

Fenland District Council Business Plan

2020/21

Introduction by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Our aim: "To improve the quality of life for people living in Fenland."

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Business Plan for 2020/21.

Our Business Plan sets out the projects and services we will deliver across Fenland over the next 12 months. It should be read alongside our Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, which explain how we will manage our finances over the next few years.

Public sector austerity has now continued for over a decade. Since 2010, we have made savings of £9.9million, and must make a further £1.651million between 2020/21 and 2023/24. The challenge remains to deliver good quality services that our residents need, whilst investing in services and projects that help the district to grow. We continue to work closely with partners, with well-established arrangements in place for a number of our key services including Revenues and Benefits and Planning Policy. Our recent partnership with Freedom Leisure has already enabled improvements to be made to our leisure centre facilities, whilst saving £351,000 per year.

As an organisation, work is underway to ensure we are operating as effectively as possible – not only to meet current needs, but to meet future ones too. We recently adopted a Commercial and Investment Strategy which will support us to make good decisions on income generation, regeneration and place-shaping opportunities. Our 'My Fenland' Customer Services project is enabling us to transform our processing of customer enquiries by utilising technology to enable residents to access services 24/7. A number of transformation projects, spanning across a variety of service areas, are also changing the way we work to meet emerging needs.

We are an ambitious, forward thinking organisation and continue to lobby for investment to help tackle important issues – particularly relating to skills, transport, affordable housing, education and regeneration. As a result, we have commitments of £61 million from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority towards projects that will benefit Fenland. We continue to work with partners to deliver property improvements, including ambitious plans for 11/12 and 24 High Street, as part of the National Heritage Lottery Funded Wisbech High Street project. The recently completed 'Growing Fenland' masterplans also offer exciting possibilities to bring economic growth and regeneration for our four market towns. As ever, we continue to pursue funding for ambitious and transformational projects and hope to secure Government funding for our 'March Future High Street' bid, having been successful in the first phase.



Chris Boden –
Councillor
Leader of
the Council

Alongside partners, we also continue to develop new ways of working. Now in its third year, and initially supported by £736,000 of Government funding, our new partnership 'Trailblazer' approach to homelessness prevention across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is shaping best practice across the country. Early intervention and multi-agency working has supported over 1,000 households, who would usually not qualify for help, to avoid becoming homeless. We also successfully bid for £2.2million of funding from the DCLG Controlling Migration Fund. This is supporting us and the wider 'Diverse Communities Forum' partnership to successfully tackle migration issues affecting local people including homelessness, overcrowding, poor housing conditions, modern day slavery, discrimination and street drinking. This work has recently been shortlisted for a national award and best practice is being shared nationally, contributing to sector-led improvement.



Paul Medd –
Chief Executive

We hope this introduction has provided a valuable insight into just some of what we do and aim to achieve. We remain committed to working with all our towns, villages and rural communities to make Fenland an even better place to live and work.

About Fenland

Fenland has strong community spirit and pride in its heritage. Over 101,400 people live in the district (ONS: 2018), which covers 211 square miles within North Cambridgeshire. 75% of people live in our four market towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech. Our beautiful rural landscape is home to 29 villages and attracts visitors from around the country.

Fenland has the lowest house prices in Cambridgeshire and plentiful availability of commercial land. As a result, our population is growing quickly. By 2036, it is predicted that the population will have increased by 9% to 110,700 (ONS: 2018). We have plans in place, some of which are discussed within this plan, to maximise the positive opportunities that growth brings.



Our population is also getting older. 29% of our population are aged 60 or over; above average compared to Cambridgeshire and the UK as a whole (ONS: 2019). Alongside partners, we are working to enable residents to access the support they need to live happily, healthily and independently.

We also face some challenges around deprivation, particularly around education and health. We are the 80th (out of 326) most deprived area in the country, with some wards within the top 10% most deprived (IMD: 2019), Nevertheless, we continue to work closely with other organisations to positively overcome these challenges.



Our Priorities

Our Business Plan sets out the priorities we aim to deliver over the next 12 months. These priorities have been developed to address the most important needs of local people and communities as a whole.

Our priorities are split into three headings: Communities, Environment and Economy. The fourth priority, Quality Organisation, sits alongside each priority.

Despite continued austerity challenges, our 366 employees are proud to deliver a variety of high-quality core services. In a typical year we empty 3 million bins, clean 210 million square miles of town centres and open spaces, answer 78,000 telephone enquiries, determine 1,300 planning applications, enable 75,400 people to vote in elections – and more!

