renovated.
- ❷ 81 homes brought back into use.
- ❸ £98,395 benefit from New Homes Bonus.

Competitive trade waste service Councillor Peter Murphy

- ❶ Introduction of a commercial food waste service to complement the existing mixed dry recycling and residual waste collections offered to small and medium sized Fenland businesses.
- ❷ 75 new customers joined our service from other providers.
- ❸ Increased income year on year; income in 2022/23 was £465,000 - up 26% from 2021/22.

Clamping down on poor parking Councillor Jan French

- ❶ Completed on-street site surveys of all existing Traffic Regulation Orders within the district. This identified works needed surrounding sign and line discrepancies.
- ❷ Working with Cambridgeshire County Council, we have prepared a draft application for the Department of Transport for the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- ❸ We wrote to all statutory consultees to find out any comments or objections in relation to the implementation of CPE. No objections were received.

A more commercial outlook

Councillors Chris Boden, Ian Benney and Steve Tierney

- ❶ Received a second full year's rent (£230,000) from the Wisbech property investment acquired in March 2021.
- ❷ Outline planning permission granted for two Council owned development sites.
- ❸ Strategically purchased another property in March to support the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy.

Healthy you

Councillor Alex Miscandloan

- ❶ Through recruitment and training we have developed our Yoga, Forever Fit and Badminton sessions into self-sustainable programmes, thereby prolonging provision.
- ❷ Over 3,170 individuals made contact with the Healthy You Tier 1 service, with just over 1,320 new individuals starting an activity at some point in the year.
- ❸ 55 sessions set up across the district ranging from physical activity, healthy eating, to school-based and family focused sessions.

Protecting our environment

Councillors Peter Murphy and Susan Wallwork

- ❶ Reviewed and responded to more than 800 consultations associated with proposed developments and industry in Fenland, including the proposal for an energy from waste plant, to protect the environment and residents from potential harm, such as noise, dust or other air pollutants.
- ❷ Successfully prosecuted two individuals for failing to dispose of their waste correctly when we found large items fly-tipped. This saw a combined fine of £857 imposed by the courts.
- ❸ Our Street Scene team spent 3,900 hours out and about in the community.

