

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

A meeting of Council will be held at Council Chamber, Fenland Hall, County Road, March on MONDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2023 at 4.00 PM and I request you to attend accordingly for transaction of the following business:

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 12)

To confirm and sign the minutes of 2 October 2023.
- 3 Civic Engagements Update. (Pages 13 - 14)
- 4 To receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Council and/or the Head of Paid Service.
- 5 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting.
- 6 To receive questions from, and provide answers to, councillors in relation to matters which, in the opinion of the Chairman, accord with the provisions of Procedure Rules 8.4 and 8.6.
- 7 To receive reports from and ask questions of Cabinet members with portfolio holder responsibilities, in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2. (Pages 15 - 66)
- 8 Motion submitted by Councillor Taylor (Pages 67 - 68)

Motion submitted by Councillor Taylor in respect of supporting local farmers.
- 9 Treasury Management Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2023/24 (Pages 69 - 78)

The purpose of this report is to review the Council's Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2023/24 and to provide members with an update on matters pertinent to future updates to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
- 10 Polling District Review Report (Pages 79 - 98)

To consider the outcome of the recent review of polling districts and places, as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- 11 IRP recommendations/Members Allowance Scheme review (Pages 99 - 116)

To present to Council the conclusions and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of its review of the

current Members' Allowances Scheme.

Fenland Hall
March



Chief Executive

Friday, 1 December 2023

NOTE The Council may, by resolution, as exemplified below, exclude the public from a meeting during the consideration of any item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100 I of the Local Government Act, 1972

"Resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for Item No./Minute No. on the grounds that the item involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act"

COUNCIL



MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2023 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor N Meekins (Chairman), Councillor B Barber (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor C Boden, Councillor J Carney, Councillor G Christy, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Cutler, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor K French, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor A Hay, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Marks, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor J Mockett, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Dr H Nawaz, Councillor D Oliver, Councillor D Patrick, Councillor M Purser, Councillor B Rackley, Councillor D Roy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor E Sennitt Clough, Councillor M Summers, Councillor T Taylor, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor S Wallwork and Councillor Woollard

APOLOGIES: Councillor G Booth, Councillor S Harris and Councillor Mrs K Mayor

C12/23 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 17 July 2023 were confirmed and signed.

C13/23 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE.

Councillor Meekins drew members' attention to the civic activities undertaken by himself and the Vice-Chairman in the weeks preceding Full Council.

C14/23 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Councillor Meekins paid his respects to former District Councillor Paul (Pop) Jolley who had passed away on 24 September, saying he was a much-loved and admired character who was an elected member of the Council between 1990 and 2004 and then again from 2011 and 2014. During his time with the Council, Pop had served on various committees including Community, Housing and Property, Policy and Resources as well as the Leisure Services Board.

Councillor Meekins said that Pop was also the local member for Manea whose goal was to get things done, was always willing to help, supported good causes and had a heart of gold.

Members joined Councillor Meekins in observing a minute's silence for Paul (Pop) Jolley.

The Chairman thanked everyone who attended his Civic Reception in September and hoped they found it to be as thoroughly enjoyable an evening as he did. He thanked Member Services for their support in organising the event with the next planned event being a coffee morning in aid of the East Anglian Air Ambulance being held on 12 October in the Council Chamber.

C15/23 **TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM, AND PROVIDE ANSWERS TO, COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO MATTERS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF PROCEDURE RULES 8.4 AND 8.6**

Councillor Meekins stated that no written questions had been received under Procedure Rule 8.6 and as Councillor Booth has given his apologies for the meeting, it was confirmed that there will be no questions under Procedure Rule 8.4.

C16/23 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2**

Members asked questions of Portfolio Holders in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 as follows:

- Councillor Gerstner asked why has it taken so long for the steps in the swimming pool at the leisure centre in Whittlesey to be repaired? He added that it has already been four weeks since they were deemed unsafe to use and it is his understanding that a member of the public took it upon themselves to undertake a temporary repair which he is very concerned about. Councillor Gerstner stated that the public are apparently using the steps, however, this is at their own risk. Councillor Miscandlon stated that the leisure contractor Freedom Leisure has obtained a quotation for the works to be undertaken, however, the original contractor was unable to undertake the repair works and, therefore, efforts are underway to find a solution to get the works carried out. He added that he will visit the swimming pool to review what works are required and then make efforts to see if there is a local tradesperson who can undertake the repair work. Councillor Miscandlon added that it is regrettable that the repair works have not been carried out over such a long period of time and he will raise the issue with Freedom Leisure with regard to addressing repair works in more appropriate time scales.

C17/23 **MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DR HAQ NAWAZ**

Councillor Nawaz presented his motion regarding the County Council and Combined Authority (CPCA) war on motorists.

Councillor Mrs French seconded the motion and Councillor Meekins opened the motion for debate. Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Gerstner stated that he is not familiar with trip budgets and asked for an explanation to be provided.
- Councillor Tierney stated that sometimes a narrative takes hold of society and with that it can encompass some truth, some misconceptions and some lies which, in his opinion, has happened over the years and is taking place currently and that some of the narratives can bring very ill-considered ideas that carry unthinkable consequences. He made the point that the Net Zero idea, which includes the removal of vehicles from the road, is very real and he stated that whilst it is easy to focus on the County Council who are one of the organisations who are pushing the idea forward, it is not just the County Council and Central Government are also looking into the topic, as are other local authorities, however, the County Council are the focus currently who, in his opinion, are considering very ill-thought-out ideas. Councillor Tierney stated that he is proud that this motion has been brought forward by Fenland District Council and he is under no illusion that whatever is decided today will have an impact in order to stop the narrative, but if nobody speaks up and ideas such as these are allowed to press on then they will not stop until reality makes them stop and by that time, they can have caused a lot of harm, expense and damage to people, individuals and society. He stated that he fully supports the motion, and he does not agree that by removing cars off the road to try and change the weather is a very well thought out narrative and is one that needs to be opposed even though he does agree with some of the

environmentalism involved.

- Councillor Boden stated that he is very happy to support the proposed motion and explained that this issue has been discussed at meetings he has attended with the Combined Authority over the past 18 months and many of the phrases that Councillor Nawaz has used have been taken from the documentation provided by the Combined Authority and some of the phrases used will not make sense unless further research is undertaken. He stated that the documentation refers frequently to fiscal measures and, in his opinion, that phrase is used because they believe that people will not realize that it means congestion or growth charging or some other form of taxation and made the point that the other phrase which is used is 'car disappearance' and the concept that is being pushed forward appears to focus on making life very difficult for motorists by placing obstacles in the way such as making them more expensive and then that will mean that the motorists will no longer wish to own a car. Councillor Boden stated that the County Council and CPCA are trying to make car journeys as difficult as possible for people so that they will no longer travel by car and, in his view, the thinking behind the scheme appears to be ill thought out and looks to punish those individuals who are merely looking to travel to work, to shop or to transport their children to school. He made reference to the point raised by Councillor Gerstner with regards to the phrase 'trip budgets' and he explained that for all local authorities with planning functions such as Fenland, there would be the requirement to consider all vehicle movements coming in and out of any new developments and treat that as a cost which would need to be met in some way and, in his opinion, it is a penalty upon the car user for all new developments. Councillor Boden stated that he is aware that in Cambridge City there are proposals for areas to be built with no access to cars at all for the residential areas and whilst that maybe appropriate for Cambridge City, it does not mean it is relevant to Fenland, with at the current time, the vast majority of people needing a car in order to conduct their daily lives. He stated that he has spoken against and will continue to do so all of these ideas put forward by the CPCA and he explained that the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan was halted when it was raised last month. He made the point that he can see a time in the future when there will be no need for a private car in future decades, however, at this point in time the Council is being asked to make sacrifices which will significantly damage the economy and the lives of the people in Fenland which is unacceptable until there is an appropriate alternative to the current situation.
- Councillor Count stated that he will support the motion which, in his opinion, has been excellently articulated, worded and presented and he thanked Councillor Nawaz for bringing the motion forward. He expressed the view that the motion exposes the desire to increase congestion in order to somehow facilitate and improve the public transport network and that there are ways and means that councillors are being told will stop people being able to use a private motor car which will force people to use public transport and as Councillor Boden has already stated that may well work in congested areas such as Cambridge City but, in his opinion, to adopt a one size fits all approach for areas like Fenland is totally inappropriate. Councillor Count stated that he has attended meetings with a developer who was looking to bring a large retail park forward and that is progressing with the current policies, however, officers based at County Council have advised the developer that a new model of trip budgets is being introduced which will measure the capacity of the entrance road and there will be no increase permitted and the developer was also advised that they would not be allowed to include a larger roundabout which would mean the increase in the flow of the traffic and if the development exceeded the permitted number of vehicles then they would have to pay for trip budgets to pay for things such as buses, which whilst may work in some areas of the county, it does not make sense or work in the Fens. He stated that he challenged this policy with officers and a motion is also coming forward at County Council's Full Council in order to try and review this and go back to the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that all officers understand where and when they can apply that kind of measure. Councillor Count stated that Councillor Boden has seen that the CPCA has a policy driven change to get rid of cars and this is not about Net Zero and not about climate change, in his view, it is the difference between the aspiration and the levelling up

agenda. He stated that everybody wants to see better public transport but, in his opinion, this is not the way to address that issue, especially as there is now a cost implication of £12 for an average Band B property in order to subsidise buses and the vast majority of that money is going to the well served areas to the south of the county, whilst some villages in Fenland have no transport whatsoever. Councillor Count stated that he approached the County Council's Chief Executive and asked for information concerning bus services and once provided the information was drilled down to parish level, with the parish level in the south of the county being 114 and, therefore, every parish over 114 was measured and as a result of the exercise it showed that in Fenland because of the amalgamation of parishes the figure went down to 780. He stated that if there are 3 or 4 villages which make up a parish, they appear to base their policy on a tick box exercise which denotes how you can get to work or school which, in his view, is very unfair to the residents of Fenland. Councillor Count stated that another part of the country has progressed with clean air zones which, in his view, is another measure of removing private motorists off of the road and in Cambridge City the decision was made not to adopt clean air zones as the evidence showed that the impact of removing cars from the streets will only be temporary because of the move to electric vehicles, which when looking to electric vehicles the particulate matter from brakes deriving from the buses will outweigh the N O contribution from the vehicles. He stated that he wholeheartedly supports the motion, and it gives Councillor Boden the increased credibility to say that the proposal does not work for Fenland, and it has got to stop.

- Councillor Seaton stated that he fully supports many of the comments that have already been made and he will support the motion. He added that he sits on the transport committee for the Combined Authority, and he finds it very frustrating due to the political makeup of the committee, which means that some members have no real say on what the outcome will be. Councillor Seaton expressed the view that it is very clear that the aim is to remove the car, however, there is no adequate transport service throughout Fenland, and it is 2015 since the last consultation took place with the parishes to ascertain their transport requirements, whilst the results of the consultation do not mean that the parishes will receive what they want but it will give a clear indication to the Combined Authority and the County Council, what is and what is not possible.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees with the motion and supports it. She added that the County Council have implemented a new policy which states that any new development needs to include a 20mph speed limit and failure to do so will result in the highway not being adopted. She explained that this has already commenced and is in place at the top of Gaul Road where the developer was forced to implement the new rule as well as the requirement to pay for the 50mph speed limit from Peas Hill roundabout to Gaul Road and she stressed to members to be wary of the 'Twenty Plenty' initiative.
- Councillor Nawaz stated that it is evident that the concerns expressed in the motion are shared quite widely and he thanked members for supporting the motion. He added that he would like to endorse what Councillor Boden had referred to with regards to the CPCA Board meeting, as he also attended the same meeting and after reading the agenda and reports he felt concerned with regards to the impact on the rural geography, diverse and scattered communities who have nowhere near enough adequate public transport. Councillor Nawaz made the point that the phrases and language that was used in the meeting were very well hidden and what was said did not fool Councillor Boden and it is pleasing to see that members all appear to be united in purpose and he stated that he looks forward to the progression of the motion in the future.

Council AGREED that its members whom the Council has appointed as its representatives on the CPCA Board and its committees, and Officers who interact with the CPCA and CCC, should reflect the sentiment within this motion when interacting with CCC, or when representing this Council at meetings of the CPCA or its committees.

Councillor Taylor presented his motion regarding weeds.

Councillor Woollard seconded the motion and Councillor Meekins opened the motion for debate. Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Woollard stated that the motion is very comprehensive and covers the issues that are faced by all the town and villages across Fenland and, in his opinion, the County Council appear to have relinquished their responsibility for the maintenance of the highway verges, pathways and drainage culverts which is undermining the efforts of everyone in Fenland to enhance communities with hundreds of thousands of pounds being spent on projects across Fenland such as the new market place development in March which is being spoilt with weeds. He stated that the use of the glyphosate chemical is safe for both humans and animals and has approval for use in the United Kingdom and across the European Union. Councillor Woollard expressed the view that there are too many instances of flooding in Fenland and the clogging of drains and culverts with weeds will only exacerbate the issue of flooding should the policy at County Council continue. He added that it clear that the residents of Fenland are not happy and the change in policy must be addressed which is why he wholeheartedly seconds the motion.
- Councillor Patrick stated that he fully supports the motion and he referred to the very high weeds he has seen in the towns and villages of Fenland which are, in his opinion, a disgrace. He expressed the view that the policy is not just about weeds, but it is also a cost cutting exercise which is leaving the towns looking so dirty and unsightly.
- Councillor Carney stated that he has been approached by many of his constituents with regards to the issue of lack of weed control and roadside drains with concerns over flooding. He explained that he reported it to the County Council in August, received an initial response and he then followed it up and questioned who would be liable if the resident's property flooded as a result of the drains not being cleared sufficiently and it is only recently where he has received a response. Councillor Carney stated that with regards to the use of glyphosate, it is well known to be one of the safest products available for weed control and he has undertaken some research and has ascertained that from the Health and Safety Executive website that glyphosate has been approved as safe and efficacious for a number of years and it also states that the responsible use of pesticides and herbicides in amenity areas as part of an integrated programme control can help deliver substantial benefits for society, management of conservation areas, invasive species and flood risk. He added that it also mentions that it can be used in public spaces for the prevention of weed growth on hard surfaces preventing trip hazards and it also makes reference to ragwort, which is covered by the Weeds Act 1959 which details 5 injurious weeds, and it was augmented by the Ragwort Control Act 2003 and if the Code of Practice is not followed then this can be used as evidence and legal action can be taken against the landowner if the weeds are not properly controlled. Councillor Carney stated that he is more than happy to support the motion.
- Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she is the Chairman of a voluntary Flood Warden Group and she explained that whilst she attended a recent meeting there was a heavy downpour of rain and at that time she received a message from a resident to advise that there were 220 properties known to be flooding out and over 1,000 at risk of flooding. She stated that 6 of those properties were at significant risk and one of the contributing factors appear to be 'off kerbs' which were installed by the County Council several years ago at great expense. Councillor Mrs Laws explained that 'off kerbs' manage the water on the roads and take water away far quicker and at that time they were blocked through weeds and the water was 3ft away from entering a property whilst two others did have water in their homes. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that it is important that the weeds are controlled for surface water flooding and as the climate changes meaning there are milder winters which means more rainfall. She explained that in March of this year the water table was extremely high in Whittlesey which meant that North Bank had to close for a couple of days. Councillor Mrs Laws

explained that following the issue encountered by residents she contacted the County Council with regards to blocked drains and she was advised that there is not a planned programme of works to empty drains and it is only actioned as and when required, which if this is correct she would be interested to know how the County Council are directing their money if they are not having a programme of planned works as she cannot see any action being taken with regards to pothole or highway repairs. She explained that she has received calls from residents with regards to how unsightly their roads are, and, in her opinion, they are likely to take matters into their own hands and use toxic sprays which could cause issues for dog walkers and in turn see matters spiralling out of control. Councillor Mrs Laws referred members to the local authority in Brighton and Hove who stopped spraying weeds and as a result they now have weeds which are taller than school age children. She stated that by having overgrown verges, it is encouraging people to walk onto the highway which is a real cause for safety and she made the point that she totally supports the motion but she wants to know what the County Council are doing with all the money they are saving by undertaking no drainage works or weed spraying in order to assist the residents of the Fenland towns and parishes.

- Councillor Miscandlon stated that he fully supports the motion and added that it is a legal responsibility for the authorities to remove ragwort and it is a criminal offence not to and they need to be aware of the detrimental effect it has on animals. He added that he also represents the Internal Drainage Boards, and he has been made aware that they are becoming increasingly concerned about the amount of debris which is falling off the unkept verges into the drainage ditches. Councillor Miscandlon also mentioned that the high weeds are also causing significant hazards to road users due to the obstruction to visibility.
- Councillor Tierney stated that the question has been raised with regards to what the County Council are doing with the saved money they appear to be saving from not tackling the issue of weeds and, in his opinion, those monies are going towards the favourite projects of the County Council, with the County Council not wanting to improve the roads they want them to deteriorate so that people do not use them. He stated that he believes Councillor Patrick is correct in his view which is that there is a money saving element to it. Councillor Tierney expressed the view that those responsible persons at the County Council can be identified by two categories, with one half being ideological dealing with global warming issues and others focussing on saving money on issues that they are not content with in order to spend on issues that they are content with. He expressed the view that the public's perception of seeing a town when it is overgrown with weeds can be one in which they feel unsafe as they feel that the town is unkempt, unloved and uncared for. Councillor Tierney expressed the view that there are many different types of chemicals which can be used safely and are non-harmful to wildlife if you research the effects and costs. He made the point that the controlling members of the County Council need to be advised that their choice of action is not satisfactory, and the towns and villages of Fenland do matter and that by leaving the area in an unkempt run-down state, it will have a knock-on effect and can lead to a rise in crime and further consequences and those members in power need to be advised of the consequences of their actions.
- Councillor Hay stated that she is disappointed that there has been a need to bring this motion to Council and she made the point that when this policy was introduced the County Council failed to consult with the District, Town and Parish Councils and now that they find themselves receiving complaints they have decided to issue a consultation. She added that a recent event took place in Chatteris giving the public the opportunity to meet the local Police along with an officer from the District Council, she attended the event in order to ascertain what issues members of the public raised and they included potholes, inconsiderate and illegal parking and one of the major concerns raised was the condition of the pathways and gullies, with residents highlighting that there was an issue of flooding which was either caused by or exacerbated by blocked gullies. Councillor Hay expressed the view that the County Council cannot be so financially constrained which precludes them from taking pride in the towns and villages. She advised members that Councillor Marks has started a petition to put forward to the County Council which at the current time has 1763

signatures and she urged all members to engage with their residents and to urge them to add their names to the petition. Councillor Hay stated that she will support the motion.

- Councillor Count stated that the Highways and Transport Committee at the County Council were advised about a pilot project being undertaken by Cambridge City Council with regards to dealing with weeds in a different way which could potentially lead to savings, however, in February the detail concerning the budget was released by the County Council which stated that there would be a saving of £150,000 made by stopping the use of glyphosate and as part of that they stated that they would spend an extra £40,000 engaging with Parish and Town Councils in the first quarter of the year which, in his opinion, was before the growing season commenced. He stated that a new policy was introduced in April 2023, and referred to the current state of the town and villages and questioned what they will look like in the future, and he cannot see a future for a first world country that allows its street, roads and pavements to be left to evolve into such a state. Councillor Count stated that it would appear that the engagement process did not take place with any authority apart from Cambridge City Council who had advance notice as they ran the pilot and he did not receive any update on the pilot scheme, he took it upon himself to ask them for an update on what the outcome of the pilot scheme was and he was eventually advised that different methods were trialled to look at their efficiencies to remove weeds and now large weeds are being removed by hand and after that if required they will use glyphosate. He stated he has also been provided further information from the County Council with regards to the invasive weeds such as ragwort, with the first weed spray being undertaken imminently and they have confirmed that they will be using glyphosate and have clarified that it is safe to use with proper training. Councillor Count stated that it would appear that complaints have been received since April from the whole of the county and the Chairman of the Highways Committee has advised him that with any new policy there does need an element of fine tuning and Councillor Count stated that whilst he appreciates that, it has not stopped the number of complaints being submitted and the Director then issued a letter which explained that new policies need to be reviewed and it included part of the new budget setting cycle which comes in force until February and then April 2024. He explained that a questionnaire has now been sent to all councillors and, in his opinion, it is action which is being undertaken far too late and he has provided evidence of an active travel route in March that is on a blind corner, is for cyclists and pedestrians only and the path is now severely restricted for people to use and, therefore, users of the route are having to walk on the highway for safety reasons which he understands is now being investigated. Councillor Count stated that he is aware that the lack of weed spraying was undertaken as a cost saving exercise and now there is a significant issue and the maintenance that is now required will mean that any savings that were made will pale into insignificance when considering the repair works let alone the damage that will be caused by any flooding. He expressed the opinion that it is a diabolical policy that has been implemented and he thanked Councillor Patrick for his support as it is not a political motion. Councillor Count added that the town of March secured over £12,000,000 to change the town centre, and whilst not everybody agrees with the change, nobody he has ever met like the weeds that are now being seen and he stated that on behalf of the people of March he is grateful for the motion being brought forward and thanked Councillor Marks for bringing the petition forward, urging everyone to sign it in order to get the County Council to change their minds.
- Councillor Marks stated that he has recently been contacted by a resident whose home was being flooded for the fourth time, he went to the property and found that there was a gully which was blocked with weeds which he helped to remove. He stated that the residents have experienced four flooding issues over the past three years and the human cost of that, in his opinion, far outweighs killing some weeds and cleaning out the gullies. Councillor Marks stated that there has been a great deal of slurry work undertaken which is a cheaper way of repairing the pavements in Manea, with the issue being now that the weeds are growing out in the middle of them and once the weather turns colder the frost will end up lifting the slabs which in turn will make them a trip hazard and he expressed the view that the County Council need to take action now to resolve the problem.