As an organisation, our unique 'one-team' culture supports the effective delivery of our priorities. It enables officers, elected members and partners to effectively work together without the constraints of traditional department silos. We support and invest in our workforce to give them the skills they need to work effectively in their roles, which has been recognised by continued Customer Service Excellence (CSE) re-accreditations. In our latest Staff Survey (2018), 84% of staff said they were proud to work for us.

Summary of Corporate Priorities

The table below gives a summary of our cross-cutting corporate priorities, which are explained in more detail over the next few pages. Some priorities relate to our 'core' services that we deliver day-to-day, such as bin collection and processing benefits. Others explain the specific projects we will deliver within 2020/21.

Each priority is underpinned by a series of performance indicators, which is reported to all Members at our Council meetings. These public reports are summarised to provide end of year performance updates in our Annual Report. This explains what the Council has been doing over the previous financial year to achieve its objectives.

Quality Organisation	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support vulnerable members of our community • Promote health and wellbeing for all • Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service • Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene • Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland • Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland • Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

Quick Links

- To view our Annual Report, visit www.fenland.gov.uk/annualreport
- To view information about our finances, please visit www.fenland.gov.uk/finances

Should you require this information in an alternative format, please call 01354 654321 or email info@fenland.gov.uk

Support vulnerable members of our community

- Enable residents to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax they are entitled to through our shared service (Anglia Revenues Partnership: ARP)
- Work with partners to support residents to manage the effects of welfare reform changes and Universal Credit
- Use our housing powers to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping, meet housing needs, improve housing conditions and keep homes safe and accessible
- Work with partners to build capacity and resilience so that residents can support themselves and their community
- Encourage a range of partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme to support older people
- Work with partners and the community to deliver the Wisbech 2020 Action Plan

Promote Health and Wellbeing for all

- Support our local community by delivering our Leisure Strategy in partnership with Freedom Leisure
- Work collaboratively with partners, including in new and emerging networks, to deliver our Health and Wellbeing Strategy in order to tackle local health priorities and reduce health inequalities
- Create healthier communities through activities developed by Active Fenland and community partners

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

- Work with local stakeholders to develop a Culture Statement for Fenland
- Support voluntary and community groups to hold public events safely

Key projects planned in 2020/21

- Work with landlords to improve housing conditions and management standards in the district's private sector including using the Council's enforcement powers
- Support property owners to bring long-term empty homes back into use, helping to address the district's housing needs
- 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
- Deliver four Golden Age fairs across the district
- Increase the use of local open spaces and collaborate with local activity providers, and other partners, to address health inequalities
- Active Fenland will work with the community to develop further health initiatives funded by third party organisations

In 2020/21 we will report on the following

- Days taken to process new claims and changes for Council Tax Support
- Days taken to process new claims and changes for Housing Benefit
- Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues
- Number of people prevented from becoming homeless
- Number of empty properties brought back into use
- Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use
- Satisfaction at Golden Age events
- Number of Active Health local sessions per year that improve community health
- Customer feedback across Freedom Leisure facilities in Fenland

Our Environment

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- Work with partners, the community and volunteers to divert at least 50% of Cambridgeshire's household waste from landfill
- Maximise the value of materials collected for recycling including through Getting It Sorted Recycling Champions
- Deliver an effective, self-funding Garden Waste collection service
- Deliver clean streets and public spaces as set out in the national code of practice
- Work with key stakeholders to deliver an effective waste partnership and to update the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough waste strategy, aligned to the developing national Waste and Resources Strategy

Work with partners and the community on projects to improve the environment and streetscene

- Use education, guidance and Council powers to fairly enforce environmental standards and tackle issues such as fly tipping, illegal parking, dog fouling, littering and anti-social behaviour
- Ensure well maintained open spaces by working in partnership with our grounds maintenance contract and supporting community groups such as Street Pride, In Bloom, Green Dog Walkers and Friends Of groups
- Work with Town Councils and the community to provide local markets, market town events and Four Season events

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

- Deliver projects through the Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour
- Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion Action Plan and projects resourced by the Controlling Migration Fund (CMF)

Key projects for 2020/21

- Continue to deliver environmental enforcement using fixed penalty notices and the court process for serious offences
- Deliver the Four Seasons event programme in partnership with our four market towns
- Deliver the Recycling Action Plan
- Deliver a competitive trade waste service
- Monitor and respond to the DEFRA Waste and Resources Strategy consultation with RECAP partners
- Review the current arrangements for parking enforcement in Fenland
- Deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council

Performance indicators for 2020/21

- Rapid or Village response requests actioned the same or next day
- % of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards
- % of household waste recycled through the blue bin service
- Customer satisfaction with our Refuse and Recycling services
- Customer satisfaction with our Garden Waste service
- Number of Street Pride, Green Dog Walkers and Friends Of community environmental events supported
- % of those asked satisfied with events