Better railways for Fenland

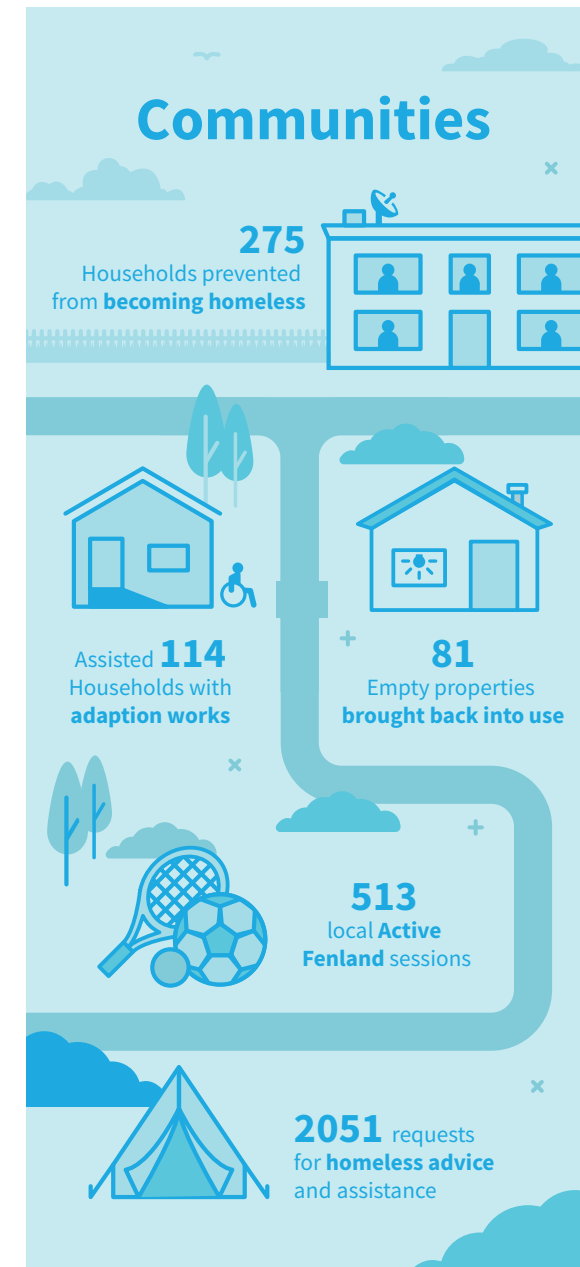
Councillor Chris Seaton

- ❶ Completion and launch of the Whittlesey Heritage Walk.
- ❷ Working with the Hereward Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and railway industry partners to achieve pre covid levels of use at Manea and Whittlesea Stations.
- ❸ The 10-year anniversary of the Hereward CRP and its national re accreditation for 2022/2023.

Our Communities

Support vulnerable members of our community

- As the Cost of Living crisis deepened in the aftermath of Covid and war in Ukraine, we launched a campaign to [help residents struggling with rising costs](#). Together with our partners, we have helped to ensure people claim support they are entitled to, know how to make their homes warmer and cheaper to run, are aware of social tariffs offered by suppliers, are helped to manage debt or know where to turn if they need advice or someone to talk to. The campaign has included organising cost of living events with a host of partners in attendance, creating a resource hub on our website, producing a cost of living information booklet available at locations across Fenland, internal staff updates and a social media toolkit.
- Our Housing Options team received [2,051 requests for homeless advice and assistance](#); 1,228 of these approaches were resolved through the advice provided. [275 households were prevented from becoming homeless](#) through various forms of intervention including (but not limited to) mediation, emotional support, budgeting advice, financial support and assisting with sourcing alternative accommodation.
- Through our Disabled Facilities Grants scheme, the Council provides [adaption works for elderly and disabled householders](#) to remain safe, secure and protected in their own homes. Last year we [assisted 114 households with adaption works](#). These included the [installation of walk-in showers, stairlifts, ramped](#) access facilities and specialist equipment such as person hoists.
- The [15th annual Pride in Fenland awards](#) took place in November to celebrate the incredible contributions of unsung heroes from across the district. Organised by Fenland District Council and the Fenland Citizen newspaper, this year's awards saw an almost record number of nominations – 83 in total. Judges heard many inspiring stories of kindness and selfless support across seven categories: Young Individual or Youth Group Volunteers, Individual Volunteer, Community Group Volunteers, Special Judges' Award and three new awards; Recreational and Environmental Volunteers, Community Fundraising Volunteers and Lifetime Volunteering Award.
- Our [Golden Age project](#), which helps provide older residents with advice on services and support available to them at events across Fenland, [celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2023](#). The events were launched in 2003 by the late Cllr Mac Cotterell MBE and have continued to be valuable to residents – and an enduring Council priority - ever since. Held at venues across the district throughout the year, the events bring together many providers of care, financial assistance, social activities, health provision and other services for the over 60s. To date, almost [7,000 visitors have attended the Golden Age events](#).



- Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, we have [led a co-ordinated response to the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme](#). Together with partner organisations and local community groups, we have helped to ensure all arrivals from Ukraine receive the best possible support and safe welcome to the district. This includes working with host families to carry out necessary accommodation and disclosure checks and providing a wrap-around support package for Ukrainian refugees to help them with access to financial support, education, healthcare, and social care services when they arrive.