- Councillor Taylor stated that there appears to be confusion regarding the use of glyphosate and stated that if the weeds have not been touched for a year then there will be a period of three to four years to get rid of what is already in existence. He explained that glyphosate was originally manufactured as a wormer for cattle, and it was not until the final inspection took place prior to the licence being signed off, that it came to light that wherever the glyphosate had been administered to the cattle, the surrounding ground had been killed off so the manufacturer then realised that they could make more profit using it as a weed killer rather than a wormer. Councillor Taylor stated that there are some weeds such as brambles that will not be killed by glyphosate and other chemicals need to be used. He stated that he is pleased to see that there is so much support for the motion and explained that there is 5ml of glyphosate to 100 litres of water and, therefore, it is a very cost-effective chemical to use in his opinion.

Council AGREED to respond to Cambridgeshire County Council and advise them of the contents of this motion and the desire to see cyclical spraying recommenced to suppress weeds on Fenland's roads, pavements and gullies.

C19/23 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GARY CHRISTY

Councillor Christy presented his motion regarding the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

Councillor Mrs Davis seconded the motion and Councillor Meekins opened the motion for debate. Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Hoy stated that she was interested to read the letter from the Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority that was sent to the Leader of Peterborough and whilst there has been some ridiculing, in her opinion, he is a hero due to the fact that he is the only person who has been able to block a LTCP. She made the point that the Leader along with the Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council have also been against it, but as they are outnumbered on the Board, the only person who can stop it currently is the Leader at Peterborough City Council. Councillor Hoy stated that the reason she feels that it is so important is due to the fact that, in her view, it is a poor document and in the letter it states that people have misunderstood it and should, therefore, read it. She made the point that if you go to the website called Your LTCP, it does not work, along with another link in the letter for the LTCP document. Councillor Hoy expressed the view that one of the issues that concerns her is that they advise that it is going to bring an increase in buses to the area but that is not correct, and they appear to dislike cars so much and will make proposals which are damaging. She added that one of the proposals being put forward is to introduce a bus lane on the Elme Hall roundabout in Wisbech and made the point that there is one bus an hour which uses that stretch of road and there is a proposal to include a fast bus lane on a road which already suffers from severe congestion and will be limited to one lane of traffic. Councillor Hoy stated that she finds the proposal ludicrous and such proposals cannot be supported, need to be opposed and if such proposals are implemented it will only lead to more congestion in the Fenland towns.
- Councillor Nawaz stated that he attended a meeting in Huntingdon and, in his opinion, it is evident that doctrinaire politics are in place rather than pragmatic policies to address the real needs of the real people particularly in places away from Cambridge City. He explained that if you visit Cambridge Station, a clear queue of buses can be seen that are waiting for passengers, however, in Whittlesey it is the opposite, and a queue of passengers can often be seen waiting for 30 or 40 minutes which also do not appear to service the Whittlesey area after 7pm. Councillor Nawaz made the point that this causes problems for those parents whose children go to school as the bus timetable, in his view, is totally inappropriate and the train service which operates and stops in Whittlesey is also very infrequent. He expressed the opinion that a comprehensive plan is required which considers the needs of all the residents in Cambridgeshire and not just one particular area of the county which

sustains the ruling group of politicians who appear to favour their political constituency rather than the real concerns and issues of the residents. Councillor Nawaz stated that he will fully support the motion and endorses everything that has been said.

- Councillor Count stated that there is currently the Greater Cambridge Partnership which has failed to deliver their vision for the future, which was to deliver £80,000,000 a year and to produce a high specification strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridge, including some outlying areas. He stated that the Mayor wanted to bring forward his Local Transport Plan, which relied on congestion charges to deliver some of his aims and objectives, however, that also failed. Councillor Count stated that the appointed Labour representative for the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership has suggested that other proposals will need to be considered such as paying for parking and he expressed the view that it appears that the knee jerk reaction is to consider how to raise taxes. He referred to a previous administration where the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership was introduced and £30,000,000 a year was secured from the Government in order to deliver transport solutions and due to the amount of tax that this area pays into the Government the figure commenced at £20,000,000 and rose to £40,000,000 a year. Councillor Count explained that the Combined Authority was then formed, and they received £30,000,000 a year to deliver transport solutions, however, there are now two separate bodies receiving £70,000,000 a year and the only ideas coming forward appear to be deciding how to receive a further income from the local residents. He expressed the opinion that consideration should be given to spending some of the £70,000,000 a year to make a difference, with the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership funding of £50,000,000 could be considered being put forward to improve bus services ahead of the congestion charging proposal which failed. Councillor Count stated that issues like these need to be highlighted and he stated that a local transport plan is needed but it needs to be based on sound and reasonable decisions. He stated that there needs to be a projection on what the money is going to be spent on which is something that everyone can unite together on to include Fenland, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire, if it is all fair and equal because at the present time it is not fair and equal and appears to revolve around Cambridge City because of their unique problems which does not suit everybody else. Councillor Count stated that he fully supports the motion.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that she fully endorses everything that other members have expressed their views on and made the point that the whole transport policy appears to be in complete disarray which was evident when the contracts were all renewed for the bus routes. She made the point that there was one particular bus route in Fenland which did not know until the night before whether it would be operating a service the next day and this caused a great deal of anxiety for those people who did not know whether they would be able to get to work or get to school. Councillor Mrs Davis stated that information has become known recently which details that grants have been given to at least four bus routes which have just been approved and that funding equates to thousands of pounds so that trials can take place for on demand services. She explained that the one route that had caused the issues for the bus users she referred to previously would have been the ideal route for an on-demand service but as that route is in Fenland it was not selected and she feels that there is a complete disregard for Fenland in all policies and not just transport and, in her opinion, this needs to change.
- Councillor Christy stated that he has also found numerous errors with the GCP document which Councillor Hoy had referred to and from a transport perspective there are many innovative ideas which can be undertaken in Fenland and all that is needed is the funding in order to make that happen which is why it is important for the motion to be supported.

Council AGREED that the Combined Authority Mayor should show some flexibility on this issue so that all of the Constituent Members of the Combined Authority can support a revised LTCP and work together in effecting its provisions and that this resolution should be sent to all Board Members of the Combined Authority and that FDC Members whom the Council has appointed as its representatives on the CPCA Board and its committees, and

Officers who interact with the CPCA and CCC as Highways Authority, reflect the sentiment within this motion when interacting with CCC, or when representing this Council at meetings of the CPCA or its committees.

C20/23 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report presented by Councillor Mrs Davis as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny panel.

Councillor Miscandlon stated that he was the previous Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and he asked that his thanks be extended to all of the officers and members of the committee, and he looks forward to reading the annual report next year.

Councillor Mrs Davis thanked Councillor Miscandlon for his kind words and stated that it is a learning curve as the committee now comprises of newly elected members.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Davis, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to acknowledge the broad scope of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2022/23.

C21/23 AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Members considered the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report presented by Councillor Miss French as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Miss French, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws and AGREED to note the work of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and its compliance with CIPFA's annual checklist for 2022/23.

5.30 pm

Chairman



Fenland District Council Fenland Hall County Road March Cambridgeshire PE15 8NQ
 Tel 01354 622281 DX 30955 March Minicom 01354 622215 www.fenland.gov.uk

Civic Engagements

From September 23,2023 to December 1, 2023

September 22, 2023	Freedom of the Town event Attended by the Chairman
September 23, 2023	Mayor of Wisbech - Afternoon Tea event Attended by the Chairman
September 24, 2023	South Holland Civic Service Attended by the Chairman
September 28, 2023	Peterborough City Council -Sausage Supper Attended by the Chairman
September 29, 2023	Wing Commanders Reception - RAF Alconbury Attended by the Chairman
October 1, 2023	Mayor of Whittlesey Civic Service Attended by the Chairman Mayor of Rushden Civic Service Attended by Vice Chairman
October 8, 2023	High Sheriff Justice Service Attended by the Chairman
November 3, 2023	Golden Age Celebration event Attended by the Chairman
November 10, 2023	Veterans Day Madingley Cemetery Attended by the Chairman
November 12, 2023	Remembrance Day events Attended by the Chairman and Vice Chairman
November 16, 2023	RAF Alconbury Thanksgiving Service and Pumpkin Pie event Attended by the Chairman
November 29,2023	Royal Visit – North Cambridgeshire Training Centre Attended by the Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank



Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

**December 2023
(For performance in
September & October 2023)**

Cabinet Members



Cllr Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



Cllr Ian Benney
Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth & Skills



Cllr Jan French
Deputy Leader of the
Council, Portfolio Holder
for Revenues & Benefits
and Civil Parking
Enforcement



Cllr Sam Hoy
Portfolio Holder for
Housing & Licensing



Cllr Dee Laws
Portfolio Holder for
Planning & Flooding



Cllr Alex Miscandlon
Portfolio Holder for
Leisure & Internal
Drainage Boards



Cllr Peter Murphy
Portfolio Holder for
Refuse & Cleansing,
Parks & Open Spaces



Cllr Chris Seaton
Portfolio Holder for
Transport, Heritage &
Culture



Cllr Steve Tierney
Portfolio Holder for
Communications,
Transformation, Climate
Change & Strategic
Refuse



Cllr Susan Wallwork
Portfolio Holder for
Community, Health,
Environmental Health,
CCTV, Community
Safety & Military
Covenant

Communities

Projects from Business Plan:

Support Vulnerable Members of Our Community

ARP updates (Cllr French)

The ARP has seen significant success thus far in 2023 and have achieved the following:

- In December 2022 a new Government scheme was announced to help support economically vulnerable families by providing additional reductions to their Council Tax bills. The Council Tax Support Fund (CTSF) also facilitated automatic reductions for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction at the time of annual billing and those making a claim successful claim during 2023-24.
- In January 2023 two new Government schemes were announced to help support residents with rising energy costs if they did not receive payments automatically. The schemes (Energy Bill Support Scheme (Alternative funding) and Alternative Fuel Payments (Alternative funding) were administered by The Department of Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) with Local Authorities responsible for undertaking verification checks and making payments. The schemes ran from late February through to July alongside the CTSF and annual billing process. As a pilot site ARP played a key part in helping to shape and design the scheme guidance and processes and was the first Authority to make payment nationally. In total we paid out almost £1.6 m to help residents across the partnership with rising fuel costs.
- We continue to see more customers using e-services The suite of forms and other functionality is available to all customer teams using Capita customer contact software. We have recently launched a new improved 'Contact Us' online form which signposts customers to online forms and gathers all required information at the first contact. We are also testing an option to send e-bills as PDF attachments to email to remove the complex sign-up and log in process currently required to view an annual Council Tax bill.
- The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils secured just over £1 million. This is a great result for a small team actioning complex further recovery cases for the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax. The Fraud teams work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £2.8 Million in fraud and error last year, an increase on the previous year. Following approval by Cambridgeshire County Council, the team are starting work on the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub in 2023/24 to achieve even higher values.
- Council Tax collection is on target.
- Non-Domestic Rates collection is also on target.

Homelessness and meeting housing needs (Cllr Hoy)

The Housing Options team has successfully prevented 149 households from becoming homeless since April 2023 (up to 31/10/23).

Total homeless presentations for this period were 1275 households.

Housing advice has been given to 728 households where no duties were owed.

There has been an 7.9% increase in homeless presentations compared to this time last year. The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work for the year is currently 44% (149 preventions divided by 335 households where duties were owed).

This is 13% under target with the following mitigating actions to improve performance:

- New community support officer recruited to provide management and support for existing and new temporary accommodation which frees up officer time to resolve homeless presentations earlier.
- Increase in temporary accommodation through Local Authority Housing Fund and leased properties from Clarion
- Improvement in void performance by Registered Providers
- Increase in new build affordable housing being completed (see affordable housing section)

We have successfully rehoused 45 households within the private sector. This continues to be a challenge with many landlords selling due to economic conditions thereby decreasing the pool of properties available. The market is also highly competitive.

The number of households requiring housing advice continues to rise as the cost-of-living crisis continues and fixed rate mortgage periods come to an end.

Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)

The Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 project is currently working with 20 clients.

The current number of rough sleepers is 12, 2 of whom are not eligible due to their current immigration status and 1 currently has unknown status. A total of 8 clients are receiving assistance with tenancy sustainment to maintain their current home to prevent homelessness. Also, 4 clients have been moved into off street accommodation, including 2 clients who have been rehoused under the Prevention and Move On scheme funded by DLUHC. Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) is in place and will be activated when required.

Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)

Our most recent Golden Age Fair was held at Wimblington Parish Hall on Friday 29 September where 86 visitors accessed information and advice from the following organisations:

Careline, FACT, Communities Service Team (CCC), How Are You? Fenland, Caring Together, PECT, The Bobby Scheme, Age UK, Library Service, CamSight, Care Network, Active Fenland, March Lions, Healthwatch, Cambridgeshire Skills, The Good Company, The Dementia Carer's Support Service (CPFT), College of West Anglia, Living Sport, Fenland Volunteering Centre, DISH and RAF Benevolent Fund.

Celebration event:

Councillors and other key people involved in organising Golden Age events, which offer advice and support to the over 60s, marked 20 years to the month since the events launched. The Golden Age events have proven a popular part of the Fenland calendar and continue to go from strength to strength with the next event planned for December at the March Braza Club. Designed for older people and their family, carers and friends, Golden Age events are held in villages and towns around the district.

Earlier this year, many of the partners involved in the Golden Age events [marked the 20th anniversary](#) when they got together for a collaboration and planning session for coming events. On Friday 3 November – 20 years on from the first Golden Age event in November 2003 – others involved in running, building and maintaining the Fenland District Council events came together in the Council Chamber in the council offices at Fenland Hall, March, for tea and cake.

The Golden Age events were founded by the late Cllr Mac Cotterell MBE and are now branded Mac’s Golden Age in his memory. Marjorie (Madge) Cotterell, widow of Cllr Cotterell and former Elm parish councillor, was at the event.

Numerous organisations have stands at the events providing details of all the services and support they offer to older people. Information and advice can range from details of social activities to financial support, volunteering information to transport provision. Free tea, coffee and cake and gifts are available on the day.

Find out about future events at: www.fenland.gov.uk/goldenage

Housing Enforcement Policy & Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy)

The geographical spread is as follows:

Town	HMOs investigated	Other Homes investigated
Wisbech	43	53
March	10	23
Chatteris	1	3
Whittlesey	6	9
Villages	3	27

Total homes investigated is 178.

VILLAGE BREAKDOWN

- Benwick = 0
- Coates = 2
- Coldham = 0
- Christchurch = 2
- Doddington = 2
- Eastrea = 0

Elm = 2
 Fridaybridge = 1
 Foul Anchor = 0
 Gorefield = 0
 Guyhirn = 2
 Leverington = 8
 Manea = 5
 Murrow = 1
 Newton = 1
 Parson Drove = 1
 Stonea = 0
 Throckenholt = 0
 Thorney Toll = 0
 Tydd = 2
 Turves = 0
 Wimblington = 0
 WSM = 1

No.s of Notices Served Apr-Oct 2023	S.11 Improvement Notice *	S.12 Improvement Notice **	Notice of Intent ***	Final Civil Penalty Notice ****	EICR *****	MEES *****	EPC *****
April		1	1				
May					1	2	
June	3	4		1			1
July			6	1			1
August	1	1					
September	4	4		1		1	
October	1	1			1	1	
Total	9	11	7	3	2	4	2

* Notices served in relation to Category 1 (serious) hazards identified during inspection

** Notices served in relation to Category 2 hazards identified during inspection

*** Notice issuing intent to serve a civil penalty fine due to a breach of legislation & can be reviewed by Ast Director upon appeal if a request is submitted by the landlord.

**** Final Civil Penalty fine issued after review by Ast Director- (landlord can only make a further appeal to the First Tier Tribunal)

***** EICR- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Electrical Installation Regulations- Final Number of fines issued after internal review

***** MEES- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Minimum Energy Performance Regulations- Final Number of fines issued after internal review

***** EPC- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Energy Performance Certification Regulations- Number of fines issued after internal review

The team are working on renewal of HMO 5-year licenses which started in November. Renewal applications will require officers to carry out re-inspections of all properties where licences are renewed and ensuring landlords are maintaining their licence conditions and providing relevant documentation where required. Landlords will also receive a copy of the new HMO Guidance and Recycling & Refuse advice.

As a case study, officers were recently alerted to a property in Wisbech due to the occupiers having no hot water and heating. Further investigations identified that the landlord had subsequently installed a new boiler himself. Upon checking the Gas Safe Register, the officer identified that the landlord was not a registered engineer and therefore he alerted the Gas Safe Register who arranged for HSE officer to attend and inspect the boiler. Upon inspection the HSE engineer deemed the boiler unsafe and cordoned it off. Contact with the letting agent was made and subsequently the boiler has been repaired and commissioned by a Gas Safe Engineer.

Empty Properties

Table 1

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use through officer involvement. From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

	Long Term Empty (LTE) 6-23MTHS	Long Term Empty Premium (LTEP) 24MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	46	5
Total for the period	1.4.23 – 31.3.24	51

Table 2

Represents the number of properties brought back into use for the New Homes Bonus. From 4 October 2022 to 2 October 2023 (CTB1 Submission date)

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	71	6
Total for the period	4.10.22 - 2.10.23	77

The officer continues to support owners in bringing their properties back into use by the following methods:-

- Providing the Council Tax premium suspension in return for action to bring the property back into use within set time period
- Assisting owners to apply to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) for the duration of the renovation and then ensuring the property returns to council tax upon completion.
- Providing owners with contact details for Landlords and local developers or Auction House East Anglia, if they are struggling to sell their property or want a quick sale.
- Working closely with colleagues in the Private Sector Housing Team to advise owners on how to renovate their property if they wish to bring it back into use for the rental market.

The officer continues to work closely with Anglia Revenues Partnership and, in the course of visits and using intelligence from members of the public, has identified a number of properties which were not listed as empty and should have been paying a premium charge or they have been fraudulently claiming council tax reductions.

Following feedback from Overview and Scrutiny we are also providing the overall trend in long term empty properties. The factors that influence this trend are outside the control of the Council and whilst the list is not exhaustive here are some examples:

- Properties going through probate (F Exempt)
- Properties waiting for planning permission to redevelop or demolish.
- The fluctuation in the property market
- The change in interest rates and mortgage offers, causing some owners to withdraw from prospective sales.
- The increase in labour & material costs and quotes for refurbishment.
- Properties where occupation is prohibited by law until works are completed to make them safe. (G Exempt)
- Repossessed properties (L Exempt)

Consequently, it is evident that in the October 2023 table below that 190 of the total 425 LTE and 96 of the total 167 LTEP properties are ones that the officer can centre their work around and try to encourage owners to bring them back into use. However, it gives an indication to members of the overall picture.

The 2 key Performance Indicators above reflects the impact of this work and how that helps with the financial determination linked to the New Homes Bonus.

October 2022	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty (FDC Empty Officer Focus)	233	87
F Exempt (Probate)	101	12
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	11	11
L Exempt (Reposessed)	0	1
Registered Provider:	51	32
Total for the period	396	143

October 2023	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty (FDC Empty Officer Focus)	190	96
F Exempt (Probate)	130	19
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	0	11
L Exempt (Reposessed)	1	0
Registered Provider:	104	41
Total for the period	425	167

Registered Provider (RP) increase:

- Impact of the work required by all RPs to audit complaints around damp and mould in response to the investigation outcome following the tragic Awaab Ishak death in

Rochdale

- This led to Clarion having 3 times more repair orders than the same period in the previous year.
- There has also been recruitment and retention issues with Clarion contractors and in particular their in-house team. An email was sent to all members 20th October explaining that Clarion had undertaken a procurement for some higher value voids (longer term) and appointed another contractor to ease recruitment pressures in their in-house team. Clarion also meets regularly with Officers at FDC to prioritise void works to those properties the Council need most with regard to meeting our homeless duties.
- There are circa 5898 affordable properties owned by RPs in the district. The % of long-term empty properties in the RP sector has grown from 1.4 % to 2.5% of the total RP stock over the 12 months. It is envisaged that there will be a reduction in this % over the next 12 months.

Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Leisure & Freedom Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)

As Members will have seen in the most recent Cabinet agenda, the Council is considering the options for the 3 larger leisure centres in Fenland, with some investigatory works to be commissioned shortly. This should lead to an options report around Easter next year for Cabinet to consider.

FDC has been successful in securing £191,000 of funding from Sport England's swimming pool support fund to support excess energy costs for the leisure centres in the current financial year. The actual excess energy cost of the six months to September has been £85,000. The following six months costs may be higher due to the seasons, but it looks like any excess energy support this financial year will be covered by the grant from Sport England.