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

- Work with partners, local businesses and the Combined Authority to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities
- Provide responsive business support to encourage business growth, job diversity, skills development and increased grant applications
- 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

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

- Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through the delivery of a proactive and effective Planning service
- Supported by our Commercial Investment Strategy, drive forward the development and delivery of new homes and commercial space by using our surplus property and land assets to deliver sustainable economic and residential growth
- Identify and bid for external funding that aligns with and supports our housing, economic and growth objectives

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across Fenland

- Promote sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services
- Engage with the Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects across Fenland
- Work with the Combined Authority to influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth in the district

Key projects for 2020/21

- 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
- Continue to lobby for improvements to our transport infrastructure, including the A47 economic corridor
- Support the delivery of interventions listed within the four market town 'Growing Fenland' socio-economic masterplans
- Continue to prepare a new Local Plan document, which will determine how the district will grow in the future
- Deliver railway projects with CPCA support through the Manea, March and Whittlesea Stations Project Boards
- Work with partners to deliver property improvements and the activity plan as part of the National Heritage Lottery funded Wisbech High Street Project
- Support local businesses to achieve regulatory compliance through a 'better business for all' approach

Performance indicators for 2020/21

- % of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks
- % of minor applications determined in 8 weeks
- % of other applications determined in 8 weeks
- % occupancy of Business Premises estates
- % of customers satisfied with our Business Premises estates
- % occupancy of our Wisbech Yacht Harbour
- Local businesses supported and treated fairly

Our 'Quality Organisation' priorities aim to support effective service delivery. They contribute to the strong foundations of the Council by making sure it runs smoothly day-to-day.

Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management

- Maintain robust and effective financial standards, robust internal controls and organisational management
- Comply with data protection and GDPR requirements

Transformation and Efficiency

- Sustainably deliver required savings, whilst pursuing transformation and commercialisation opportunities, to ensure the organisation is fit for the future
- Engage with the Combined Authority's Public Service Reform agenda

Performance Management

- Set relevant and robust performance targets to ensure the effective delivery of Business Plan priorities
- Report regularly on service performance to the Corporate Management Team, Councillors and the Public

Consultation and Engagement

- Appropriately consult with residents about our services and proposals as outlined in our Consultation Strategy

Excellent Customer Service

- Maintain our CSE accreditation to ensure we continue to deliver the most effective service to our communities
- Help residents to self-serve and access our services digitally to allow us to provide greater support for vulnerable customers and complex queries

Equalities

- Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by delivering the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act through our core service delivery and publication of a statutory Annual Equality Report

Asset Management and Commercialisation

- Ensure our asset base is sustainable, suitable and fully utilised to maximise income opportunities and financial efficiencies
- Deliver our adopted Capital Programme in line with our Corporate Asset Management Plan to maintain the integrity and safety of our assets
- Work jointly with public, private and third sector partners to improve access to our services, including from co-located facilities
- Begin implementation of our Commercial Investment Strategy in order to make informed decisions about the purchase and management of property assets

Workforce Development

- Equip our workforce with the right skills to effectively deliver our priorities
- Support and empower our staff to make effective decisions within a pleasant working environment

Enforcement

- Use a fair and proportionate approach to improve living, working and environmental standards as set out in our suite of Enforcement Policies

Health and Safety

- Maintain effective Health and Safety systems to comply with relevant legislation and local requirements
- Deliver all aspects of the Council's Health and Safety action plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workforce, partners and the wider community

Key projects for 2020/21

- Launch our Commercial Investment Strategy
- Deliver the 'My Fenland' project to modernise customer service arrangements across the district
- Develop and launch a new website design to improve content, navigation and online transactions
- Identify and deliver projects that support us to become a 'Council For the Future' (CFF)

Performance indicators for 2020/21

- % of customer queries resolved at first point of contact
- Customers satisfied by our service
- Contact Centre calls answered within 20 seconds
- Contact Centre calls handled
- Council Tax collected
- Council Tax net collection fund receipts
- NNDR collected
- NNDR net collection fund receipts
- Number of visits to our website



Fenland District Council

Fenland District Council • Fenland Hall • County Road • March
Cambridgeshire • PE15 8NQ
T: 01354 654321 • E: info@fenland.gov.uk • W: fenland.gov.uk

Documents prepared by Fenland District Council are available in large print, Moon, Braille, on audio cassette and electronic format upon request. We can also arrange to have documents translated into community languages.
For more information call 01354 622451 or email info@fenland.gov.uk