Promote health and wellbeing for all

- [Freedom Leisure](#) continues to deliver leisure centre services on the Council's behalf and has done an excellent job at encouraging people back into the centres following the Covid pandemic. Whilst there remain some reductions in performance below the pandemic levels, overall monthly income is now performing 4% above the February 2020 level, with swimming lessons particularly strong, and [thousands of young people learning to swim every week](#). This is excellent news and a reflection on the efforts that the Freedom team in Fenland has put into the service.
- Health and wellbeing support for Fenland residents and businesses continued following the Covid-19 pandemic. Working with our partners we focused on access to vaccination centres and information regarding immunisations through the ['Stay Strong, Live Long' campaign](#). The Enduring Transmission project continued to support businesses until March 2023 providing [direct public health support](#) helping to build resilience and supporting business continuity.
- Our Active Fenland team successfully attracted [more than £402,000 in funding](#) to help all ages of the community to [get more active, more often](#), and to lead healthier lifestyles. The funding helped to [deliver 513 sports and physical activities](#) to Fenland communities, including badminton, tennis, running, walking football and netball, yoga and strength and balance.
- We have [continued to invest in our parks and open spaces](#). Together with our contractor Tivoli, we look after more than 135 hectares of parks and open spaces across Fenland. Work in the past year has included [refurbishments to several play areas](#) to keep them up-to-date, safe, and popular with children and families, investment in [planting new trees](#), and a [new Splashpad attraction](#) in Wisbech Park. We also [secured a £240,000 grant from the Government's Changing Places Fund](#) to provide two larger, accessible Changing Places toilets for severely disabled people, including one for the new Wisbech Park café and pavilion due to open in 2024.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage

- We worked with numerous local cultural and creative organisations and individuals to [develop the Fenland Culture Strategy](#) and build on relationships with Arts Council England (ACE) and Cause4 Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy, both of which have led to [additional training support, engagement, and further investment in the district](#). This work, combined with Fenland's ACE Priority Place status, also led to two Fenland-based organisations being named as the [first two ACE National Portfolio Organisations \(NPO\)](#) ever. As a result, they will receive a combined £399,600 investment annually.

- We secured **£120,000** from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for **Amplifying Community Arts and Culture**. The funding will be used to help local creative providers **develop more opportunities for the community to engage in creative activities**, including training and upskilling for cultural organisations and creative individuals, and equipment and resources. It will also provide dedicated support to the creative community around searching and applying for grant funding to further amplify what is available in Fenland.
- Significant effort has been made in the last couple of years to ensure that our much-loved **Four Seasons events were not only re-established but came back bigger and better** than they were before the Covid pandemic. Government 'Welcome Back' funding enabled a series of marketing events throughout the town centres prior to the relaunches, designed to rebuild the events again and encourage visitors back out into public spaces. Additional funding was secured by volunteers to boost March's St George's Fayre, with visitors turning out to the event in their thousands, and there were huge efforts to support Whittlesey Festival to recruit more volunteers and regroup in 2022 after a three-year hiatus. Work has been ongoing in Whittlesey for 18 months but has proved successful, meaning that all Four Seasons events will have been reinstated in 2023.
- Thanks to an idea born from our Growing Fenland Whittlesey Project and funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, we launched the **new Whittlesey Heritage Walk** in October 2022. Developed in partnership with key stakeholders, the walk encourages people to explore the fascinating and often undiscovered history of the ancient market town. The walk can be completed by following information boards along the route, using the Whittlesey Heritage Walk brochure or downloading the Love Exploring App which includes Augmented Reality and GEO-Location features for lots of family fun.

Performance	Target 2022/23	Performance
Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	250	246
Proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work	57%	53%
Number of empty properties brought back into use	50	81
New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£45,000	£98,395
Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health	500	513
Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland	25	29
Value of Grants for creativity and culture managed by FDC	£40,000	£43,000

Our Environment

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- We carried out more than **2.9million bin collections** from across the district, in all weathers, and collected more than **8,850 tonnes** of materials for recycling. Thanks to residents continuing to recycle their waste well, we also generated more than **£461,600 of income** to support our services. Customer satisfaction with our Refuse and Recycling and Garden Waste (Brown Bin) services remains high with **96%** and **89%** respectively. The Garden Waste service has continued to grow with subscriptions at an all-time high of over **23,688** in 2022/23.
- Our trained 'Getting It Sorted' volunteers supported recycling in Fenland with events, activities, and online training courses. They also kept the Council's multi-lingual recycling website, www.gettingitsorted.org, up-to-date to help residents recycle right at home.
- Our Cleansing and Rapid Response team continued to provide the excellent **seven-day street sweeping, litter picking and fly-tipping removal service** in our towns and villages. Last year they responded to over **1,860 service requests**: **96%** on the same or next day. Over **1,380 quality inspections** were made in areas of high footfall - **99%** met cleansing standards first time.

Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene

- We worked with a number of community environmental volunteering groups who carried out litter picks, planting and other community projects help to keep Fenland clean, green and safe for all to enjoy. Leverington Street Pride celebrated its 10th anniversary and Chatteris In Bloom achieved Gold in the town category of the Britain in Bloom awards. Over **£33,000 was awarded to community groups** living within the vicinity of wind turbines to improve their local environment. Projects included switching to LED lighting, upgrading to triple glazed windows to a community hall, solar powered mobile vehicle activated signs and enhancements to green spaces.
- Our Street Scene team spent **3,900 hours out and about in the community**, working on various environmental improvement projects. In 2022/23 the team issued **10 Fixed Penalty Notices** for fly-tipping, and successfully prosecuted two individuals for fly-tipping, with a combined fine total of **£857** imposed by the courts. The team also investigated **194 reported abandoned vehicles** and issued **13 car parking fines** to drivers parked illegally on March Market Place.



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

- Our **shared CCTV service** with Peterborough City Council maintained its 100% service function 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service conducted **over 4,000 pro-active camera patrols**, **detected over 1,000 incidents of crime and disorder across the district** and supported our policing partners to make **over 100 arrests** for offences, helping to make the district safer.
- Our Community Support and Community Safety teams made a **successful bid to the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for £50,000** to improve the perception of crime and anti-social behaviour in Wisbech. We are currently working with a range of partners including Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Clarion Housing, Wisbech Town Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to establish and engage with young people in Wisbech to shape the future of the project which will run until March 2025.
- Together with internal and external partners, our Community Safety team has been involved in the investigation of 246 reports of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or other quality of life concerns. The team is also part of the Fenland Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which has undertaken projects to raise awareness of domestic abuse and coercive control, radicalisation, child criminal exploitation and road safety. As well as engaging the community, training sessions were delivered to support the development of frontline professionals who work within the Fenland community surrounding domestic abuse, hate crime, cybercrime and substance abuse. The team was also part of a successful partnership bid with the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner and Cambridgeshire Constabulary, securing funds from the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative to deliver work on diverting youth away from involvement in anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Wisbech.

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	90%	96%
% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	93%	98.6%
% of collected household waste recycled through the Blue Bin service	28%	27%
Customer satisfaction with Refuse and Recycling services	90%	95.8%
Customer satisfaction with Garden Waste service	85%	89.1%
Number of Street Pride, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of Community environmental events supported	204	236
% of local businesses who thought they were supported and treated fairly	96%	100%
% of those asked who are satisfied with Fenland District Council's events	96%	97%