The Council has also applied to the Sport England capital swimming pool support fund for £443,791 as part of a £676,291 project to improve energy efficiency in the swimming pools. Results from our bid should be known in late December / January. The works that the bid would support include;

- Manor combined heating & power unit replacement
- Additional solar PV on all 3 swimming pool roofs.
- Replacement of out-of-date building management systems at all three pools
- Destratification fans for the pool halls
- Replacement energy efficient lighting in 2 pool halls
- Insulation of the Hudson pool filter

Recent and ongoing works at the leisure centres has included;

- Chatteris Leisure roof skylight replacements completed
- George Campbell roofing repairs completed
- George Campbell Leisure Centre Gym Changing Rooms revisions
- Pool filter replacements ordered for George Campbell
- Pool boiler replacement project for George Campbell has commenced
- Fire alarm replacement at the Hudson is planned to commence in the new year

- Changing Places Toilet (CPT) facility for the George Campbell currently in design phase
- Removal of old water pipework, fixtures and fittings within the George Campbell as a part of the CPT project

Freedom performance is as anticipated, with Managers being pushed hard to deliver to very challenging income targets.

Integrated Care Partnership (Cllr Boden)

Please see information below under [Health & Wellbeing Update](#)

Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)

The Active Fenland team continues to deliver affordable, local opportunities for the Fenland community to engage in healthy activities. A full timetable of the sessions offered is available on the Council's website ([Autumn Timetable 2023 - Digital v2 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)), with sessions promoted using social media and word of mouth.

This month the County Council public health team has agreed to extend the healthy weight sessions run by the team for a further three months until the end of the financial year.

Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Partnership met on 8th September. The agenda and papers are available through this link:

[ICB meeting papers | CPICS Website](#)

Consultations:

The government have launched a consultation on proposals to further address smoking in creating a 'smokefree generation' by ending cigarette sales to children aged 14 and under.

This announcement was accompanied by the publication of the command paper 'Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation' (linked [here](#)).

The consultation can be accessed (linked [here](#)). It will be open for 8 weeks; it closes on 6 December 2023. The consultation asks for views on 3 areas:

1. Creating a smokefree generation: the consultation gathers views on the smokefree generation policy and its scope to inform future legislation.
2. Tackling youth vaping: the consultation gathers views on several options to ensure we take the most appropriate action to tackle youth vaping. The proposals in the consultation include restricting vape flavours, regulating point of sale displays of vapes, regulating packaging and presentation of vapes, and considering restricting the sale of disposable vapes. In addition, the consultation gathers views on the implementation of a new duty on vapes.
3. Enforcement: the consultation asks about introducing new powers for local authorities to issue on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) to enforce age of sale legislation of tobacco products and vapes.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

Delivering the Creativity & Culture Strategy (Cllr Seaton)

The Fenland Cultural Strategy Board has had its first full meeting following the re-set of the group after working with a creative consultant. This board is independent, voluntary and its members have been selected to represent a range of skills, specialisms and experience across the cultural sector.

The Fenland Cultural Strategy has enabled the successful applications to the UK: Shared Prosperity Fund (£120,000) and the Integrated Care System Tackling Prevention Fund (£50,000).

In September and October, the UK: SPF Amplifying Community Arts and Culture project, made significant steps forward.

- A £25,000 portion of this project, has enabled the two-year contract extension of the Creativity and Culture Development Officer role at Fenland District Council, from September 2023.
- £10,000 of this project has contributed towards the Fenland Culture Fund, which are micro-grants for arts, culture, and heritage, [Fenland Culture Fund - Fenland District Council](#). This has been created in collaboration with Arts Council England (with an additional £25,000 contribution) and Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy (a further £5000 contribution). The grants launched on Monday 9th October, and will close on Monday 20th November. There is a total of £23,000 available. The Fenland District Council communications team and colleagues in finance have both supported this piece of work, and we are pleased that this is the first public element of the Fenland Cultural Strategy that people will see and be able to benefit from.

In September and October, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System funded project also moved forward. This fund is for Tackling Prevention and Supporting Community Engagement, and Fenland District Council was successful with £50,000 for a project to support young people's mental health using art interventions, in part inspired by the NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing model. An administrative partner has been engaged and the delivery is due to begin shortly.

Working with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage (Cllr Seaton)

The Creativity and Culture Development Officer regularly makes introductions and is able to identify valuable connections for people to meet and encourage collaboration and learning from each other. The communications team at Fenland District Council are very supportive and often can help Fenland organisations in promoting their events and opportunities to our own wide audience.

The Culture, Art and Heritage committee was established, which is an important next step in connectivity and advocacy with the Fenland Cultural Strategy and associated projects. The first meeting was on Tuesday 3rd October, and saw a training session with presentations from:

- Fenland District Council, Creativity and Culture Development Officer.
- Arts Council England, Relationship Manager / Priority Place Lead for Fenland.

- Historic England, Stakeholder Engagement Advisor and Local Heritage Education Manager.
- National Trust, General Manager and Project Manager.
- Creative People and Places, MarketPlace Project, Programme Director and Creative Producer.

The Creativity and Culture Development Officer is an active member of a range of Fenland events and groups. Including:

- Fenland Young Creatives, Local Cultural Education Partnership which is committed to children experiencing art and culture at home in Fenland and creative volunteering and careers.
- National Trust Wisbech Board, designed to monitor the new Project Manager based at Peckover House and supporting the National Trust in realigning its role in Wisbech. This is especially significant whilst the National Trust on a National level is considering strategic changes in the ways in which it works with its urban properties. As the birthplace of Octavia Hill, one of the National Trust founders, Wisbech is a key location in this early strategic thinking and can potentially be an important part of this.
- Wisbech Christmas Fayre Committee, where support has been offered by introducing further arts and cultural organisations to join the committee and contribute additional art features to the events.
- March St George's Festival Working Group, supporting Creative People and Places Marketplace and Fenland Arts Association to submit a funding application to enhance St George's Festival 2024.
- Enabled Creative Arts East to connect with partners to deliver arts, culture and creative activities in parks and open spaces.

Fenland Poet Laureate Competition

The Fenland Poet Laureate Award is an annual poetry competition to find the next Poet Laureate for the district. For the first time it is being organised by Fenland District Council. The winning poet is awarded the honorary title of Fenland Poet Laureate and gets the opportunity to represent and promote Fenland poetry during their year in the role.

The competition will open for entries on Monday 4th December 2023 and the deadline for submissions is Wednesday 31st January 2024. Alongside the Fenland Poet Laureate Award 2024, there will also be the Young Fenland Poet Laureate Award 2024, which is for ages 17 and under. The competition is open to anyone who lives, works or attends school in the administrative district of Fenland and is completely free to enter. Competition entries will be shortlisted by members of Fenland District Council's Culture, Arts and Heritage (CAH) Committee. Shortlisted submissions will then be judged by award-winning poet and CAH committee Chair, Cllr Elisabeth Sennitt Clough, and the current Fenland Poet Laureate, Qu Gao.

There will be an awards ceremony on Friday 15th March 2024.

Supporting groups to hold public events (Cllr Murphy)

September saw the spectacular return of Whittlesey Festival, one of the Council's Four Seasons public events. After a hiatus due to covid, the event returned with a breath-taking show of live music and entertainment across three stages. Thousands of visitors joined the

celebration, which took place throughout the town centre. Highlights included 150 classic vehicles, an eclectic street market, schools art exhibition and live performances from the acclaimed Black Eagles. Many community organisations and individuals were involved in the planning of the event, not only giving their time in kind, but also raising significant sponsorship which was partly used to offer free attractions for children and families at a time of increased cost of living.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)

Pride In Fenland will now be taking place on Wednesday 13 March 2024 at Wisbech St Mary Community and Sports Centre.

5 Market Place Wisbech – Fire Damaged Building (Cllrs Laws & Seaton)

Consent granted for demolition works and phase 1 of this is expected to start soon.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2023/24	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	6.48 days	9.00 days	8.31	
ARP2	Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	5.29 days	9.00 days	11.33	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	246	250	178	
CELP2	The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	53%	57%	44%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	81	50	51	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£98,395	£45,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP6	Number of Active Health sessions per year that improve community health	513	650	311	
CELP19	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	29	30	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP20	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland	£43,000	£201,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A

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

Comments**ARP 2 Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit**

The number of days to process Housing Benefits is above the current target. There are several factors contributing to this, and performance has been impacted by cost-of-living increases and energy schemes which have now closed. The number of outstanding UCDS files has gradually increased since June as a system issue was identified that prevented 13% of the more complex records from automating correctly. A fix has now been released which is currently being tested and we anticipate that the volume of outstanding files will reduce to levels seen in the first quarter of this year when it is fully implemented. This has left a small backlog of legacy cases which are more complex, and these are therefore requiring more time and resource to resolve, where possible, ARP are working directly with DWP to address and resolve all issues with these complex cases.

We are implementing target days to address the issues and have and seconded a dedicated team now in place to work on these, and therefore aim to meet the target by the end of the year.

CELP 2 The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)

This is 13% under target with the following mitigating actions to improve performance:

- New community support officer recruited to provide management and support for existing and new temporary accommodation which frees up officer time to resolve homeless presentations earlier.
- Increase in temporary accommodation through Local Authority Housing Fund and leased properties from Clarion
- Improvement in void performance by Registered Providers
- Increase in new build affordable housing being completed (see affordable housing section)

Environment

Projects from Business Plan:

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

Diverting waste from landfill (Cllr Murphy)

The provisional waste figures for the first 6 months of this financial year demonstrate a continuation of the changes that we observed in previous reports based on the impact of the cost of living.

The teams have already collected a total of more than 21,000 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste from our customers. Within this total the Residual Waste remains broadly unchanged from last year, overall recycling waste collected has reduced by around 6% (282 tonnes) however the weather this year has resulted in an increase in garden waste collected of 25% (1,095 tonnes).

Collected Waste Tonnes	2022	2023	% Change
Overall tonnage	20,929	21,352	+2%
Residual Tonnage	12,058	11,667	-3%
Dry Recycling Tonnage Actual	4,479	4,197	-6%
Compost Tonnage Actual	4,393	5,488	+25%
Dry Recycling & Compost Tonnage Total	8,872	9,685	+9%

Collected Waste – Percentage Recycling (Blue Bin to Residual)	27.1%	26.5%
Percentage Recycling (Blue and Brown Bin to Residual)	42.4%	45.4%

The economic pressure on our customers is being seen in the reduced amount of recycling being produced. These reduced levels, along with significant changes in the values of the recycling material markets has seen a change in the income achieved from recycling compared to the highs of last year. In the first 6 months of this financial year, we achieved a net income of £163,543 from the materials presented, which is £128,656 less than the same period last year. This is because of a tonne of Fenland's recycling being worth around £130 a year ago and is now worth closer to £60 which has reduced the income from the materials.

We will continue to support our customers to maximise their recycling efforts and continue to treat their waste as a resource, but it is clear that the economic situation is having an impact across the recycling resource chain and impacting income from the materials collected.

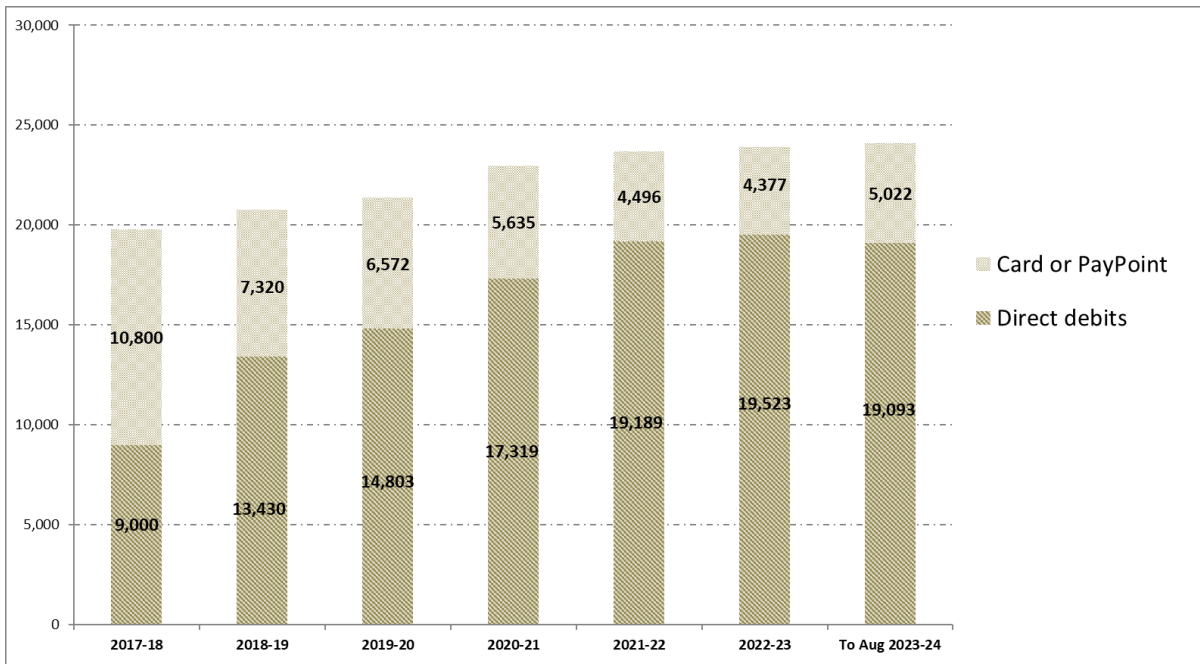
To protect the quality of recycling materials collected, the team have rejected 4,514 blue bins so far this year along with 655 properties receiving information directly from supervisors encouraging best use of recycling



bins. Of these 655 bins inspected, 48% (316) were actively recycling and 7% contained incorrect materials (46). During November all 45,500 properties have received the winter collection calendar including information on recycling better.

Garden Waste Collection (Cllr Murphy)

The levels of garden waste subscriptions this year are already approaching those at the end of last year. A total of 24,115 subscriptions so far this year, with 79% direct debits, has generated an income of around £980,000 to cover the costs of providing the garden waste service to those who have chosen to make use of it.



This summer has so far produced significantly more garden waste than last year’s dry summer and the team have collected almost 5,500 tonnes of garden waste. This material is sent to be composted locally.

Service cost increases have resulted in the fee for 2024/25 being set at £44 for the direct debit and £55 for cash or card to continue to deliver a cost neutral service. Communications are in place to share the changes with customers, including calendars, bin tags, council tax flyers, emails and letters.

Delivering clean streets and public spaces (Cllr Murphy)

The cleansing team works 7 days a week, 364 days a year to keep Fenland’s streets and public open spaces clean.

So far this year (end October) they have responded to 1,191 requests from the public to deal with fly-tipping, graffiti, street cleansing or similar requests. Of these 96% (1,142) were actioned the same or next day.

The scheduled cleansing and rapid response service, with support from Fenland’s active local volunteers, including Street Pride groups, deliver clean streets and public open spaces in

Fenland. The standard of cleanliness is monitored by Street Scene officers using Keep Britain Tidy surveying methodology across a range of land use types and all wards. In the past 4 months officers have completed 604 surveys for litter and street sweeping and found 587 to be of a suitable standard (97%).

Working with key stakeholders to deliver an effective waste partnership and update the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Strategy (Cllr Tierney)

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) will be able to develop the strategy during 2024 given the recent clarity from Defra over the future of waste collection in England for domestic and commercial premises.

Deliver a competitive trade waste service (Cllr Murphy)

Fenland has 556 commercial waste customers, including 28 who make use of the commercial food waste service. From them the team have collected more than 715 tonnes of waste, of which 70 tonnes was recycling and 52 tonnes of food waste. The total invoiced income for the first half of the year for the commercial waste, recycling and food waste is £279,766.

Monitor and respond to the DEFRA Waste & Resources Strategy consultation with RECAP partners (Cllr Tierney)

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) were pleased to recently hear the response to Defra's 2021 consultation on the future of waste collection in England.

This has resulted in clarification of how recycling can be collected and provides a steer on the future make up of services in this regard. The RECAP partnership is still waiting for clarity over whether Cambridgeshire will be able to follow the rest of the country with fully funded weekly food waste collections from 2026.

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

Tackling fly-tipping, illegal parking, dog fouling, littering and ASB (Cllr Murphy)

Total number of fly tips for August and September are shown below, with October's figures to be provided in our next report. Wisbech rural villages have been the most affected across the district.

Month	Total	Chatteris	March	Whittlesey	Wisbech	Villages
August 2023	93	4	16	8	29	39
Sept 2023	49	0	13	16	12	8

The Street Scene Team aim to be as proactive as they can and aim to attend fly tipped sites to look for any evidence. Some of our proactive work is included below:

3 Fixed Penalty Notices for £400 have been issued to 3 local individuals that we believe to be responsible for fly tipping. 1 has already been paid. All residents reside in Wisbech and relate to waste dumped in the town.

2 business owners have been issued with a Formal Section 34 Notice requesting they produce documents in relation to adequate trade waste provisions. Failing to do so within the allocated time will result in a £300 Fixed Penalty Notice.

1 individual has received a formal written warning for fly tipping offences where we did not have sufficient evidence for a prosecution but where we suspected their involvement.

2 Formal interviews under caution have been carried out to those we believe may be responsible for dumping waste. Investigations into the information provided is ongoing.

Additional enforcement work is taking place on March Marketplace to raise awareness of the parking order following the recent improvement works. Sadly, we have had to issue **2 parking fines** to cars who were found to be parking illegally.

The team have received **a total of 53 reported abandoned vehicles. All were investigated and 5 were removed by our contractor** due to be a danger to the highway.

Grosvenor Road car park, Whittlesey - the car park has been subject of seasonal ASB driving and noise disturbance linked to inappropriate driving in and out of the carpark for the past 3 years, much to the annoyance of residents. The Police supported the issue with increased patrols, encouraged direct reporting into their service and post incident visit to nuisance vehicle owners, but the issue continued for residents. After collating further evidence and liaising with Assets & Projects, it has been agreed to install a speed bump at the entrance/exit point of the car park.

Maintaining open spaces through grounds maintenance contractor and Street Pride, In Bloom, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of groups (Cllr Murphy)

The open spaces team and our contractor, Tivoli, have had a good season with grass cutting ending in October. Community feedback has been positive, with a limited number of negative comments throughout the cutting season. Given the number of cuts required over several months and the high number of different areas that the Council maintains, this is very positive news. During the winter season Tivoli will maintain hedges and carry out other works to ensure that our open spaces estate is well managed and appreciated by the local community.

This year has seen the replacement of the play area in Wisbech Park. This was very well received over the summer with considerable numbers of people visiting the new play area every day. The open spaces team also commissioned several activity sessions to take place in the park in the past few months and these proved very successful. Adding in the events organised by the Town Council, Wisbech Park has been exceptionally well used this year.

Wisbech Park Pavilion; The pavilion is on track for completion in mid-December and handover to FDC. The council has been discussing the management of the pavilion with Wisbech Town

Council in the past few months, and both Councils have put in place necessary governance to lease the building to the Town Council for a peppercorn fee. This approach will ensure that management of the facility is handled at a very local level and will allow the Town Council to further develop community activities and events in the park.

West End Park, March – extension to the park; Developer Cannon Kirk is finalising the West End Park extension that was part of the Section 106 agreement to allow a significant development along Gaul Road. The Council and Cannon Kirk are finalising legal matters to transfer the new park extension to the Council when final touches to the open space are completed. This will be a significant increase in the open space available to March residents, right in the heart of March. Considering this open space improvement along with the ongoing Future High Street Fund works and March Area Transport Works, as well as the recent railway station enhancements highlights the improvements being delivered in the town for the local community to enjoy.

A total of 23 Street Pride events were held in September and 18 in October by community groups to improve the environment. This included regular work parties as well as equipment being lent to Smurfit Kappa in March to undertake litter picking to coincide with World Clean Up day.

Congratulations must go to both Benwick In Bloom and Chatteris In Bloom for their results at this year's Anglia in Bloom competition. Benwick obtained a Silver Gilt and won the small village category whilst it was Gold for Chatteris who won the town category.

This year, the Heritage Open Days, which are a series of events co-ordinated by the National Trust ran from 8th – 17th September and several community groups within March & Wisbech held events to coincide.

On 2nd September, The Friends of March Railway Station held an open day which included several stalls and provided an opportunity for people to see recent renovation and enhancement works.

On 14th September a guided walk took place around Station Road Cemetery by one of the volunteers. Visitors could hear stories about local people buried here along with information about nature and wildlife they might see.

The Friends of Rings End Nature Reserve held two events on 10th & 12th September. One was a work party where attendees could assist with painting the front gate and clearing brambles. The second event was a walk around the reserve.

The Friends of Wisbech General Cemetery ran two walks on 10th September focusing on the wildlife, monuments and chapel. Saturday 16th September saw the Friends of Octagon Graveyard guide visitors around so that they can appreciate the peaceful space it offers and reflect on the site's history and wildlife.

All the events were an excellent opportunity for the community to explore for free the history and culture on their doorstep and also highlighted the types of activities that individuals can get involved with.

On 5th October, volunteers attended the annual Celebration Evening. The Council appreciates

and values the ongoing work of all its volunteers and this event is our way of saying 'thanks' and celebrating each groups' achievements. Representatives from Street Pride, In Bloom and Friend's groups all attended which reflects the increasing co-operation between them.

Each group received a certificate of thanks in appreciation of their continuing efforts over the past year to improve their local street scene and open spaces.

Special certificates were also awarded for several projects:

Best Nature Project

Friends of Wisbech General Cemetery & Doddington Street Pride (joint winners)

Best Partnership Project

Wisbech Street Pride & Wisbech In Bloom & Parson Drove Street Pride (joint winners)

Best Street Scene Project

Whittlesey Street Pride

Best Youth Project

Wisbech St Mary Street Pride & Wisbech St Mary Church of England Academy & Chatteris in Bloom/Street Pride (joint winners)

Best Promotional Project

Friends of Station Road Cemetery, March & Friends of Octagon Graveyard, Wisbech (joint winners)

Best Clean Up

Friends of March Railway Station & Manea Street Pride (joint winners)

Whittlesey Green Dog Walkers Scheme promoted at the Whittlesey Community Safety event on 24 October 2023. The Green Dog Walkers Scheme is a friendly way to tackle dog fouling issues. The idea is that responsible dog owners sign a pledge to say that they will clear up after their dogs & will carry spare bags with them which they will offer to anyone they see not clearing up. Green dog walkers are identified by an attractive paw print tag worn by the owner's dog/s, to encourage participation in the scheme. [Whittlesey Green Dog Walkers \(whittleseygreen.org.uk\)](http://whittleseygreen.org.uk)

Working with town councils and the community to provide local markets and market town events (including Four Seasons events) (Cllr Murphy)

Four Seasons

Christmas preparations are in full swing. March Christmas Market will take place on 3rd December and already has more than 116 bookings. The event will encompass part of the High Street, Market Place, City Road, the Leisure Car Park and March Library which will host a craft fair.

Wisbech Christmas Fayre will have new attractions this year too including an outdoor bubble cycle and performances from Gorilla Circus. Wisbech and Fenland Museum will also be hosting a pop-up historical Christmas food display and tastings as part of the event.

The March Events Committee will be hosting an 'Imagine a Dragon' consultation arts event on the 4th November supported by March Library and Creative People and Places, where free taster arts activities will be on offer, and we will be speaking with people about what arts they would like to see in 2024.

Markets

Chatteris - Our casual Trader, 'Village Cakery' has decided to attend every week at Chatteris Market after success attending every other. The bakery stall is proving very popular and due to extra demand has made the decision to attend weekly.

Whittlesey - We have had to say goodbye to our bakery stall, 'Make it Sweet' in Whittlesey but have contacted those on our waiting list and hope to be able to continue to offer bakery items in the town as soon as possible.

March – The market will welcome a new stall to March Saturday 'The Flour Tub' is a local business selling baked goods.

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

Estimated sign and line costs have now been received from the County Council for the sign and line corrective works. However due to the time taken by the County Councils contractor to produce some of the work packages to inform the estimated cost for each of the Towns, some of the target costs are now beyond the 90-day price guarantee period. Updated costs have been requested and will be presented within the December Cabinet update paper. The July Cabinet update report therefore remains current at this moment in time.

Street Lighting (Cllr French)

The current Streetlight repairs and maintenance works contract which is due to expire on 31 January 2024 has now been extended until 30 April 2024. The contract extension is necessary due to current officer workload and reduced resources within the Engineering Team. It is anticipated that the new streetlight repairs and maintenance works contract will be tendered at the beginning of December. It is the intention that the procurement exercise will be solely for FDC and associated Parish lighting stock and not extend to cover SCDC lighting stock requirements.

Currently replacement and upgrade works are ongoing for several Parish Councils in addition to FDC's own lighting stock. No new bulk replacement works shall be commissioned through the existing Repair & Maintenance contract due to associated connectivity and material lead in times. Currently FDC are awaiting UKPN connectivity works to numerous streetlight replacements for FDC and various Parish lights.

In September the following repair and maintenance works were undertaken:

7 streetlights for Parish Councils

8 streetlights for FDC

1 streetlight for Clarion

October stats were not available at the time of writing this update.

FDC Car Park Maintenance (Cllr French)

Visual car park inspections will be undertaken in November and any urgent or emergency works will be subsequently ordered. Full inspection regimes will be reinstated in the new year following engineering team resource levels being restored. Some existing repair work is currently outstanding which is awaiting contractor attendance.

Consultation between FDC and the National Trust is still ongoing in relation to new heads of terms associated with a further lease arrangement for Chapel Road car park. A full report will be brought to cabinet in due course following receipt National Trusts final lease terms and conditions.

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

Community Safety Partnership updates (Cllr Wallwork)

Engagement update:

Community Safety in partnership with Cambs Fire & Rescue supported two water safety engagement events for the traveller community at the Hudson Leisure Centre. The events engaged with traveller families accessing swim sessions put on by the County Council and gave in person practical advice to keep safe in water. Fun resources were handed out to help embed learning/key safety messages for children.

The Alcohol PSPO for Wisbech has been extended for another three years following Cabinet approval to extend. This will help with reducing alcohol related ASB, offering intervention to persons who may have alcohol problems and reducing alcohol related litter in public places through the Op Luscombe approach or, if necessary, through the PSPO legislation.

Hate Crime Project

In partnership with Fenland Diverse Communities Forum and Cambridgeshire Constabulary a hate crime awareness project was delivered. This included, Hate Crime week resources shared with schools across Fenland, awareness raising for frontline professionals and volunteers who work across Fenland, engagement events, social media campaign and the refresh of the Third-Party Reporting centre scheme, which will involve refresher training for staff at those locations later in the year. A total of 47 volunteers and professionals who have contact with the community attended the hate crime training session on 12th October 2023.

Wisbech Town Engagement 04/09/2023 Oasis Centre.

This event was supported by Change Grow Live (drug & alcohol service), Cambs Fire & Rescue, Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) and the Scams & Cybercrime Officer from Cambs Police. This event was attended by 47 residents who were providing advice on reporting to

authorities, issues regarding roads/highways, graffiti, parking, street drinking in Wisbech town, drug activity, and navigating benefits advice when caring for a family member. Also, how to join Neighbourhood Watch and starting a scheme for their area.

Residents all received take away information regarding ASB/Crime reporting options and were given advice and signposting on their individual issues.

Whittlesey Town Engagement 24/10/2023 Library

This event was supported by Cambs Fire & Rescue, NHW (Neighbourhood Watch) Cambridgeshire Coordinator and local volunteers, the Scams & Cybercrime Officer from Cambs Police, Bobby Scheme, Barclays Bank Fraud Team and Fen Youth Radio. Issues reported included concerns with Burglary, Planning, Highways issues/Speeding (Eastrea Road), Scams and Homelessness.

Rural Engagement Sessions

Sessions have been held at the following locations; Eastrea, Coates, Christchurch, Doddington, Wimblington, Newton, Gorefield, Leverington, Guyhirn, Wisbech St Mary and Manea.

Workforce Development Sessions for Frontline Professionals & Volunteers: Prevent – 19/10/23

A total of 58 frontline professionals and volunteers from across Fenland attended this session presented by a Police Inspector from the Eastern Region Counter Terrorism Unit. Topics covered were.

- Introduction to the Prevent Team, what is Prevent and Radicalisation
- Current UK threat level and looking at potential threats, including some signs and symbols to look out for
- A basic understanding of some of those ideologies
- What is Prevent and Channel? An overview of the process following a referral to us.
- How to make a referral to Prevent
- Background into online platforms being used to exploit vulnerable people in a variety of ways

County Lines Training

Two sessions were held for those who work with or care for looked after children. The training was delivered in partnership with Dave Sargent, the Partnership Strategic Lead (Vulnerability and Exploitation) from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board. A total of 43 people benefited from these sessions, who had links to children care homes, fostering, and support staff from County Council who work with looked after children and schools. The training presentation and links to access the County Lines training film and resources were shared with the attendees.

Fenland Diverse Communities Forum updates on delivering the Community Cohesion Action Plan (Cllr Wallwork)

Diverse Communities Forum (DCF)

The Fenland Diverse Communities Forum has held a meeting at the Queen Mary Centre regarding the cost-of-living challenges in the area. The aim of the meeting was to provide information to the wider membership of the group on the work being carried out to help mitigate the impact of the situation on local households.

There is a strong commitment amongst the DCF membership to work together to provide services that meet the needs of the whole Fenland community, by avoiding duplication of effort by maximising the focus of all partners on helping others with ongoing work projects. This involves networking, and providing partners with an update on work projects, highlighting projects being developed and the positive impacts of these. It also provides partners with an opportunity to promote their organisation and seek any help or assistance that they may require and offer constructive feedback on what they hear.

On the day, the Forum had representatives from the Health, Community Safety, Community, Statutory and Voluntary sectors, as well as the Cambs & Peterborough Combined Authority, Police, Interfaith Forum and Education.

Delegates heard from our front-line organisations about local financial challenges and enabled the Citizens Advice Rural Cambs (CARC), the Wisbech Community Development Trust, Oasis Centre, Queen Mary Centre, Ferry Project and Rosmini Centre to feedback on the current situation and how they are addressing this.

In summary, the CARC and all our community hubs have been a lifeline to many residents over the last 12 months, providing food parcels and ongoing information, advice, guidance and support.

The Forum also heard from Wisbech Town Council about the work of the Council in their town and the Digital Repair Café, who could best be described as a mobile shop who are prepared to provide no cost workshops. The Repair Café is a place for exchange, sharing skills and knowledge. Volunteer repairers can improve their skills and coach the visitors to gradually become more competent in fixing everyday objects. The Cambridgeshire Society for the blind stated that they face high costs of basic everyday repairs which are hard to afford and welcomed this. Discussions are now underway about having a Repair Café in Fenland.

The interactive discussions that flow from the presentations are an informal opportunity to discuss a variety of topics relating to cohesion, integration and upskilling people where there is an evidenced need. It also enables partners to tweak their service delivery to sync with community needs. In the medium to longer term it helps to review partnership working and better inform the priorities for the discussion around the action plan update.

Feedback from the meeting was very positive. As an example the College of West Anglia's Adult Community Education Service Manager said that they are *"looking forward to 'reaching out' to other attendees. A lot of areas where we can collaborate or support."*

Community Safety Grant Agreement updates (Cllr Wallwork)

ASB Partnership Intervention:

- Successful application for an injunction against an ASB perpetrator who was having a negative impact upon retailers, visitors and residents of Wisbech town centre.
- Continue to support police led Op Luscombe through joint patrol activity and hub representation.
- Liaising and supporting Clarion, along with local police team, to respond to issues involving communal areas within their housing stock.

Communities Fund:

- Successful removal of graffiti from Ghost Passage which was funded through the

OPCC Communities Fund

- Successful OPCC Communities Fund bid to improve Councils response to graffiti and its removal. Training of staff to use and handle equipment/supplies but more importantly able to train other colleagues which allows for succession planning.

Safer Streets 4 & 5:

- Safer Streets 4 (Peterborough & Medworth ward Wisbech) successfully concluded between July 2022 and September 2023 including:
 - The interventions, which included new CCTV and the installation of video doorbells for eligible households, were aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), neighbourhood crime and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
 - Businesses in Peterborough and Fenland were encouraged to sign up to Business Against Abuse (BAA) – an accreditation scheme which trains business owners how to identify predatory behaviour, prevent it from escalating into a possible sexual offence and make their business a safe place for everyone, in particular women and girls.
 - Since the project launched, ASB reports have fallen in areas where the new safety measures were concentrated while specialist training has enabled the force and its partners to target issues quickly and use new legislation more effectively.
 - Following the funding of two Anti-Social Behaviour Officers within Peterborough City Council and Fenland District Council, 18 ASB cases have now been progressed with three Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) issued and two summons pending.
 - Other key achievements include the training of 150 professionals from different agencies to improve understanding of ASB legislation and how it can be used. So far, this has directly led to the granting of four Civil ASB Injunctions across both areas.
 - Meanwhile, the installation of new gates within Norfolk Street, Wisbech, has seen ASB calls fall by more than half from 129 to 59 calls during the eight-month project.
 - More than 1,500 children have received awareness assemblies challenging predatory behaviour and misogynistic views across Peterborough and Fenland.
 - In further success, 17 new cadets have been recruited to units in Wisbech and Peterborough and are already taking part in volunteering activities including test purchase operations and litter picking.
- Worked with OPCC and Cambs Constabulary on a successful bid for funding from Safer Streets 5; includes funding in Wisbech for two additional CCTV units, Neighbourhood Watch, Community Resilience/Confidence post (18 months), dedicated CCTV monitoring

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

The CCTV shared service has maintained its 100% service function across a 24/7 period. From April to end of October 2023, the CCTV service has been able to respond to 739 incidents across our four market towns including incidents relating to anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, violent crime, illegal drug use, possession of weapons and theft.

As a result of CCTV intervention this has led to 85 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 and reduce the

fear of crime.

The CCTV service also continues to be pro-active in delivering services that helps reduce crime & disorder and anti-social behaviour by delivering regular camera patrols of our four market towns and other key locations. Since April the CCTV team have delivered 2,522 patrols. All patrols all conducted across the 24/7 period ensuring that no matter what time of day and night our local communities are being protected and that 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 example, homelessness, stray and lost dogs, cleansing incidents, dangerous buildings and structures, damaged trees, to name but a few areas. From April to November, the CCTV service has responded to over 235 calls for services from our telephone contact service.

During October, key partners from our local town councils, were invited to visit the new control premises at Sand Martin House, Peterborough and meet the team. There were a number of open days offered during October both during the day and an evening opportunity. All sessions were widely taken up with good attendance from across the district. Partner feedback was highly positive and complimentary, and all were impressed by the quality standards of the cameras and the control room since the introduction of the shared services between FDC and Peterborough City Council.

Street Drinking Update (Cllr Wallwork)

Case Study - Elderly female, 88yrs, reported concerns regarding street drinking and littering in Wisbech. Community Safety explained the partnership work of Operation Luscombe and how it impacts upon street drinking and ASB in Wisbech, and the problem was something we took seriously. It was also explained that there were options to report litter concerns and how FDC operated a response service to the more serious problems. The lady shared she felt better and reassured the issues were being addressed.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 22/23	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP8	Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	96%	90%	96%	
CELP9	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	98%	93%	97%	
CELP10	% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling (1 month in arrears)	27%	28%	26.5%	
CELP11	Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services	95.8%	90%	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP12	Customer satisfaction with our garden waste service	89.1%	85%	N/A (Dec 2023)	N/A
CELP13	Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	236	204	144	
CELP14	% of those asked who are satisfied with events	97%	95%	96%	
CELP18	% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	100%	95%	100%	N/A

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

Comments
CELP10: Reduced levels of recycling materials as a result of the cost of living changes and extended producer responsibilities can be seen in a reduced recycling rate.

Economy

Projects from Business Plan:

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

Attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities (Cllr Benney)

The Economic Growth team were contacted by the Department for Business and Trade regarding Juno, a US waste recovery company which had identified Whittlesey as a potential location for a new facility. The team met with the company and arranged an All Member Seminar on 3 October where Juno presented their plans to Members and Members were able to ask Juno about the investment. Juno has since decided not to progress with the facility in Whittlesey due to concerns regarding potential archaeology issues at the site. The following compliment was received:

"Can I give you my thanks for your exceptional help over the past couple of months." Richard Patient Thorncliffe, agent for Juno.

The team worked with a marquee hire company to assist with their move to Chatteris. The company provided marquees to the NHS during Covid for use as testing facilities. They supply events such as the Chelsea Flower Show.

Support is being provided to a new wedding venue business by liaising with FDC functions such as planning and licensing and by introducing business support organisations that can focus on start up support.

Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)

Meetings were held with a packaging supply company which supplies food manufacturers, a cardboard box manufacturer whose main customer is Hotel Chocolat, a German owned company that installs and services machinery in waste and recycling centres throughout the UK, a gym equipment installation and servicing company for international gym equipment manufacturing companies at gym facilities throughout the UK and a Canadian owned food manufacturing company who is making a £10m investment in waste heat harvesting.

Planning permission has been granted to Del Monte for the expansion of their facility in Wisbech. The Economic Growth team has worked with the business over three years in areas such as upskilling the workforce and supported them before and during the planning process. The following compliment was received:

"Thanks for all of your help with the project so far – it' greatly appreciated."
Director, Fresh Cut (Europe), Del Monte (UK) Limited

Another company that the team has worked with for three years has taken an additional unit as part of its expansion plans in Chatteris. The robotics company was introduced to Growth Works to form part of their video promotional material aimed at the international AgriTech sector.

Finally, Blokarts East Anglia received planning permission for a new building to house the assembled karts which will save set up time. The team has worked with the company to attract grant funding for their continued expansion plans. The company has been approached by Virgin Red Letter Days and attracts visitors from around the UK who use other hospitality businesses in the March area.

Shared Prosperity Fund

In 2023-24, the Economic Growth Team are progressing 8 full applications from local businesses for grant funding via the Investment in Business project.

In 2024-25, the Investment in Business project will have c£540k available and it is proposed that this funding be allocated as follows:

1. £250k continuation of the existing SPF business grant scheme
2. £150k grant scheme to support business start-ups/early-stage businesses
3. £140k business skills for young people (16-25) – three projects:
 - i. Business training for early-stage businesses
 - ii. Running a business/entrepreneurial course for schools
 - iii. How to be business ready event(s)

A report setting out the proposed 2024-25 programme was taken to the Cabinet meeting held on 20 November and the grant programmes will be launched in December this year.

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

The total allocation of REPF for Fenland is £436k with £109k in 2023-24 and £327k in 2024-25. The investment priorities for REPF are Business Growth and Community/Place with the focus in 2023-24 being on Business Growth.

To date in 2023-24, the Economic Growth Team received 43 Expressions of Interest in applying for a REPF business grant and 20 have now been invited to submit a full application.

The REPF business grant programme for 2024-25 will be launched in December this year with a total of £163.5k of funding available. A report setting out the proposed 2024-25 programme was taken to the Cabinet meeting held on 20 November.

Promote business premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Units (Cllr Benney)

The Estates team continue to actively engage with tenants of all sites. Industrial units are fully occupied whilst the Boathouse occupancy has remained static since the previous report at 92%. This is the result of two units being vacant however one of those is now under offer but, as the legal documents are not yet complete, this occupancy is not reflected in the 92% quoted. Once complete, occupancy will rise to 96%.

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre has remained at 65% despite the Police Firearms Association taking space. A number of tenants have left recently for various reasons including switching back to full time working from home or business relocation. Investigations with the marketing agents and outgoing tenants to understand this decrease are ongoing with a view to amending the offer on site to attract tenants once again remains ongoing.

The process of reviewing the occupancies of the industrial units continues with officers taking action to renew expired leases across all sites before moving onto rent reviews which have not been actioned. To date, the work has resulted in rent increases to the benefit of FDC of

approaching 31% on the estates actioned, as well as the management benefit to ensure the properties remain occupied and profitable.

Skills Update (Cllr Benney)

At the Cabinet meeting held on 30th January 2023, it was agreed that a sum of c£131k from the Council's SPF allocation be provided to the CPCA to invest in a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough People and Skills Programme in year three. This SPF funded skills programme will deliver:

- A refined 'Skills Brokerage Service' offer for businesses.
- Further development of the 'All-age careers service' aspiration/offering.
- Funding to provide paid internship opportunities.

The full CPCA report "UK SPF – Skills Projects and Succession Planning for Skills Brokerage Service" was presented to the CPCA Skills & Employment Committee (Agenda Item 7) on 5th June 2023.

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)

The government has launched a consultation into unregulated cosmetic procedures such as facial fillers and dermabrasion. These procedures are currently unregulated and have been cause for concern both within the industry and for customers. More information can be found below:

[Consultation launched into unregulated cosmetic procedures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

The consultation suggests that a tiered risk system will be introduced of Low, Medium and High-Risk treatments. Also, the required training of individuals in each category will be more clearly defined.

The council currently licenses tattooing and body piercing practices and may well be required to license certain other procedures once regulated.

Food safety

Recently we participated in 3 national food sampling studies:

- Study 77: Ready to Eat Salad and salad components from Retail and Catering, looking at the food safety risks associated with ready to eat salad and salad components.
- Study 78: Hygiene in Catering Premises - Environmental samples including cloths, random area hygiene swabs and random area pathogen swabs in premises that prepare and serve food to the public.
- Study 79: Sliced or Cut Meat from retail and catering premises.

We chose two businesses in March area for Studies 77 & 79 and the results identified concerns in one of them which served as a coaching exercise during their later food safety inspection. For Study 79 we chose a food producer in Wisbech, and we are still awaiting results.

In September we carried out 45 food safety interventions, which included 12 'alternative enforcement strategy' questionnaires which are issued to low-risk premises only, at least every 3 years. A total of 33 out of the 45 interventions were awarded a food hygiene rating (FHR) following our food safety inspection:

FHR 5 – 29 businesses
FHR 4 – 2 businesses
FHR 3 – 1 business
FHR 2 – 1 business

Similarly in October, we carried out 43 interventions of which 12 were questionnaires. A total of 31 businesses were awarded a FHR:

FHR 5 – 29 businesses
FHR 3 – 1 business
FHR 0 – 1 business (a Food Hygiene Improvement Notice was served as a result of this inspection and subsequent revisits where works had not been completed as required).

We also received 23 food service requests – 5 general food safety enquiries, 5 new business enquiries, 4 food hygiene enquiries, 3 general complaints, 2 requests for food hygiene rating rescore visits, 2 requests for food export certificates, one foreign body complaint and one complaint forwarded to us from Food Standards Agency relating to pest activity.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

Planning updates (including progress on the Local Plan) (Cllr Laws)

Work on the emerging Local Plan is at a pause pending recruitment to the vacant posts.