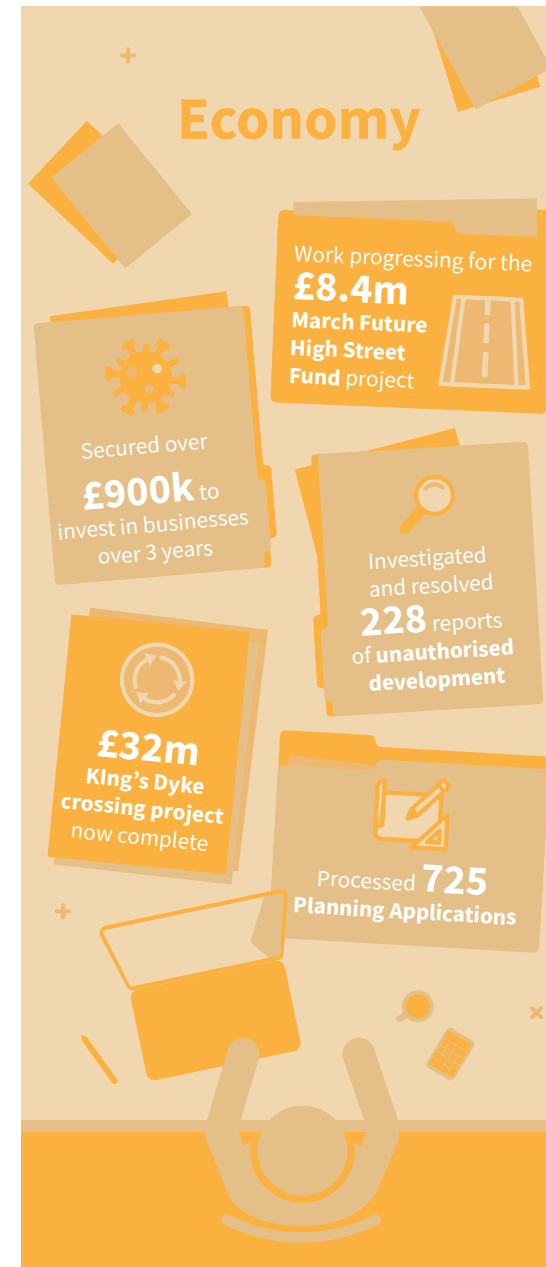
Our Economy

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

- The Economic Growth team has done intensive work with numerous business to support them to grow. One such example being major employer Suncrop, which was support to:
 - develop a long-term plan to **combat business-threatening energy price hikes**.
 - become a **Disability Confident employer** and further explore opportunities to address recruitment challenges by employing harder-to-reach groups.
 - form beneficial contacts to help with **access to funding and partnership working** with a foreign business now looking to establish a base within Suncrop's Chatteris site.
 - further explore **robotics innovation**.
- We **secured over £900,000 of funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund** to invest in businesses over the next three years. The funding will support businesses with grants to invest in new technology, diversify their income or create new employment opportunities. In addition, we have **secured over £430,00 to invest in rural businesses and communities** that will, for example, provide grants to help farming businesses diversify.
- We helped to **deliver a Start & Grow programme** with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Growth Hub, an intensive programme of structured business support and grants, funded by the Community Renewal Fund. More than £650,000 in business support and grants was delivered into Fenland through a number of sources. The 'Start' programme was for individuals wanting to explore enterprise and offered intensive pre-start business information sessions, online learning, mentoring, networking and peer support. The 'Grow' programme supported existing early-stage micro-businesses to expand into new markets, create new jobs or increase profitability and productivity.

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

- Our **Planning team determined 725 planning applications** - between 62% and 81% of these were decided on time, depending on application type. The team also dealt with nearly 800 other types of application (such as discharge of condition, general enquiries, and licensing requests) and received 103 pre-application enquiries, in addition to 'traditional' planning applications. We also **investigated and resolved 228 cases of unauthorised development** reported to us.



- Work continued on projects outlined in our [Growing Fenland masterplans](#), part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) strategic Market Town Masterplans, including opening of the Whittlesey Heritage Walk and Wisbech Park Splashpad, progress on the March Future High Streets Fund project, completion of improvements to Wisbech Market Place and funding for local skills development in Chatteris.
- Work gathered pace on [March town centre's multi-million pound regeneration](#), a programme of inter-related schemes being delivered by various partners to transform and futureproof the town centre. Highlights of 2022/23 include:
 - [Delivery of March Market Place improvements](#), funded by our Future High Streets Fund grant funding. Work started in January 2023 and was completed in April.
 - Primary-build of [CityFibre's £5million super-fast broadband investment](#) - offering service to over 8,500 homes.
 - [Major gas pipe upgrade](#) by Cadent Gas
 - Contractor appointed to deliver the Broad Street regeneration scheme, including transformation of the existing road layout and a new public realm area. Funded by the Future High Streets Fund and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- Our [Wisbech High Street Project](#), funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, continued to make progress. Highlights from 2022/23 included the completion of restoration works at 31 High Street with grant funding, the delivery of seven free, in-person traditional heritage skills workshops, and planning approved and contractor appointed to deliver a retail and residential scheme at 24 High Street, known as 'The Gap'.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

- Supported by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority funding, work continues to improve transport connectivity in Fenland. Highlights include the [completion of the £32million Kings Dyke Crossing Project](#) in Whittlesey and the [£25million A47 Guyhirn roundabout](#). There was also great progress on the Fenland Railway Station Masterplans project, which aims to improve stations at March, Manea and Whittlesey and provide better railways for Fenland. Work included the completion of a redevelopment at March Railway Station, with a new open-plan ticket hall and waiting area, accessible modern toilet facilities and a bigger, upgraded car park. There were also infrastructure improvements delivered through the March Area Transport Study (MATS).