All of the vacant posts across the whole of the planning service are out to advert with a closing date of 8th January 2024. Interviews are being held during the remainder of that month.

The Government set the planning application fees nationally and it was announced recently that they would be increasing between 25% and 35% in December 2023. At the same time the Government has reduced the time the Council has to decide non major applications (to 16 weeks where no extension of time has been agreed by the applicant) before a fee refund is given. The income budget is to be adjusted accordingly.

Work is continuing on the implementation of the transformation project with the next large change being the implementation of a new digital mapping system which enables remote working and easier identification of consultees on planning applications.

The Council partners with a number of other Councils for the delivery of the building control service (CNC). The service lead is about to leave and the position is being recruited to.

A decision by the Secretary of State on the Medworth Energy from Waste scheme is anticipated in February 2024.

Delivery of new homes (including affordable homes) (Cllr Laws & Cllr Hoy)

The first lets into new build properties as part of the 137 affordable home scheme on Elm High Road Wisbech are scheduled for February 2024. A total of 97 of the homes will be affordable rented and 40 for shared ownership.

External funding bid updates (Cllr Boden)

- [Shared Prosperity Fund](#)
- [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#)
- [Growing Fenland](#)

Capital Projects Update

Accommodation Review

Progress in respect of the Corporate Accommodation Review continues in accordance with the agreed project plan

In Summary Progress to date includes:

- The procurement and appointment of an independent / impartial partner to work with Members and Officers to develop an options appraisal to help inform the Council's future accommodation strategy.
- Cabinet agreed the Strategic Outline Business case (SOBC) which identified a long list of options which were subject to
 - o Financial analysis
 - o Non-Financial analysis
 - o Cost Benefit analysis
- Members agreed to take a short list of options through to Outline Business Case development (OBC). Each option factored in a presence in the town of March as this location is central to the district.
- Recent tours of Fenland Hall have been undertaken with Elected Members with further Tours of Melbourne Avenue scheduled. The tours provide Members with the opportunity to see all aspects of the current corporate accommodation.

Next Steps

- The Outline Business case in respect of the short-listed future accommodation options is currently being collated in conjunction with our impartial partners
- The organisational future space requirements are being finalised.
- We are engaging with key partners via One Public Estate (OPE) to ascertain the potential for future co-location.
- A report seeking members agreement to a preferred option regarding the Corporate Accommodation will be brought to Cabinet early 2024, following which, if Cabinet are in agreement, a full business case of the preferred option will be commissioned.

Wisbech Port

The suspended quay works are progressing well. APA Concrete Repairs Ltd are on target to meet the contractual repairs to the underside of the quay. Work is due to be completed by 15 December 2023.

We Have given consent for a new cargo to be trailed into the port. LECA (Lightweight Expanded Clay Aggregate) is used in a number of different ways from under floor insulation to making building blocks to flower pot soil replacement. This trial will initially be for 12 months

and will be closely monitored by the Port Authority and our environmental team .

We expect the first consignment to be shipped in week commencing 11 December 2023. Each ship will discharge 1500 cubic meters of the product and this amount will be arriving every 5-6 weeks. The trial is for 30,000 cubic meters.

The Port of Wisbech is currently receiving 3 cargos a month, two of timber and one of bricks.

The yacht harbour and boat yard remain busy for the time of the year, and we continue to hit our performance target. Vessels coming out for winterising along with commercial fishing boats also coming in to have repair work done.

The Elms Chatteris

- FFL have recruited a Development Manager for the site (Lovell)
- Technical team (architect, engineering specialist etc) have been appointed.
- Reserved Matters planning application being prepared

Nene Waterfront Development

- Fenland Extra Care Consortium (procured by FFL) are preparing Reserved Matters application for a new Affordable Extra Care Scheme for older residents with care needs on one of the 5 plots.
- Implementation of new electric substation underway.

March Future High Street Fund (Cllr Seaton & Cllr French)

The March Future Highstreets fund programme continues through delivery phase and at pace. To date the Marketplace scheme has been completed on time and under budget, along with four property grants being provided to local property owners. March dental and 24 Market Place have both received grants totalling £100,000 to improve their premises from empty/derelict properties to bring them back into use. Following intervention by the grants, FDC have been able to facilitate the creation of two new purpose build business units (now let) and three new residential units (also let) within the town centre.

The Broad Street project continues to be delivered by Octavius, with regular community coffee mornings making officers and staff available to members of the public that may have questions or concerns. At time of writing, the tarmac for the new road has been laid. Paving along the eastern side of Broad Street, Dartford Road and Station Road will be completed by Christmas along with initial demolition work of the Toilet block.

The new year will see the third phase of the project begin as works begin to switch over to the western carriageway for completion.

24 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Seaton)

Etec – FDC's main contractor - continues ground works at 24 High Street. The project is into the piling phase and this is proving problematic. The ground in the area is exceptionally fluid – even at depth – and this is causing concern whilst piling and the potential movement of adjacent properties. Adjacent properties are of an age, and their footings reflect that age (i.e. they are not piled), meaning that a cautious approach is being taken to the 24 High Street work to avoid movement of adjacent buildings. This may mean a delay in getting to the High Street level. Expectations were to pour the ground floor concrete slab prior to Christmas to allow it to go off over the Christmas break. The extended time that piling is taking may mean that this will no longer be possible, resulting in a delay of a number of weeks.

Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)

Chatteris Projects

The Chatteris Town Council managed Chatteris Museum project has now moved the museum into its new premises (the old Barclay's bank building in the High Street) as scheduled.

The contract for the works to 14 Church Lane has been awarded and work is well underway in converting the former museum and town council chambers to create better work spaces, badly needed storage facilities and new community rooms. The existing first floor accommodation is already taking shape as a residential flat and work will begin soon on building above the flat roof part of the building at the rear to create a second residential flat for rent. The building work should be completed in the spring and enable Chatteris Town Council move back after six months in temporary accommodation at 2 Park Street. As a result of the building works large meetings of the Council, including full council meetings, are being held at the King Edward Centre.

Whittlesey Projects

Funding from the CPCA, following the suspension of the Whittlesey Heritage Centre project, has been secured for work to;

- Develop an SOBC regarding a Whittlesey relief road. Consultants will be appointed to progress this work.
- Add additional solar PV to the Manor swimming pool; Business case developed. Application to UKPN underway & funding application to Swimming Pool Support Fund, managed by Sport England has been submitted. Works to commence once the outcome of the further funding bid has been announced (expected in December / January).
- Improvements to the netball / tennis court area & options appraisal at the Manor Centre. Fencing replacement completed, lighting unit replacement is imminent, and the playing surface refurbishment will take place last – subject to weather conditions.
- Whittlesey Library display re Must Farm. Whittlesey Library is being refurbished by CCC in 2024. Delivering this project prior the refurbishment is not possible and would mean that it was pulled down for refurbishment work. This project will be moved to take place after the library refurbishment in 2025.
- Whittlesey Buttercross – remove trip hazard works. Project yet to commence.

Wisbech Projects

There is no further progress with the Shop Watch Radio Scheme due to issues around access to the aerials at Exchange Tower.

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 Benney)

The Estates team continue to play a full and active role in the ongoing accommodation review as reported to members, including the preparation of and assistance in member tours of Fenland Hall.

The first tranche of disposal and overage claims is ongoing with a total of £466K received as

of October 2023. The remaining initial properties continue to be pursued via planning consents prior to sale at auction to ensure maximum value. Future value gains are also protected with the adoption of stricter overage clauses.

Work is concluding in relation to identifying potential sites for a further tranche of disposals, and these will be put before members for approval prior to disposal work commencing.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

Promotion of sustainable road, rail and concessionary travel initiatives (Cllr Seaton)

Manea Railway Station

The car park at the station opened in August 2023 with a soft launch. An official opening is in the process of being organised.

March Station

The platform 1 building project and the refurbished and extended station car park was officially opened in May 2022.

Whittlesea Station

Following the completion of the second strategic outline business case and options appraisal work in late 2022, we are continuing to try and secure funding for the Outline Business Case (OBC) Project. Discussions with CPCA are ongoing.

Hereward Community Rail Partnership

Funding applications have been successful to secure money for a Manea Walking and Cycling map, route audits and route promotion and a summer 2023 drone video. The completed drone video was launched at a special CRP celebration event in October 2023. Initial work to develop the audits are ongoing. Initial design work to determine the style of the maps is also in discussion.

Engagement with CPCA and CCC on delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects (Cllr Seaton)

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

The LTCP sets out the forward transport strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is an essential document to help secure funding for local transport improvements. The CPCA are currently updating this document. In September 2023 the latest version of the LTCP went to the CPCA Board for further discussion and adoption. This version of the document includes the full draft LTCP with the district chapters, the main report and all the appendices. It can be viewed from the link below. This version was not approved by the CPCA Board. CPCA Officers are currently in discussion to ascertain the next steps.

[CMIS > Meetings](#)

At FDC Council on 2 October 2023, a motion was passed that the LTCP should be revised.

The good elements should be retained and matters relating to deliverability and funding should be amended and prioritised. Any such prioritisation should recognise differences within individual districts. A copy of the motion has been sent to all CPCA Board members. Further details can be found in the FDC press release, a link to which is below:

[Call for revised local transport plan - Fenland District Council](#)

Wisbech Access Strategy

There is no specific update for this project.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It contains a range of transport projects in Wisbech that aim to address transport issues within the town and to help support the delivery of the scale of growth in the Fenland Local Plan. 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 report was presented to CPCA Business Board in July 2021 and CPCA Board in September 2021. The report required a strategic decision on the way forward linked to timescales and budgets. It was agreed that funding would be made available to complete the detailed design and the land acquisition for the 3 schemes – A47 Broad End Road, A47 Elm High Road and A1101 Ramnoth Road/Weasenham Lane. A copy of the main accompanying paper for the meetings mentioned above can be found from the following link:

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

There has been delays relating to land acquisition and ongoing discussions around related issues such as probate. This work is now expected to complete before the end of 2023. The next step for these 3 projects is to secure funding for their construction.

March Area Transport Study – Main schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It includes a range of transport projects across March to address transport issues and to facilitate new housing and employment growth.

In January 2023, A paper went to CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. The paper asked the Committee to:

- note the completion of the Full Business Case stage 1 (FBC1);
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £4,149,825 for the construction of MATS Broad Street;
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £300,000 for the completion of the FBC 2;

Here is a link to the Committee Paper and relevant reports for further details: [CMIS > Meetings](#)

The schemes forming part of this project are:

- A141 / Peas Hill Roundabout Upgrade (52m ICD), including the creation of an allmovement signalised junction at the A141 / Hostmoor Avenue Junction.
- A141 / Twenty Foot Road Signals.

- Broad Street / Dartford Road / Station Road Mini Roundabout, with one lane in each direction on Broad Street
- High Street / St Peter's Road Traffic Signal Improvements.
- Development of a Northern Industrial Link Road (NILR) – As a larger more complex project this scheme is expected to be taken to FBC2 in 2024.

March Area Transport Study – Walking & Cycling Schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

The MATS project also includes a Walking and Cycling Strategy. £562,800 was approved at the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting. This funding allows for schemes in the Walking and Cycling Strategy to be progressed in 3 phases. The phase one schemes which are primarily lining and signing will be constructed and completed in full. Phase 2a schemes require further investigation and design work to determine the solution to be built. Phase 2b schemes require option development work as well as further investigation and design work. This funding will enable 28 projects to be progressed as set out above. Phases 2A and 2B will require further funding in the future for their construction.

A copy of the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting paper setting out more details and information including for the 28 schemes can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2117/Committee/63/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

The full technical details and feasibility study work associated with the March Area Transport Strategy 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 for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project with study work being taken forward by CPCA.

In November 2022, CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee and the Board approved work to Undertake an Options Assessment Report to provide the economic analysis on mode options, including existing information on heavy rail. This will be based on a service operating between Wisbech and March which removes the current dependency on Ely Area Capacity Enhancements whilst still being mindful of the future strategy to link into Cambridge. £80,000 has been drawn down from CPCA Medium Term Financial Plan to undertake this options assessment work. This study work is currently ongoing.

A link to the papers and information from the November 2022 CPCA meeting with the the relevant reports and papers can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2139/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

A47

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

In May 2023 National Highways released a series of documents and a consultation to support the Roads Investment Strategy 3 process covering the period 2025 – 2030. The consultation is live until 13 July 2023. It includes a Strategic Road Network Initial report, regional reports, and interactive maps. There are several references to A47 within the East of England regional report. The outcome of the consultation will feed into the RIS3 decision making by Government. The documents can be viewed from the following link:

<https://routestrategies.nationalhighways.co.uk/>

As part of RIS2 National Highways are working on a series of Pipeline scheme undertaking feasibility and other technical work to support decisions for RIS3. One of these projects is A47 Elm High Road roundabout. They are also considering this roundabout alongside Weasenham Lane/Ramnoth Road. Officers are providing extensive technical input into the project. The outcome of the work will go forward to Government as part of their decision making for RIS3. Any such decisions are expected to be in 2024.

Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project is being procured and managed by Fenland District Council with funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) market towns programme.

The project commenced in March 2023 with a paper approved by FDC Cabinet for the Governance arrangements and procurement of a contractor to deliver the project. Please see the link to the Cabinet paper for further details.

[Cabinet Paper March 2023 - Whittlesey Relief Rd V2 6.2.2023 updated 02.03.23.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

A procurement exercise has since been completed and a contractor appointed in August 2023. Project Board meetings took place in August and September 2023. The project has an agreed programme to complete in late autumn 2024. Initial evidence and gap analysis work is ongoing and will be discussed with the Project Board in November 2023.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 23/24	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	74%	70%	91%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	62%	70%	62%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	81%	80%	85%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	93.9%	90%	93.4%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	99%	100%	99%	

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

Comments
In terms of cumulative performance: Majors is up 1%, Minors is up 3% and Others has fallen by 0.5% since last month.
With regard to performance against the national requirement (24 month rolling tracker): Majors 81% (no change) (target 70% minimum) Non-majors 72% (no change) (target 70% minimum) - we therefore remain in a position in which we are avoiding possible designation for poor performance
Planning application fees are being increased by Government and go live in December 2023. The income forecast is being adjusted accordingly
The various vacancies within the planning service have been advertised with the closing date for applications being the end of the first week in January 2024
The transformation project continues to be implemented with the next major change being planned being the introduction of new mapping software which will enable remote working and quicker issue of consultations on planning applications.

Quality Organisation

Projects from Business Plan:

Governance, Financial Control & Risk Management

Finance and internal audit updates (Cllr Boden)

On 20 November 2023, the Audit and Risk Management Committee held its 3rd meeting where members will be invited to consider reports in relation to the Auditor's Annual Report, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid Year Review as well as updates to the Internal Audit Plan and Risk Register. Future business for the committee includes consideration of an updated RIPA Policy and new Anti-Money Laundering Policy. Following the last update, interim arrangements are now in place for all core vacancies, pending permanent arrangements being finalised, and the internal audit plan is being delivered in line with expectations.

Data protection updates (Cllr Boden)

There have been no reportable breaches of the UK GDPR during the period to which this briefing relates however there have been 2 recorded breaches requiring no further action. In the same period, there have been 1 data subject access requests.

Transformation and Efficiency

Transformation Project updates (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

The Transformation Team has recently successfully recruited to the fixed term vacancies within the team including the Transformation Lead Officer and Business Improvement Officer roles.

Recruitment to the roles is vital in order that the Transformation Reviews of all Council services can commence. The programme of service reviews will commence in November 23 and be rolled out across the organisation over the next 2 years.

Work continues in relation to the Review of the Planning Service, to date 25 recommendations have been identified and endorsed including the following:

- Funding secured for Idox to complete a systems audit and implementation
- Enterprise Workflow system – including automated task allocation
- Connector between Planning Portal and Uniform, application via portal integrate with Uniform, preventing the duplication of data entry
- Implement new and update existing templates to streamline processes
- Reduce the use of paper, greater use of reprographics
- Investigate and resolve connectivity and printing issues when hybrid working
- Building resilience and removing single points of failure

To date the recommendations have resulted in the delivery of increasingly efficient working practices, including the enhanced use of the software to drive processes including automation, where possible, resulting in a saving of 252 Technical Officer hours per annum.

Public Service Reform updates (Cllr Boden) – Public Service Reform updates (Cllr Boden)

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman are currently carrying out a joint consultation with a view to having a single gold standard for complaint handling in the local government sector. It will align complaints about housing management, already subject to the code via the Housing Ombudsman with other LA services. The plan is to implement this in April 2024.

The code sets out what we must do procedurally to handle complaints. The purpose of the code is to resolve complaints raised quickly, and to use the data and learning to drive service improvement. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals.

There are minimal proposed changes with the proposed code, the objective being to support continuity and certainty for customers. No difference should be applied to complaint handling across all service areas in the council.

The code will also act as a guide for individuals so that they know what to expect from an organisation when they make a complaint and provide details about how to make a complaint and progress it through an organisation's internal complaints procedure.

Once the code is finalised we will ensure that our 3c's policy is updated to reflect the agreed changes and communicate these changes with members and customers.

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

Individual project updates are as detailed elsewhere in this report. A full review of 2022-23 was published in the Annual Report as approved by Cabinet on 17th July 2023. The report is available on our website.

Communication, Consultation and Engagement

News update:

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in September = 10

Highlights include:

- Return of Whittlesey Festival hailed a great success.
- Discover what's on offer for the over 60's at free event.

- Improving access to mental health services for rough sleepers in Fenland.
- Rail representative host 'Meet the Manager' event in Manea village.
- Free mental health webinars for business.
- More activity sessions launched in Fenland.
- All the fun of the fair coming to Fenland this Autumn

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in October = 18

Highlights include:

- Outstanding Fenland volunteers honoured at annual celebration evening.
- Could your small business use a £5k Government Grant?
- Have your say on where you can cast your vote.
- Excellence award for Fenland planning team member.
- Free innovation event for manufacturing firms.
- Station tea party culminates ten-year anniversary.
- Next step in developing case for Whittlesey relief road.

All press releases are distributed to relevant press and media organisations, appear as a web article on the news pages of the [Fenland District Council website](#) and on our social media channels [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Monthly update on FDC social media sites:

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

September:

- Twitter = 115
- Facebook = 105

October:

- Twitter = 116
- Facebook = 106

We currently have 7,068 followers on Facebook and 8,851 followers on twitter.

Consultation Summary:

September:

- Statement of Community Involvement

October:

- Polling Districts, Places and Stations Review 2023

Excellent Customer Service

Customer Service Excellence accreditation (Cllr Tierney)

The Council has once again been reaccredited for Customer Services Excellence (CSE),

which is a national standard that recognises public bodies that provide customer-focused, high quality, excellent services. Fenland is one of the few Councils that have consistently achieved this rigorous standard for all of its services, both customer-facing and internal, not just individual ones.

Following a remote assessment in June, the CSE assessor, Neil Potentier, stated that Fenland's staff continue to 'put the customer at the heart of everything' in line with the corporate values, and have an ethos of 'working smarter, not harder'. He continued that the Council continue to work with an ever-increasing range of partners on numerous projects and initiatives that meet a deprived area's needs; and 'leave no stone unturned' in our efforts to identify and reach out to any group or person needing help.

Mr Potentier praised the Council for continuing to demonstrate how they put residents at the heart of service delivery; with the Transformation 2 Agenda taking things to a different level to embed and improve excellent services, to maximise channel shift to digital channels, but not to the detriment of residents who are unable to use these channels.

Supporting vulnerable customers with complex queries (Cllr Wallwork) – ALL

Please see updates on [Homelessness](#), [Rough Sleepers](#) and [Community Safety](#).

Elections Update (Cllr Boden)

Whittlesey By-Election

On Thursday 28 September 2023 the Council successfully delivered the North West Ward of Whittlesey Town Council By-Election following the resignation of Councillor Ray Whitwell. There were 2 polling stations, both held at the St Johns Ambulance HQ where 194 electors voted in person and a further 428 voted by post.

The overall turnout was 16.52% of the registered voters and Luke Turner was duly elected.

Elections Act 2022 Update

The elections team have been busy preparing for the start of Tranche 2 of the Elections Act changes as follows:

Changes to Postal and Proxy Voting

From 31 October 2023 Absent Vote Applications must include a National Insurance Number (NINo) or a reason you are unable to provide one. This is due to a change in Electoral Law which requires you to verify your identity when submitting your application.

Online absent vote applications

From 31 October 2023 electors (except for anonymous electors) will be able to apply for most types of absent votes both online and through paper applications. Online applications made through a secure government portal will also require your NINo as well as a photograph of your wet ink signature.

Maximum period for absent vote applications

From 31 October 2023 a postal vote can be in place for –

- A particular poll

- A definite period of not more than 3 years
- A maximum period of up to 3 years

For electors with a long-term postal vote in place before 31 October 2023 there will be transitional arrangements to ensure that they renew by the deadline, but they will be able to vote by post with their current arrangement in place until 31 January 2026.

Proxy voters can continue to put in place a proxy arrangement for an indefinite period (subject to a three yearly eligibility check and five yearly signature refresh). However, all existing proxy voters with an arrangement in place before 31 October 2023 must make a fresh application by 31 January 2024. We will contact existing proxy voters informing them of the need to reapply.