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	70%	74%
% of minor applications determined in 8 weeks	70%	62%*
% of other applications determined in 8 weeks	80%	81%*
% occupancy of our Business Premises estate	92%	93.9%
% occupancy Wisbech Yacht Harbour	95%	99%

*The reduced performance was as a result of rising workloads and resource challenges

Quality Organisation


- We collected over £65million in Council Tax and £24million in Business Rates. This plays a major part in funding the key services we provide to the community. A large share of this money is also passed onto the Police, Fire Service, County and Parish Councils - see the 'Money Matters' section for more information.
- We continued to roll out our ongoing transformation project to optimise our workforce, improve services and customer experience and make it even easier for people to interact with the Council. Phase 2 of our transformation project included a new My Fenland operating model and new management structure. Transformation highlights in 2022/23 included the completion of 75 process mapping tasks, and redesign of 11 processes, to develop services for the benefit of either our customers, our staff, or both. The My Fenland team also answered more than 54,900 phone calls and resolved 99% of customer queries at the first point of call. We also received 10,397 payments via PayPoint, totalling over £1.3million.
- Our website saw over 345,000 visits and received 21,500 online form submissions across 48 different topics and was regularly updated with front-page news to maintain user engagement. As part of our ongoing work to improve our digital services and user journeys, we also expanded our suite of online forms, with new digital journeys for licensing forms and event bookings. The forms enable residents to apply for services or submit information online 24/7, and automatically transfer information received directly to teams on the ground and into back-office systems – saving hours of resource in processing time.
- Our Social Media channels remain popular, with 8,880 Twitter followers and 6,700 Facebook followers. Over the past year we have used our social media channels to promote our online services and customer self-service forms, encourage behaviour change to tackle issues such as dog fouling and fly-tipping and improve recycling rates, and highlight local news, events, campaigns and consultations. We have also increased our use of video on our social media channels to develop our online engagement with residents.
- The Licensing team issued 414 licences and dealt with 95 service requests for a variety of licensable services including Taxi, Premises, Alcohol, Scrap Metal and Animal Licensing, to help ensure such businesses are well managed and operating safely and legally.
- We consulted with residents, stakeholders and partners about a wide range of topics to help us understand local people's priorities and shape our service. Consultations included asking for views on our draft Budget and Business Plan, our Local Validation List which helps ensure that the requirements for information included within a planning application are kept to the minimum, and plans for a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to help reduce anti-social behaviour in a Wisbech alleyway.



- We were **reaccredited with the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award** last year. This is a Government standard that recognises the high quality, customer focused services that we provide. The independent assessor said the Council had continued to meet the **'gold standard' for customer service delivery** and that our ongoing transformation programme is clearly delivering significant benefits to customers.
- As well as continuing to provide direct public health support to businesses through the post-Covid Enduring Transmission project, our Environmental Health team delivered a wide range of services including:
 - **Inspected more than 290 food businesses** to ensure they complied with food law and produced food that is safe to eat.
 - **Investigated nearly 2,000 reports of noise or other environmental problems** that may be affecting residents.
 - Extended our network of **air quality monitoring sites**.
 - Assisted Health Security UK with **infectious disease outbreaks** including salmonella, norovirus, campylobacter, cryptosporidium.
- Inspected and **permitted 16 industrial processes**, ranging from sawmills to mineral processes.
- Inspected and **licensed all skin piercing businesses**, including tattooing, acupuncture, botox and eyebrow microblading.

Performance

	Target 2022/23	Performance
% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact	85%	99%
% of customers satisfied by our service	90%	86%
% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	46.5%	47.49%
% of contact centre calls handled	80%	87.96%
Days taken to process Council Tax Support new claims and changes	8.0 days	5.29 days
% of Council tax collected	95.72%	96.76%
Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£64,734,624	£65,262,181
% of NNDR Collected	96.70%	97.1%
NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,017,406	£24,120,990
Number of online forms submitted via FDC website	22,000	21,504



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