Changes to Proxy Voting Limits

The number of people a person can act as a proxy for has also been restricted.

From 31 October 2023, a person is not entitled to vote as a proxy in any electoral area on behalf of more than four electors. Within the four electors, no more than two electors can be domestic electors.

3C's Update (Cllr Tierney)

Quarterly figures July - September 2023

July 2023 – Sept 2023	Total Received	On Time	% on Time
Correspondence	21	20	95%
Stage 1			
CELP	36	31	86%
GI	2	2	100%
PRCS	13	12	92%
Stage 2			
CELP	6	5	83%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	0	0	N/A
Stage 3			
CELP	1	0	0%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	0	0	N/A

Asset Management and Commercialisation

Commercial & Investment Strategy (Cllr Boden)

As part of the Commercial and Investment Strategy, a facility of £25m was granted to the Investment Board to finance capital expenditure to be undertaken in accordance with the aims and objectives of the agreed strategy. At the end of March 2023, £4m of this facility has been utilised to fund the acquisition of a commercial investment in Wisbech and a house in March. These acquisitions were approved at Investment Board meetings held on 16th March 2021 and 3rd December 2021 respectively. Further utilisation will be needed when the funding position of Fenland Future Ltd is finalised and the draft Business Plan for 2023/24 has now been agreed.

The Commercial Investment in Wisbech has delivered a rental income of £230k for the year to March 2023. Rental income continues to be on track for 2023/24. As we used our own funds to acquire this asset there is no external cost of capital and the loss of interest foregone on our funds is minimal at present. This acquisition has enhanced the Councils revenue position and has had a positive impact on the MTFS.

Updates on the work of the Investment Board were presented to Cabinet at its meetings on 30 January 2023, 16th March 2023 and 11th September 2023. The annual report on Investment Board activity was presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 19th September 2023

Fenland Future Limited (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney & Cllr Tierney)

Fenland Future Ltd (FFL) has been granted Outline Planning permission on the two Council owned sites identified for development in their Business Plan. Work now progresses on options for the delivery methodology to be utilised in delivering the developments.

On The Elms site in Chatteris, Lovell Homes have been commissioned to work with FFL as a Development Management Partner and Design Architects, Planning Consultant and Engineering specialists have been appointed to work up the Reserved Matters Application. At the Nene Waterfront in Wisbech, a Reserved Matters Application is being prepared for 1 of the 5 plots for a circa 70 home affordable housing extra care scheme.

Workforce Development

Workforce skills and training (Cllr Boden)

We have a strong commitment to learning and development. We believe that if we are to continue to deliver excellent services to our customers, our staff must be well trained.

We have an extensive learning and development offer for our workforce, which involves opportunities for formal and informal training; we have a range of learning resources available to all staff, e-learning, coaching, shadowing, secondments, in house training workshops delivered by our own in-house experts; as well and more formal courses and training and apprenticeships.

Staff value the learning and development opportunities that are offered at FDC and are able to indicate the difference that training makes to them and their team. However, it is important that we continually review our learning and development offer to ensure it is fit for purpose and as accessible as possible.

We believe that talent exists in all our staff and that it is needs to be encouraged and nurtured. Every manager with staff responsibility manages talent through the following activities:

- Performance management
- Coaching and development
- Springboard discussions, 121's and
- Recruitment

Talent management and succession planning ensures ongoing organisational capacity and capability for the future and enables transformation; and at a time when more is demanded of less, it becomes increasingly important.

Supporting and empowering staff (Cllr Boden)

We are committed to supporting and empowering our workforce, and we have a range of support that our staff can access, from an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) The EAP is free and confidential for staff to use, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessible by phone, email and online.

The EAP is designed to help with a wide range of work, family, and personal issues. It provides practical information, fact sheets and packs, resource information on support services in the local area and even short-term face to face or telephonic counselling if required.

It is supported by a comprehensive EAP website offering extensive resources including articles, interactive tools, regular online seminars, confidential 24/7 support, self-help workbooks, Podcasts, blogs, videos, and articles on a range of topics, Debt advice, Debt Management, Domestic Abuse support, Wellbeing portal & App, Trauma programme and Exercise and Fitness advice.

Alongside this we provide additional support via our team of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA), our Occupational Health Advisor, a range of family friendly policies and procedures, a comprehensive (cost neutral) employee benefits platform. We also provide individual support via our HR team, service managers, our Management and Trade Union and Staff Partnership (MTSP) reps.

We carry out our Staff Survey every two years to get a better understanding of employee morale, satisfaction, and engagement at Fenland District Council. This was undertaken in 2022, with 87% of respondents stating they were proud to work for Fenland District Council.

Enforcement

All enforcement policies update (Cllr French (CPE), Cllr Laws (Planning), Cllr Murphy (Streetscene) & Cllr Wallwork Environmental Health))

The Environmental Offences (fixed penalties England) Regulations 2023 has increased the maximum fine levels for a number of fixed penalty notices; fly tipping, littering, householders' duty of care, graffiti and fly posting.

A comparison exercise is being undertaken to ensure Fenland's fines meet the criteria within these regulations, are at the right level when compared to similar areas and reflect any fines awarded by the magistrates' court for previously prosecuted offences. A new set of fine levels will then be recommended for approval.

Health & Safety

Maintaining Health & Safety Systems to comply with legislation (Cllr Boden)

The Council has a comprehensive suite of Health and Safety Policies and procedures, which all managers are aware of and trained on. We have a Health and Safety Panel, with membership drawn from all areas of the Council. This Panel meets every quarter to ensure ongoing compliance in all areas; to track all health and safety related issues, accidents and near misses. An ongoing Action Plan to monitor the corporate health and safety goals is in place and well established.

Work continues to drive forward improvements in health and safety management where required.

In 2023/24 the emphasis will be to support managers and staff to continue good standards of health and safety, whilst operating a shared service with East Cambridgeshire District Council, (three days per week at Fenland and two days per week at East Cambridgeshire).

A summary of some of the work planned for 2023/24 is provided below:

- Conduct review of the Council's Codes of Practice as required under the three yearly revision programme.
- Delivery of a corporate health & Safety training programme
- Conduct accident investigations as applicable
- Coordinate delivery of a health surveillance programme across the Council
- Development of further e-learning training courses for the Council's e-learning platform
- Undertake audits/inspections of individual services/teams/buildings as per the audit programme
- Update intranet-based health & safety information for staff use.

Health & Safety Action Plan updates (Cllr Boden)

Good progress has been made over the last 12 months to deliver our objectives as set out in the health and safety action plan for 2022/23. Some of the actions are highlighted below:

- The roll out of internal health and safety e-learning courses developed for staff training via the Intranet.
- An analysis of all accidents and their consequent actions has been undertaken.
- The Accident Incident Rate (based on 100 per employees) was 6.31, which was the same as for the previous year
- Health and Safety training was delivered to a total of 91 staff
- A programme of audits and inspections undertaken

Other Updates:

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) update (Cllr Chris Boden)

Information relating to the CPCA can be found on their website:

[Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](http://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Mayoral decisions can be found [here](#).

Officer decisions can be found [here](#).

The papers for recent meetings can be found by clicking on the links below:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Audit & Governance Sub Committee	14.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Audit & Governance Sub Committee	17.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Business Board	13.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Combined Authority Board	29.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Employment & Skills Board	10.10.23	CMIS > Meetings
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	13.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Human Resources Committee	10.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Human Resources Committee	16.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Skills & Employment Committee	06.11.23	CMIS > Meetings
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	15.11.23	CMIS > Meetings

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF	LINK
----------------	---------	------

	MEETING	
Audit & Governance Committee	12.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Business Board	15.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Combined Authority Board	31.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	22.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Human Resources Committee	05.02.24	CMIS > Meetings
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	29.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Skills & Employment Committee	15.01.24	CMIS > Meetings
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	17.01.24	CMIS > Meetings

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Target 23/24	Cumulative Target	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
PRC1	% of customer queries processed at the first point of contact	99%	90%	99%	
PRC2	% of customers satisfied with our service (measured annually in February)	86%	90%	N/A (Feb 2024)	
PRC3	% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	47.49%	31.5%	39.3%	
PRC4	% of contact centre calls handled	87.96%	80%	85.58%	
ARP3	In year % of Council Tax collected	96.76%	66.50%	66.53%	
ARP4	Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£65,262,181	£44,840,415	£44,857,298	
ARP5	In year % of NNDR collected	97.10%	63.06%	62.94%	
ARP6	NNDR net collection fund receipts	£24,120,990	£15,951,298	£16,982,725	
PRC5	Number of online forms submitted via FDC website	21,504	21,000	14,235	

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

Comments

This page is intentionally left blank

Motion submitted by Councillor Taylor

Supporting Local Farmers

1. Fenland District Council recognises and notes the huge contribution made by Fenland's farmers, growers and wider food and drink industry to the local economy, environment, and rural communities.
2. Fenland District Council commits to further enhancing our partnerships with local arable, livestock and dairy farmers to enhance our magnificent countryside.
3. Fenland District Council commits to supporting our local farmers, growers and food and drink sector by, where possible, ensuring that food and drinks provided at council organised events are sourced from local suppliers. If plant-based produce is provided, meat and dairy options should also be provided.
4. As part of furthering Fenland District Council's environmental priorities, the Council will consider ways to encourage residents, where possible, to shop locally, taking advantage of home-grown, affordable, and nutritious produce, including meat, dairy, and plant-based options, thus reducing food miles to our tables, and boosting the local economy.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Council	
Date:	11 December 2023	
Report Title:	Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2023/24	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

The purpose of this report is to review the Council's Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2023/24 and to provide members with an update on matters pertinent to future updates to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

2 Key issues

- The attached report has previously been presented to Audit and Risk Management Committee at their meeting on 20 November 2023.
- The Council has operated within its Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), Annual Investment Strategy, treasury limits and prudential indicators set by Council for the first six months of 2023/24.
- Forecasts are that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.
- Forward projections for PWLB certainty rates are forecast to fall back over the next two to three years as inflation dampens.
- Prudential indicators have been updated to reflect the latest capital programme and borrowing projections.
- No new external borrowing has been taken out to date in 2023/24. The current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes that some external borrowing will be required over the three-and-a-half-year period to 31 March 2026.
- Investment income received from temporary investments (call accounts and fixed term deposits) for the first six months of 2023/24 was £490k. The 2023/24 budget of £550k is expected to be exceeded.
- Projected income from property funds for 2023/24 is forecast at £130,000 against an original budget of £150,000.
- Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased over the course of the past six months and will be considered if giving rise to long-term savings. However, no debt rescheduling has been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the report.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio Holder, Finance
Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper (s)	Link Asset Services template Council Report - 20 February 2023 - General Fund Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023-26

Report:

1 Context

- 1.1 The Council's responsibilities in relation to Treasury Management are defined as part of the Local Government Act 2003 ('the Act'). The Act requires the Council to have regard to the Treasury Management Code published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (CIPFA).
- 1.2 Additionally, there is a statutory requirement for the Council to comply with the Prudential Code. There is a close interaction between the Treasury Management Code and the Prudential Code. The Prudential Code establishes a framework for the Council to self-regulate the affordability, prudence and sustainability of its capital expenditure and borrowing plans whilst the Treasury Management Code is concerned with how the Council uses its Treasury Management function to progress the future plans developed with reference to the Prudential Code.
- 1.3 In December 2021, CIPFA issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. These require local authorities to provide a Capital Strategy, a summary document approved by full Council covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments.
- 1.4 The Council's Capital Strategy for 2023/24 was approved by Full Council on the 20 February 2023.

Treasury Management

- 1.5 Treasury management is defined as "The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
- 1.6 The Council complies with the requirements of CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021).
- 1.7 The primary requirements of the Code applicable to the 2023/24 financial year are as follows:
 - Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement, which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
 - Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices, which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
 - Receipt by Full Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement, including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report covering activities during the previous year.
 - Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
 - Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies (including Mid-year Review Report) to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- 1.8 This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and covers the following:

- an economic update for the first six months of 2023/24 taking account of expert analysis provided by the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors, Link Asset Services;
- a review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- the Council’s capital plans;
- a review of the Council’s investment portfolio for 2023/24;
- a report of the Council’s borrowing strategy for 2023/24;
- a report of debt rescheduling during 2023/24;
- a review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24.

2 Economic Update

- 2.1 The start of 2023/24 has been dominated by high inflation and the measures of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to bring inflation in line with Central Government 2% target. The MPC have increased interest rates by 100 basis points, taking Bank Rate to 5.25% and possibly the peak in the tightening cycle.
- 2.2 In its latest monetary policy meeting on 2 November, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The weak August/September CPI inflation release, the recent loosening in the labour market and the downbeat activity surveys appear to have convinced the Bank of England that it has already raised rates far enough. The commentary supports the views that from the MPC that rates will be “sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently longer” support the views that rates will now stay at or their peak for an extended period of time.
- 2.3 Further down the road, it is anticipated that the Bank of England will be keen to loosen monetary policy once the worst of the inflationary pressures have lessened – but that timing will be one of fine judgment: cut too soon, and inflationary pressures may well build up further; cut too late and any downturn or recession may be prolonged.

3 Interest Rate Forecast

- 3.1 The Council’s treasury advisor, Link Group, provided the following forecasts on 7th November 2023 (PWLB rates are certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80bps):

Link Group Interest Rate View 07.11.23		Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26
BANK RATE		5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings		5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings		5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.40	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10
12 month ave earnings		5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
5 yr PWLB		5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.50
10 yr PWLB		5.10	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50
25 yr PWLB		5.50	5.30	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00
50 yr PWLB		5.30	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80

- 3.2 The latest forecast on 7th November 2023 sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.
- 3.3 Gilt Yields/PWLB Rates – Gilt yield curve movements have broadened since the last Newsflash. The short part of the curve has not moved far but the longer-end continues to reflect inflation concerns. At the time of writing there is 30 basis points difference between the 5 and 50 year parts of the curve.

4 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

- 4.1 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24 was approved by Council on 20 February 2023. There are no policy changes to the TMSS.
- 4.2 Changes are required to some of the prudential indicators as a result of the forecast 2023/24 capital outturn. The following table compares the previous prudential indicators (agreed on 20th February) against the latest revised indicators.

Prudential Indicators	2023/24 Previous £000	2023/24 Revised £000
Capital Programme	20,572	22,713
Capital Financing Requirement	19,461	18,026
Gross Debt	19,051	17,403
Operational Boundary	37,477	18,405
Authorised Limit For External Debt	41,477	22,405

5 The Council's Capital Position

- 5.1 This part of the report is structured to update:
- the Council's capital expenditure plans;
 - how these plans are being financed;
 - the impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
 - compliance with limits in place for borrowing activity.
- 5.2 An update capital programme and the financing of that programme for 2023/24 is to be presented to Cabinet for approval on 18 December 2023. This revised estimate will address amendments to the programme since February, including re-profiling schemes from 2022/23 and the allocation of further capital funds for, energy efficiency works at leisure centres, construction of the Wisbech pavilion, concrete repairs at the suspended quay Wisbech and a re-assessment of resources available in the period 2023-26. The tables in this report reflect this updated programme.
- 5.3 From February 2020 the programme has reflected the Council's decision to allocate £25m to take forward schemes in accordance with the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy. Members will be aware that the Investment Board approved the purchase of an investment and residential properties in previous years.
- 5.4 In 2023/24 £4m of funding has been allocated towards the purchase of 29 properties to house resettled Ukraine/Afghan families and households facing homelessness as part of the governments Local Authority Housing Fund Programme. The remaining Commercial and Investment Strategy allocation funding has been profiled to reflect the anticipated timing of future projects, including those due to be delivered by Fenland Future Limited. However, the Investment Board retains the discretion to vary when the available funds are utilised over the life of the programme.

5.5 The table below compares the revised estimates with the original capital programme which was incorporated into the 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS).

Capital Programme	2023/24 Original Estimate £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000
Current Forecast Expenditure	20,572	22,713
Financed by:		
Capital Grants	9,600	12,501
Section 106's & Contributions	45	25
Capital Receipts	250	155
Capital Reserves	149	452
Total Financing (before borrowing)	10,044	13,133
Borrowing Requirement	10,528	9,580

5.6 The capital expenditure plans set out above provide a summary of future level of spend. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet service activity and the Council's capital strategy.

5.7 The Council's projections for borrowings in 2023/24 are summarised below. The following table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement – CFR). The revised estimated CFR is lower than the original budget forecast (see paragraph 5.2 to 5.4 above).

External Debt Projections	2023/24 Original Estimate £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000
External Debt at 1 April	8,523	7,823
Prudential Borrowing	10,528	9,580
Gross Debt at 31 March	19,051	17,403
Capital Financing Requirement at 31 March 2024	19,461	18,026
Borrowing Less CFR – 31 March 2024	(410)	(623)

5.8 The Council has made provision to repay all 'borrowing' liabilities through increased Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) in the General Fund revenue budget.

5.9 Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total

CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2023/24 and the next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need. The policy permits borrowing in advance of need where it is prudent to do so. Members should note that the current limits and estimates set out below have been determined with reference to the existing capital programme.

- 5.10 The operational boundary is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases this would be a similar figure to the CFR but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt.

Operational Boundary	2023/24 Original Estimate £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000
Debt	15,500	12,400
Plus Other Long Term Liabilities Finance Leases	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities/ Non Financial Investments	20,977	5,005
Operational Boundary for Year	37,477	18,405

- 5.11 A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit, which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level for borrowing which, while not desired could be afforded in the short term but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised Limit For External Debt	2023/24 Original Estimate £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000
Debt	19,500	16,400
Plus Other Long Term Liabilities Finance Leases	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities/ Non Financial Investments	20,977	5,005
Total Borrowing	41,477	22,405

- 5.12 The Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current year in complying with the above prudential indicators.

6 Investment Portfolio

- 6.1 In accordance with the Treasury Management Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite.
- 6.2 The current forecasts for bank rate are shown in paragraph 3.1 above.
- 6.3 The Council held £28.679m of investments, including property funds at 30th September 2023 (22.550m at 31st March 2023). The investment portfolio yield from temporary investments (call and fixed term deposits) for the first 6 months of the year was 4.72% (7 day backward looking average Sonia Rate 4.71%).
- 6.4 It should be noted that the value of investments remains high due to the distorting impact of capital and revenue grants paid in advance or during the first 6 months of this financial year. Some of this funding has not been spent in the first six months of this year. However, it is expected that a significant proportion of this grant funding advanced will be spent or repaid in the next 6 months and consequently investment balances will be lower by the end of this financial year.
- 6.5 The Council has achieved investment income of £490k to 30th September 2023. The 2023/24 budget of £550k is expected to be exceeded. With the Bank of England base rate rising steadily since April 2023, interest rates and therefore income returns have increased significantly.
- 6.6 £4m of the Council's investments are held in externally managed pooled property funds where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income (from quarterly cash distribution payments) and long-term price stability. The Council views these as a long-term investment that it has entered into for a minimum of five years as this manages the risk of fluctuations in the value of the investment which was £3.379m at 30 September 2023. Since mid-2022 commercial property market has had a difficult time in general as property prices fell sharply in response to high inflation, rising interest rates and increased debt costs which accounts for the fall in value. Income flows to property have remained strong and distributions from the fund are not affected by the movement in capital value. The distributions payable for the first quarter was £31,883 (second quarter returns are expected in November), which is a 3.77% distribution return.
- 6.7 The 2023/24 projected outturn for property fund income is £130k against a budget of £150k.
- 6.8 The Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2023/24.

7 Borrowing Strategy


- 7.1 The Council's estimated CFR for 2023/24 is £18.026m (including finance lease borrowing facilities). The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions.
- 7.2 No new external borrowing has been undertaken during 2023/24 to date. The Council has utilised surplus cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost-effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring in the event that any upside risk to gilt yields prevails.
- 7.3 The current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes that some external borrowing will be required over the three-and-a-half-year period to 31 March 2026. Assumptions about

the level of external interest payable are included within the budget. Responsibility for deciding when to borrow externally, together with details of the amount to borrow and the term and type of any loan, rests with the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Finance Officer's decision will be informed by advice from the Council's treasury management advisors and information regarding the progress of schemes set out in the capital programme. Any borrowing decisions will be reported to Cabinet through the annual treasury management report.

8 Debt Rescheduling

- 8.1 Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased over the course of the past six months and will be considered if giving rise to long-term savings. However, no debt rescheduling has been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item No:	10	
Committee:	COUNCIL	
Date:	11 DECEMBER 2023	
Report Title:	POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW	

1 Purpose / Summary

To consider the outcome of the recent review of polling districts and places, as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

2 Key issues

- This review is a compulsory Polling Districts and Polling Places review that has to take place every 5 years;
- The last review was an interim one that took place in December 2022 due to the outcome of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s Electoral Review of Fenland;
- The Council has undertaken a consultation exercise on the proposals within the report and received a number of comments which have been taken into account in the final recommendations. All comments and responses are detailed in Appendix B;

3 Recommendations

That the Council

- notes the outcome of the review and the consultation undertaken;
- agrees the changes recommended to polling districts and polling places, as detailed in the report at Appendix C.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Governance
Report Originator(s)	Elaine Cooper, Team Leader Elections, Land Charges and Member Services Anna Goodall, Assistant Director
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive Anna Goodall, Assistant Director Elaine Cooper, Team Leader Elections, Land Charges and Member Services
Background Paper(s)	Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 Schedule A1, Representation of the People Act 1983 Consultation responses

1 Background / introduction

- 1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 places a duty on local authorities to carry out a full review of their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every fifth year after 1 October 2013. This review is, therefore, a compulsory review which must commence and be completed within a 16-month period that started on 1 October 2023.
- 1.2 The legislation allows for Interim Reviews to be undertaken between compulsory reviews to ensure all Polling Districts and Places are kept under consideration and remain suitable. The last interim review took place in 2022 as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Electoral Review of Fenland, which resulted in major changes to the Polling Districts and some polling places.
- 1.3 As this review is taking place not long after the last review, it results in minor changes to Polling Districts and polling places.
- 1.4 In undertaking a review, the Council must:
- publish a notice indicating the holding of a review
 - consult the Returning Officer for every Parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
 - enable any such Returning Officer to make representations to the authority and publish them in a prescribed manner
 - seek representations from such persons that it thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
 - allow any elector in the authority's area to make representations which could include proposals for alternative polling places.
- 1.5 On completion of the review, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public.
- 1.6 The definitions of polling district, polling place and polling station are:
- A **polling district** is the area created by separation of a ward, division or constituency into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to the electors
 - A **polling place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer
 - A **polling station** is the actual area where the process of voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place and designated for the particular polling district. This function is the responsibility of the Returning Officer.

The Council is responsible for designating polling places, whereas the Returning Officer is responsible for determining where the polling stations are situated within that polling place.

2 Considerations

- 2.1 When undertaking a review the Council is required to give due regard to the following considerations:
- It must seek to ensure that all electors in the area have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - It must seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to all electors.

- 2.2 A schedule of existing polling districts and polling places is set out in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The review takes into account the proposals of the new UK Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries, which are expected to come into effect at the next UK Parliamentary General Election, which has to take place before 28 January 2025, whereby the boundary for North East Cambridgeshire is fully coterminous with the Fenland District Council boundary.
- 2.4 The electoral review also takes into account the implications of the Election Act regarding Voter ID, the range of new accessibility requirements and the new postal vote arrangements.
- 2.5 The changes will come into effect for elections taking place after 1 February 2024.

3 Effect on corporate objectives

3.1 Quality Organisation:

- this review fulfils the Council's legal obligations under The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- the review ensures voter engagement is maximised in the democratic process by establishing polling stations that electors deem suitable and accessible.

4 Community Impact

4.1 The Council undertook a formal consultation period from week commencing 2 October to 10 November 2023. A public notice of the holding of the review was displayed on the Council's website. In addition, the following specific consultations were undertaken with:

- all members of Fenland District Council
- the Returning Officer(s) for East Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council
- the Member of Parliament
- Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner
- all the Clerks for Town / Parish Councils in the Fenland area of the North East Cambridgeshire Constituency area
- organisations which have particular expertise regarding access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability including Camsight, The Varrier-Jones Foundation, Age UK, Fenland Association for Community Transport Ltd, Fenland Area Community Enterprise Trust, Caerus Care Ltd, Papworth Trust, Wisbech St Raphael Club, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Mencap, Fenland Society for the Blind, Affinity Trust & Fenland Learning Disability Partnership
- Candidates and Election Agents who acted at the 2022 District elections
- Polling places within the Fenland area.

4.2 8 interested parties responded to the consultation within the deadline, with one response received after the deadline and the comments and responses are reported at Appendix B.

- 4.2 The proposed changes to the current polling districts and polling places are detailed in Appendix C.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Council is asked to agree the recommended Polling Districts and Polling places outlined in the report, subject to members agreement details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. Specified interested parties may make representations to the Electoral Commission to reconsider any polling districts and polling places.
- 5.2 The new electoral register containing revised arrangements for polling districts will be published on 1 February 2024. New polling districts and polling places will become effective at elections held after this date.

**FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
CURRENT SCHEDULE OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES**

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTER	PARISH	POLLING PLACE
CHATTERIS NORTH AND MANEA	CNM1	Birch, Chatteris	Chatteris Library, Furrowfields Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Bricstan Hall, Church Lane
	CNM2	Slade Lode North, Chatteris	Quaker Way Residents Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Children's Centre, Larham Way
	CNM3	Manea	Manea Village Hall, School Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Manea British Legion, East Street
CHATTERIS SOUTH	CS1	Slade Lode South, Chatteris	Quaker Way Residents Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Children's Centre, Larham Way
	CS2	The Mills, Chatteris	The Masonic Hall, Huntingdon Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Town Football Club Pavilion, West Street
	CS3	Wenneye, Chatteris	Emmanuel Church Hall, East Park Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Salvation Army Fortress, East Park Street
DODDINGTON AND WIMBLINGTON	DW1	Doddington	Doddington Village Hall, Benwick Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Doddington Scout Hall, Benwick Road
	DW2	Wimblington	Wimblington Parish Hall, Addison Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Parkfield Sports Centre, Chapel Lane
	DW3	Wimblington (Stonea)	The Golden Lion Public House, Sixteen Foot Bank Or if that polling place is unavailable Skylark Centre, Manea Road
ELM AND CHRISTCHURCH	ECH1	Elm (Elm & Fridaybridge)	Elm Centre, Main Road Or if that polling station is unavailable Elm Parish Council Offices, Begdale Road
	ECH2	Elm (Elm & Friday Bridge)	Fridaybridge Tower Hall, Maltmas Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Friday Bridge Primary School, Maltmas Road
	ECH3	Elm (Coldham)	Mobile Polling Station at Coldham Playing Field, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
	ECH4	Elm (Rings End)	Play 2 Day, The Old Station Yard, Gull Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Oliver Twist, High Road
	ECH5	Christchurch	Christchurch Community Centre, Upwell Road Or if the polling place is unavailable Townley Primary School, Crown Road
LEVERINGTON AND WISBECH RURAL	LWR1	Peckover West, Wisbech	Wisbech Cricket and Hockey Club, Chapel Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech Rugby Club, Chapel Road

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTER	PARISH	POLLING PLACE
LEVERINGTON AND WISBECH RURAL	LWR2	Leverington	Leverington Sports and Social Club, Church Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Leverington Village Hall, Gorefield Road
	LWR3		Leverington Village Hall, Gorefield Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Leverington Sports and Social Club, Church Road
	LWR4	Newton-in-the-Isle	Newton-in-the-Isle Village Hall, Church Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable St James Church, Church Lane
	LWR5	Tydd St Giles	Tydd St Giles Community Centre, Broad Drove East Or if that polling place is unavailable Kinderley Primary School, Church Lane
MARCH EAST	ME1	East, March	St Peters Church Room, High Street Or if that polling place is unavailable St Peters Church, High Street
	ME2		Fleming Court off Smiths Drive Or if that polling place is unavailable First March Scout Hall, Badgeney Road
	ME3	Town End, March	March and District Children's Centre, Cavalry Drive Or if that polling place is unavailable Cavalry School, Cavalry Drive
MARCH NORTH	MN1	North, March	Roman Catholic Church Hall, St Johns Road Or if that polling place is unavailable March Youth and Community Centre, Station Road
	MN2		The GER, Robingoodfellows Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable March Town Football Clubhouse, Robingoodfellows Lane
	MN3		St Johns Church Hall, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Fenland Hall, March
MARCH SOUTH	MS1	South, March	March Cricket Club, Burrowmoor Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Providence Baptist Church Hall, Burrowmoor Road
	MS1		St Wendredas Church Hall, Church Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Neale Wade Academy, Wimblington Road
MARCH WEST AND BENWICK	MWB1	Peas Hill, March	Rookwood Club, West End Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
	MWB2		Rookwood Club, West End Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
	MWB3	West, March	St Marys Church Hall, Wisbech Road, Westry Or if that polling place is unavailable March Town Cricket Club, Burrowmoor Road
	MWB4	Benwick	Benwick Village Hall, High Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Benwick Primary School, High Street

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTER	PARISH	POLLING PLACE
PARSON DROVE AND WISBECH ST MARY	PDW1	Parson Drove	Parson Drove Village Hall, Main Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Parson Drove Pavilion, Main Road
	PDW2	Wisbech St Mary (Wisbech St Mary)	Wisbech St Mary Sports and Community Centre, Beechings Close Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech St Mary Academy, Church Road
	PDW3	Wisbech St Mary (Murrow)	Murrow Village Hall, Murrow Bank Or if that polling place is unavailable Murrow Methodist Church, Front Road
	PDW4	Wisbech St Mary (Wisbech St Mary – Guyhirn)	Play 2 Day, The Old Station Yard, Gull Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Oliver Twist, High Road
	PDW5	Wisbech St Mary (Wisbech St Mary - Thorney Toll)	Thorney Toll Village Hall, Main Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
	PDW6	Gorefield	Gorefield Community Hall, Wolf Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Gorefield Village Hall, Gote Lane
WHITTLSEY EAST AND VILLAGES	WHE1	Bassenhally, Whittlesey	Straw Bear PH, Drybread Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Alderman Jacobs School, Drybread Road
	WHE2	Bassnehally, Whittlesey	Straw Bear PH, Drybread Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Alderman Jacobs School, Drybread Road
	WHE3	Coates & Eastrea, Whittlesey	Eastrea Centre, Roman Gardens Or if that polling place is unavailable The Nags Head PH, Eastrea Road
	WHE4	Coates & Eastrea, Whittlesey	Coates Public Hall, 1 The Fold Or if that polling place is unavailable Coates Primary School, The Fold
	WHE5	Coates & Eastrea, Whittlesey	The Three Horseshoes Inn, March Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
LATTERSEY	WHL	Lattersey Whittlesey	Quinion Close Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable New Road Primary School, New Road

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTER	PARISH	POLLING PLACE
WHITTLESEY NORTH WEST	WHNW1	North West, Whittlesey	Whittlesey Baptist Church, Gracious Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Ivy Leaf Club, Gracious Street
	WHNW2		St Johns Ambulance HQ, Plough Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Ivy Leaf Club, Gracious Street
WHITTLESEY SOUTH	WHS1	St Andrews, Whittlesey	St Andrews Parish Hall, Parkinson Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Whittlesey Library, Market Street
	WHS2	South, Whittlesey	Manor Leisure Centre, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable CCC Youth, Child and Family Centre, Scaldgate
	WHS3	South, Whittlesey (Pondersbridge)	Pondersbridge Village Hall, Oilmills Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district
WISBECH NORTH	WN	North, Wisbech	The Oasis Village Centre, St Michaels Avenue Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station at The Oasis Centre
WISBECH RIVERSIDE	WR1	Claremont, Wisbech	Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a dual station The Boathouse, Harbour Square
	WR2	Clarence, Wisbech	Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a dual station The Boathouse, Harbour Square
	WR3	Riverside, Wisbech	The Boathouse, Harbour Square Or if that polling place is unavailable a dual station at Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road
	WR4	Peckover East, Wisbech	Wisbech Cricket and Hockey Club, Harecroft Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech Rugby Club, Chapel Lane
WISBECH SOUTH	WS1	Octavia Hill, Wisbech	College of West Anglia Isle Campus, Ramnoth Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Salvation Army Centre, John Thompson Road
	WS2		Awdry House, Ramnoth Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Thomas Clarkson Academy, Corporation Road
	WS3	Medworth, Wisbech	Wisbech St Raphael Disabled Club, Love Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Queen Mary Centre, Queens Road
WISBECH WALSOKEN AND WATERLEES	WWW1	Waterlees, Wisbech	The Oasis Village Centre, St Michaels Avenue Or if that polling place is unavailable Kingdom Hall, Tinkers Drove (if suitable)/a mobile polling station at The Oasis Centre
	WWW2	Walsoken, Wisbech	Walsoken Village Hall, Kirkgate Stret Or if that polling place is unavailable The Black Bear PH, Old Lynn Road
	WWW3	Wisbech	Meadowgate Academy, Meadowgate Lane Or if the polling place is unavailable another room or a mobile polling station at Meadowgate Academy

Polling District and Polling Places Review

Consultation Comments

Consultee	Comment	Response
<p>Interim Headteacher Alderman Jacobs School</p>	<p>Alderman Jacobs Feel it is unsuitable as access for visitors creates parking issues and endangers children because they can leave the building through open access doors (which are only open on polling days) and encounter moving vehicles. This is a school and the polling station poses safeguarding risk from the point of view of unknown adults having access to the school and its site as well as leaving the school site unsecured throughout the school day so that children can leave the building. The building is used by approx. 670 pupils between the ages of 3 and 11 and its use as a polling station causes serious safeguarding issues. The location is at the back of the school down a long driveway and cars cannot enter here. Last year, voters complained about the length of the walk from their cars, which had to be parked on Drybread Road.</p> <p>The Straw Bear Public House would be a much better place for the polling station. It has none of the safeguarding for children or access issues for elderly or infirm voters that Alderman Jacobs School has. It also has a car park, which would avoid the public parking along Drybread Road, causing potential access issues, particularly at the start and end of the school day when traffic congestion is already a concern for many residents.</p>	<p>The comments are acknowledged and whilst we would prefer not to use a school as a polling station due to the issues that this presents there is no other alternative in this polling district and The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on schools to provide a Polling Station venue if the Returning Officer deems it suitable. The issue of the location is due to the room that we were allocated by the school and we will ask the school for a more accessible room for electors but there is no guarantee this will be provided.</p> <p>We already use the Straw Bear Public House as a polling station and this is only able to accommodate the one polling station as the owners wish to keep the public house open for business as well. Once the access is improved for the Whittlesey Football Club this could be used, but we need to continue the use of the Alderman Jacobs School for the time being.</p> <p>It is proposed that the polling place for WHE2 remains Alderman's Jacobs School.</p>
<p>Councillor Brenda Barber</p>	<p>Leverington and Wisbech Rural The current polling stations in the area fulfill the needs of the area in my opinion. There is ample parking and room to fulfil obligations with ease. I do not see any need to change districts or polling places.</p>	<p>None required</p>

Consultee	Comment	Response
Doddington Village Hall	Doddington No amendments necessary	None required
Councillor Michael Humphrey	Gorefield Happy with Gorefield.	None required
Leverington Village Hall	Leverington Happy with the current arrangements for polling	None required.
Wisbech St Mary Parish Council	The Parish Council considered their response for your review at their meeting on Monday 9 th October 2023. Their recommendations are as follows: Wisbech St Mary – Wisbech St Mary Community Centre Guyhirn - Guyhirn Community Room (or Play2Day if accessibility is seen as an issue.) Murrow – Murrow Village Hall Thorney Toll – Thorney Toll Village Hall	In relation to the comments about Guyhirn Community Room being used for Guyhirn instead of Play2Day, a visit was previously made to assess the new Guyhirn Community Room and whilst the facility itself is suitable, the access to the community room is not. The vehicular access is a long distance from the road to the community room, alongside a dyke on an unmade track and has no lighting alongside it. The other access that is tarmacked is to be blocked off to vehicles as there is conflict with people using the play area and vehicles. Unless the access was improved significantly the facility would not be suitable for use. It is proposed that no changes are made to the current polling places for PDW2-PDW5.
Wisbech Town Council	Wisbech Town Council has no comments to make.	None required

Received after the deadline for response:

Consultee	Comment	Response
Whittlesey Town Council	Cllr Boden advised it is a legal requirement to have polling place reviews and one has been started by FDC. As far as WTC are concerned, there are two proposed changes, neither of which are acceptable. Polling District WHNW1, mostly to the East of Orchard Street and East Delph, in the recent by election both polling districts had to vote at St John's Ambulance which was unsatisfactory as the turnout on the day from WHNW2 was 80% greater than turnout from WHNW1. The only location that is satisfactory would be a mobile unit in the Baptist Church car park for NW1, the Baptist church are unable to accommodate	Please see the response against Councillor Boden.

Consultee	Comment	Response
	<p>the polling station within the building due to existing commitments. Cllr Boden proposed in light of the comparatively poor turnout in WHNW1 ward in comparison with the turn out in WHNW2 ward, there should be separate locations for these wards.</p> <p>The second issue is with polling district WHEVE5, FDC are not planning to abolish the polling district, but anyone living in Turves would need to go to Coates to vote. Cllr Boden proposed that in no circumstances should the polling place be in Coates for Turves residents, it must be in Turves.</p> <p>The above proposals were seconded by Cllr Wainwright with a unanimous vote in favour.</p>	

**FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
SCHEDULE OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
CHATTERIS NORTH AND MANEA	CNM1	Birch Ward, Chatteris	Chatteris Library, Furrowfields Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Bricstan Hall, Church Lane	No change
	CNM2	Slade Lode North Ward, Chatteris	Quaker Way Residents Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Children's Centre, Larham Way	No change
	CNM3	Manea	Manea Village Hall, School Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable British Legion Club, East Street	No change
CHATTERIS SOUTH	CS1	Slade Lode South Ward, Chatteris	Quaker Way Residents Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Children's Centre, Larham Way	No change
	CS2	The Mills Ward, Chatteris	The Masonic Hall, Huntingdon Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Chatteris Town Football Club Pavilion, West Street	No change
	CS3	Wenneye Ward, Chatteris	Emmanuel Church Hall, East Park Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Salvation Army Fortress, East Park Street	No change
DODDINGTON AND WIMBLINGTON	DW1	Doddington	Doddington Village Hall, Benwick Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Doddington Scout Hut, Benwick Road	No change
	DW2	Wimblington (inc Stonea)	Wimblington Parish Hall, Addison Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Parkfield Sports Centre, Chapel Lane	Incorporates the previous polling district of DW3 Stonea
ELM AND CHRISTCHURCH	ECH1	Elm - Elm & Friday Bridge Ward (Elm)	Elm Centre, Main Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Elm Parish Council Offices, Begdale Road	No change

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
ELM AND CHRISTCHURCH	ECH2	Elm - Elm & Friday Bridge Ward (Friday Bridge)	Fridaybridge Tower Hall, Maltmas Drive Or if that polling place is unavailable Friday Bridge Primary School, Maltmas Drive	No change
	ECH3	Elm - Coldham Ward	A mobile polling station at Coldham Playing Field, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
	ECH4	Elm - Rings End Ward	Play2Day, The Old Station Yard, Gull Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Oliver Twist, High Road	No change
	ECH5	Christchurch	Christchurch Community Centre, Upwell Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Townley Primary School, Crown Road	No change
LEVERINGTON AND WISBECH RURAL	LWR1	Wisbech – Peckover West	Wisbech Cricket and Hockey Club, Chapel Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech Rugby Club, Chapel Road	No change
	LWR2	Leverington	Leverington Sports and Social Club, Church Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Leverington Village Hall, Gorefield Road	No change
	LWR3	Leverington	Leverington Village Hall, Gorefield Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Leverington Sports and Social Club, Church Road	No change
LEVERINGTON AND WISBECH RURAL	LWR4	Newton-in-the-Isle	Newton-in-the-Isle Village Hall, Church Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable St James Church, Church Lane	No change
	LWR5	Tydd St Giles	Tydd St Giles Community Centre, Broad Drove East Or if that polling place is unavailable Kinderley Primary School, Church Lane	No change

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
MARCH EAST	ME1	March - East	St Peters Church Room, High Street Or if that polling place is unavailable St Peters Church, High Street	No change
	ME2		Fleming Court Residents Community Room, off Smiths Drive Or if that polling place is unavailable First March Scout Hall, Badgeney Road	No change
	ME3	March – Town End	March Child and Family Centre, Cavalry Drive Or if that polling place is unavailable Cavalry School, Cavalry Drive, March	No change
MARCH NORTH	MN1	March - North	Roman Catholic Church Hall, St Johns Road Or if that polling place is unavailable March Youth and Community Centre, Station Road	No change
	MN2		GER, Robingoodfellows Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable March Town Football Clubhouse, Robingoodfellows Lane	No change
	MN3		St Johns Church Hall, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Fenland Hall, County Road	No change
MARCH SOUTH	MS1	March – South	March Town Cricket Club, Burrowmoor Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Providence Baptist Church Hall, Burrowmoor Road	Acre Road, Almond Drive, Babble Close, Beck Close, Birchwood Avenue, Blossom Terrace, Bluebell Way, Boundary Drive, Brewin Avenue, Brewin Chase, Brook Close, Burrowmoor Road (up to bypass), Butt Avenue, Buttercup Close, Cherryholt Avenue, Cherrywood Avenue, Cherrywood Green, Chestnut Crescent, City Road, Clover Close, Conway Close, Corn Mill, Cousins Close, Cricketers Close, Dahlia Close, Daisy Avenue, Damson Drive, Deptford Close, Ellingham Avenue, Gaul Road (up to bypass), George Street, High Street (1- 71 odds), Hornbeam Close, Jones Close, Kingswood Road, Lewis Close, Magnolia Close, Maiden Stile Close, Millfield Close, Oxbow Crescent, Park View East, Park View West, Plowright Close, Ravenhill Drive, Richmond Avenue, Riverbank Close, Shaw Drive, St Thomas


WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
MARCH SOUTH				Drive, Sunflower Avenue, Swale Close, Sycamore Close, The Chase, Turnbull Road, Violet Drive, Willow Drive, Yardy Close
	MS2		St Wendreda's Church Hall, Church Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Neale Wade Academy, Wimblington Road	Causeway Close, Causeway Gardens, Chapel Street, Church Close, Church Street, Coronation Close, Crown Close, Ermine Close, Gas Road, Heritage Way, High Street (73-133 odds) Jobs Lane (3-7 odds, 2-12 evens), Kirk Ogden Close, Knights End Road (2-114 evens) Princess Avenue, Springfield Avenue, Steeple View, St Wendreda's Drive (1-3 odds), The Avenue (1-75 odds), The Causeway (11-63 odds), Wimblington Road (7 & 9)
	MS3		St Wendreda's Church Hall, Church Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Neale Wade Academy, Wimblington Road	Apple Tree Close, Barkers Lane, Coleseed Road (The Bungalow, Coleseed House), Hook Drove Wimblington (Hook Drove Bungalow, Hook Drove Cottage, Corner House, Halfpenny Toll Stables), Knights End Road (15-129 evens), Jobs Lane (Orchard Lodge, 11-23 odds), Lambs Hill Drove, Linwood Lane, Mill Hill Lane, Mulberry Close, Rectory Drive, Saxon Way, Sherbrooke Close, Spire View, St Wendredas Drive (2-12 evens), The Bramleys, Town End Pits Lane, Wimblington Road (except 7 & 9)
MARCH WEST AND BENWICK	MWB1	March – Peas Hill	Rookwood Club, West End Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
	MWB2		Rookwood Club, West End Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
	MWB3	March - West	St Marys Church Hall, Wisbech Road, Westry Or if that polling place is unavailable March Town Cricket Club, Burrowmoor Road	No change
	MWB4	Benwick	Benwick Village Hall, High Street Or if that polling place is unavailable Benwick Primary School, High Street	No change

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
PARSON DROVE AND WISBECH ST MARY	PDW1	Parson Drove	Parson Drove Village Hall, Main Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Parson Drove Pavilion, Main Road	No change
	PDW2	Wisbech St Mary – Wisbech St Mary Ward (Wisbech St Mary)	Wisbech St Mary Sports and Community Centre, Beechings Close Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech St Mary Academy, Church Road	No change
	PDW3	Wisbech St Mary – Murrow Ward (Murrow)	Murrow Village Hall, Murrow Bank Or if that polling place is unavailable Murrow Methodist Church, Front Road	No change
	PDW4	Wisbech St Mary – Wisbech St Mary Ward (Guyhirn)	Play2Day, The Old Station Yard, Gull Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Oliver Twist, High Road	No change
	PDW5	Wisbech St Mary - Wisbech St Mary Ward (Thorney Toll)	Thorney Toll Village Hall, Main Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
PARSON DROVE AND WISBECH ST MARY	PDW6	Gorefield	Gorefield Community Hall, Wolf Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Gorefield Village Hall, Gote Lane	No change
WHITTLESEY EAST AND VILLAGES	WHE1	Whittlesey - Bassenhally	Straw Bear PH, Drybread Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Alderman Jacobs School, Drybread Road	No change
	WHE2	Whittlesey - Bassenhally	Alderman Jacobs School, Drybread Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station at Alderman Jacobs	No change
	WHE3	Whittlesey – Coates and Eastrea (Eastrea)	Eastrea Centre, Roman Gardens Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
WHITTLESEY EAST AND VILLAGES	WHE4	Whittlesey – Coates and Eastrea (Coates)	Coates Public Hall, 1 The Fold Or if that polling place is unavailable Coates Primary School, The Fold	No change
	WHE5	Whittlesey – Coates and Eastrea (Turves)	The Old School House, 452 March Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
WHITTLESEY LATTERSEY	WHL	Whittlesey – Lattersey	Quinion Close Community Room Or if that polling place is unavailable New Road Primary School, New Road	No change
WHITTLESEY NORTH WEST	WHNW1	Whittlesey – North West	Mobile Polling Station at Whittlesey Baptist Church, Gracious Street Or if that polling place is unavailable St Johns Ambulance HQ, Plough Road	No change
	WHNW2		St Johns Ambulance HQ, Plough Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
WHITTLESEY SOUTH	WHS1	Whittlesey – St Andrews	St Andrews Parish Hall, Parkinson Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Whittlesey Library, Market Street	No change
	WHS2	Whittlesey - South	Manor Leisure Centre, Station Road Or if that polling place is unavailable CCC Youth, Child and Family Centre, Scaldgate	No change
	WHS3		Pondersbridge Village Hall, Oilmills Road Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile polling station in the polling district	No change
WISBECH NORTH	WN	Wisbech - North	The Oasis Village Centre, St Michaels Avenue Or if that polling place is unavailable a mobile station at The Oasis Centre	No change
WISBECH RIVERSIDE	WR1	Wisbech – Claremont	Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Boathouse, Harbour Square	No change
	WR2	Wisbech – Clarence	Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road Or if that polling place is unavailable The Boathouse, Harbour Square	No change

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT LETTERS	PARISH/TOWN	POLLING PLACE	DESCRIPTION OF POLLING DISTRICT (changed polling districts only)
WISBECH RIVERSIDE	WR3	Wisbech – Riverside	The Boathouse, Harbour Square Or if that polling place is unavailable Robert Hall Centre, Lynn Road	No change
	WR4	Wisbech – Peckover East	Wisbech Cricket and Hockey Club, Harecroft Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Wisbech Rugby Club, Chapel Lane	No change
WISBECH SOUTH	WS1	Wisbech – Octavia Hill	College of West Anglia (Isle Campus), Ramnoth Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Salvation Army Centre, John Thompson Road	No change
	WS2		Awdry House, Ramnoth Road Or if that polling place is unavailable Thomas Clarkson Academy, Corporation Road	No change
	WS3	Wisbech - Medworth	Wisbech St Raphael Disabled Club, Love Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable Queen Mary Centre, Queens Road	No change
WISBECH WALSOKEN AND WATERLEES	WWW1	Wisbech - Waterlees	The Oasis Centre, St Michaels Avenue Or if that polling place is unavailable Kingdom Hall, Tinkers Drove (if suitable) / a mobile station at The Oasis Centre	No change
	WWW2	Wisbech - Walsoken	Walsoken Village Hall, Kirkgate Street Or if that polling place is unavailable The Black Bear PH, Old Lynn Road	No change
	WWW3		Meadowgate Academy, Meadowgate Lane Or if that polling place is unavailable another room or mobile polling station at Meadowgate Academy	No change

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item No:	11	
Committee:	Council	
Date:	11 December 2023	
Report Title:	REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME	

1 Purpose / Summary

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council is statutorily required to review its Members' Allowances Scheme at least every 4 years.
- 2.2 The last statutory review of the Member Allowance Scheme took place in 2019. At that time the Independent Remuneration Panel recommended that an interim review take place prior to the next statutory review and this was completed in 2021. Statutory reviews must take place every 4 years.
- 2.3 The previous IRP recommended that the Members' Allowances Scheme be subject to review as soon as practicably possible in the new term of office to ensure that the incoming Elected Representatives were able to proactively participate in the review of allowances.
- 2.4 During the July 2023 Council meeting Members agreed to undertake the statutory review of members allowances, agreed the Terms of Reference for the review in addition to the associated timescales.
- 2.5 The scope of the review was agreed as follows:
 - To review the existing entitlements set out in the current Member Allowance Scheme and to make recommendations:
 - as to the amount of Basic Allowance that should be payable to all elected members of the District Council;
 - about the roles and responsibilities for which a Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable and the amount of each such allowance;
 - regarding the approved duties for which travelling and subsistence allowances can be paid and the amount of these allowances;
 - as to the amount of the co-optees' allowance;
 - regarding allowances in respect of the expenses incurred in arranging for the care of children and dependents, the amount of this allowance and the means for determination;
 - as to whether any allowance should be backdated to the beginning of the new term of office for Members, in the event of a new/amended scheme being adopted;

- as to whether any other issue covered by the 2003 Regulations including whether annual adjustments should be made to allowance levels by means of an index and, if so, for how long such a measure should last, up to a maximum period of 4 years;
 - regarding the remuneration of the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person.
- 2.6 As set out within The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, all Members' Allowances Schemes must include a Basic Allowance that is paid equally to all Members of the Council and may make provision for the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to members who hold positions of significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor.
- 2.7 The Local Government Act 1972 stipulates the provision of the payment of travel and subsistence allowances. Expenses for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council also fall under this Act.
- 2.8 Before the Council can make or amend its Members' Allowances Scheme, it must have regard to the recommendations of the IRP.
- 2.9 When revoking a Members' Allowances Scheme, the new scheme may only come into effect from the following financial year e.g. 1st April 2024 unless the IRP recommends that allowances are backdated.
- 2.10 The IRP has undertaken a review of the current scheme and has made recommendations which are contained within the report.
- 2.11 The proposed Members' Allowances Scheme is contained at Appendix 1.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Council has regard for the recommendations of the IRP in formulating a Members' Allowances Scheme, to come into effect from 1st April 2023 and authorises the Monitoring Officer to make such typographical amendments as are necessary to produce clean text copies of the Constitution.
- 3.2 The recommendations include:
- 3.3 Members acknowledge receipt on behalf of the Authority of the Independent Remuneration Panel's report.
- 3.4 **Basic Allowance**
- 3.5 The recommended basic allowance is calculated using the following robust formula, namely that on average elected district Councillors spend 15 hours a week fulfilling their district council role, the average wage in Fenland is currently £13.60 per hour however it is also recognised that a proportion of the work elected Councillors perform should not attract a payment as it is for the benefit of the local community and therefore a public service discount is applied. In this instance the proposed public service discount used is 50%. The formula is therefore as follows hours per week to fulfil the role (15) x

weeks in the year (52) x average earnings (£13.60) x public service discount (50%). This equates to a Basic Allowance of £5,304.

3.6 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA):

- 3.7 All SRA's to be based proportionately on the proposed basic allowance as outlined in further detail below
- 3.8 The Leader of the Council to receive an SRA that is 3.5X the basic allowance, £18,564
- 3.9 Cabinet Members to receive an SRA that is 1.75X the basic allowance £9,282
- 3.10 The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to receive an SRA that is 1.4X the basic allowance, £7,426.
- 3.11 The Chairman of the Planning Committee to receive an SRA that is 1.4X the basic allowance, £7,426.
- 3.12 The SRA for Members of the Planning Committee and Substitute members of the planning committee to remain unchanged at £523 and £105 respectively
- 3.13 The Chairman of the Council to receive an SRA that is 0.84 X the basic allowance, £4,455.
- 3.14 The Chairman of the Licensing Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.65 X the basic allowance, £3,448.
- 3.15 The Chairman of the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35 X the basic allowance, £1,856
- 3.16 The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35 X the basic allowance, £1,856.
- 3.17 The Chairman of the Employment Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35 X the basic allowance, £1,856.
- 3.18 The Leader of the Main Opposition Group to receive an SRA that is 1.2 X the basic allowance £6,365.
- 3.19 The Leader of Other Opposition Groups to receive an SRA that is 0.4 X the basic allowance, £2,122. In order to qualify for this allowance, other opposition groups must consist of a minimum of three Members.
- 3.20 SRA payments to be limited to 1 per Member with the exception of the new SRA payments associated with the Combined Authority.
- 3.21 New SRA's are to be introduced in respect of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as follows:
- 3.22 The CPCA Board Member to receive an SRA that is 33% of the Leaders SRA, £6,126.
- 3.23 The Substitute Board Member and all other appointed CPCA Committee Members (excluding other substitute Committee members) to receive an SRA that is 20% of The CPCA Board Members SRA, £1,225.
- 3.24 No further changes are proposed and therefore the following allowances will all remain the same as the current published scheme
- 3.25 **Co-optees' Allowance:**

- 3.26 Remain the same as the current scheme
- 3.27 **Travelling and Subsistence:**
- 3.28 Travel and subsistence to be payable in respect of Planning Committee site inspection visits subject to site inspection visit rules.
- 3.29 Travel and subsistence payments should not be made in respect of representing constituents at any FDC Committee meeting.
- 3.30 Travel and subsistence should not be paid in respect of District Councillors choosing to observe FDC Committee meetings.
- 3.31 The amount of travel payable shall continue to be at the maximum levels payable to council staff in line with HM Revenue and Customs' rates.
- 3.32 Travel undertaken to establish if a planning application, otherwise recommended for refusal, should be deferred to Planning Committee should not be financially recompensed.
- 3.33 **Dependents' Carers' Allowance:**
- 3.34 Rates to remain the same as the current scheme.
- 3.35 The General Conditions to remain the same in accordance with the existing scheme.
- 3.36 **Parental leave:**
- 3.37 The approach outlined in the report is adopted as a basis of a policy to support parental leave for councillors.
- 3.38 **Backdating Allowances:**
- 3.39 An annual increase to member allowances of 3.19% for the period 22/23 back dated to 01/04/22.
- 3.40 The Council's new Members' Allowances Scheme to be effective from 1st April 2023.
- 3.41 **Annual Adjustment of Allowances:**
- 3.42 The basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Independent Persons and Deputy Independent Persons Allowance be increased annually in line with the percentage increase in staff salaries where all staff are awarded a universal percentage increase. In instances where staff are awarded a lump sum payment or variation of lump sum and percentage increase then members allowances will be linked to what the lump sum increase represented in terms of median percentage increase to all locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer. The recommendation is for the above-mentioned annual increase to take place from April 2023 for a period of up to four years. For 2023/24 this equates to an increase of 3.88%.
- 3.43 **Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person:**
- 3.44 The Independent Person for the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.20 X the basic allowance, £1,061.
- 3.45 The Deputy Independent Person for the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.10 X the basic allowance, £530.

3.46 **Pensions:**

3.47 Councillors are not eligible to enter the Local Government Pension Scheme.

3.48 **Equipment and Associated Consumables:**

3.49 To remain the same as the current scheme

3.50 **Future Reviews:**

3.51 The Panel recommend that Members may wish to consider an interim review in two years' time, the scope of which is to focus primarily on the recently formed Executive Advisory Committees to consider if the responsibilities associated with the committees warrants the allocation of a specific SRA or otherwise. The next statutory review of Members Allowances which must be no later than December 2027 following the 'all out' local elections.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Report Originator(s)	Amanda Orchard, Marketing Consultant, Magistrate - Chairman of the IRP Panel Gerard Dempsey, Business Consultant, Magistrate and former CEO of national business chains Nicky Blanning, Senior Manager for Cambridge University with previous experience IRP's
Contact Officer(s)	Paul Medd, Chief Executive, 01354 622202, paulmedd@fenland.gov.uk Peter Catchpole Corporate Director and S151 Officer, 01354 622201, petercatchpole@fenland.gov.uk Carol Pilson, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer, 01354 622360, cpilson@fenland.gov.uk Anna Goodall, Assistant Director, 01354 622357, agoodall@fenland.gov.uk
Background Papers	The Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Fenland District Council's Members' Allowances Scheme Scope of Members' Allowances Review Council Report, July 2023

**Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances
December 2023**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) comprised of three members:
- Amanda Orchard – Marketing Consultant, Magistrate - Chairman of the IRP Panel.
 - Gerard Dempsey - Business Consultant, Magistrate and former CEO of national business chains
 - Nicky Blanning – Senior Manager, Cambridge University with extensive previous experience of IRP's.
- 1.2 In undertaking the review, The Panel had regard for the Terms of Reference agreed by Council in July 2023, the scope for which covered all aspect of the Member Allowances scheme given that on this occasion the review is a full statutory review. The Panel received a copy of the current allowances scheme, approved by Council in May 2021 and The Panel was requested to undertake a review with reference to the scope.

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The Panel are extremely experienced undertaking reviews for a number of neighbouring Local Authorities and therefore they received a briefing on Members' Allowances Reviews including Legal requirements for schemes, different methodologies, benchmarking, the basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, travel and subsistence, dependents' carers' allowances, pensions, co-optees allowance, considerations regarding the Combined Authority and requirements for publicity.
- 2.2 The Panel members:
- Received a copy of previous report from 2019 and 2021;
 - Studied a summary of members' allowances data obtained from other Cambridgeshire District Councils, Cambridge City Council plus other CIPFA nearest neighbours for the purposes of benchmarking;
 - Received the results of the survey of Members' views in relation to the current Members' Allowances Scheme;
 - Received a schedule of the current Special Responsibility Allowances;
 - Received a document detailing the remit and frequency of each of the Council's Committees and list of outside bodies including meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
 - Undertook interviews and questionnaires with a total of 16 Members from a cross-section of the Council's membership as well as the provision of an open invitation to all Members. Interviews spanned:
 - Group Leaders
 - Cabinet Members
 - Committee Chairmen
 - Committee Members

- Members of CPCA Committees and the CPCA Board
- Opposition Members
- All Members

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 The Panel has regard for the terms of reference approved by Council in July 2023 which included:

3.1.1 To review the existing entitlements set out in the current Member Allowance Scheme and to make recommendations:

- as to the amount of Basic Allowance that should be payable to all elected members of the District Council;
- about the roles and responsibilities for which a Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable and the amount of each such allowance;
- regarding the approved duties for which travelling and subsistence allowances can be paid and the amount of these allowances;
- as to the amount of the co-optees' allowance;
- regarding allowances in respect of the expenses incurred in arranging for the care of children and dependents, the amount of this allowance and the means for determination;
- as to whether any allowance should be backdated to the beginning of the new term of office for Members, in the event of a new/amended scheme being adopted;
- as to whether any other issue covered by the 2003 Regulations including whether annual adjustments should be made to allowance levels by means of an index and, if so, for how long such a measure should last, up to a maximum period of 4 years;
- regarding the remuneration of the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person.

3.1.2 To report any recommendations to Council as soon as is reasonably practicable following member engagement and completion of the review, no later than December 2023;

3.1.3 To compare and contrast schemes in existence at other Councils.

4 BASIC ALLOWANCE

4.1 The 2003 Regulations state that an authority must pay a Basic Allowance to all of its members and that the amount must be the same for each member.

- 4.2 The results of the interviews with elected members and survey responses evaluated, suggest that on average District Councillors spend 15 hours a week fulfilling their district council role (with no special responsibilities), the average wage in Fenland is currently £13.60 per hour (the Fenland average wage were provided by NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics), however it is also recognised that an important part of being a councillor is the desire to serve the public and, therefore, not all of what a councillor does should be remunerated.
- 4.3 Part of a councillor's time should be given voluntarily and therefore a public service discount should be applied. The principle of public service had been recognised in previous IRP reviews and was quantified in 2021. In most cases the amount of public service discount is between 30 – 50%, with the average being 35% discount (figures provided by South East Employers). In this instance the IRP proposed that a public service discount of 50% be used in line with the current scheme.
- 4.4 The Panel are keen to ensure that their recommended scheme of allowances provides reasonable financial compensation for councillors. Equally, the scheme should be fair, transparent, logical, simple, and seen as such. The formula for calculating the basic Allowance is therefore as follows, hours per week to fulfil the role (15) x weeks in the year (52) x average earnings (£13.60) x public service discount (50%). **The panel are proposing that the basic allowance should continue to be calculated utilising the following, best practice methodology: The average number of hours per week spent fulfilling the role of District Councillor X the number of weeks of the year X the average local hourly earnings X the public service discount. 15 X 52 X £13.60 X 50%. This equates to a Basic Allowance of £5,304 pa which is a £260 pa increase on the 21/22 current scheme or 5.2%.** The Panel recognise that on initial consideration a 5.2% increase appears generous however they are cognisant of the fact that Members did not receive any annual increase during 22/23 due to the nature of the staff award, which was a lump sum and there was no provision within the existing scheme for any scenario other than aligning Member allowance annual increases with staff annual increases. Had an annual increase been agreed, and the Panel are recommending a 3.19% increase for 22/23, then the suggested increase for this review would have been a modest 1.90% increase and this would be the same for all the SRA's outlined in section 5 below. Further details in respect of this issue are contained in Section 10.

5 SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ALLOWANCES

- 5.1 Special Responsibility Allowances are awarded to councillors who perform significant additional responsibilities over and above the roles and expenses covered by the basic allowance. These special responsibilities must be related to the discharge of the council's functions.
- 5.2 The 2003 Regulations do not limit the number of SRAs which may be paid, nor do they prohibit the payment of more than one SRA to any one councillor. They do require that an SRA be paid to at least one councillor who is not a member of the controlling group of the Council. As the guidance suggests, if

the majority of councillors receive an SRA, the local electorate may rightly question the justification for this.

- 5.3 The Panel considered all positions currently in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances. The Panel recommends that all SRA's are linked proportionately to the Basic Allowance as this will ensure transparency and the consistent application of a robust approach.
- 5.4 **The Leader of the Council to receive an SRA that is 3.5 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Leader's allowance of £18,564 pa, an increase from the current scheme of £910 pa or 5.2%.**
- 5.5 The Panel considered the role of Deputy Leader of the Council which is not currently paid an SRA. No evidence came forward to support the introduction of a SRA in respect of this role and therefore **The Panel Recommend that no new SRA should be introduced in respect of the Deputy Leader.**
- 5.6 The Panel did give consideration to the introduction of a two-tier system in respect of Cabinet SRA's. This consideration arose during the consultation exercise, as there was some suggestion that particular Cabinet Portfolio's attributed greater workloads and responsibilities, however there were significant variations on members views on this and therefore **The Panel concluded that the introduction of a two-tier SRA system for Cabinet Members was not appropriate at this time.**
- 5.7 **Cabinet Members to receive an SRA that is 1.75 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Cabinet SRA of £9,282 pa, an increase from the current scheme of £455 pa or 5.2%**
- 5.8 The Panel considered the role of the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel. It was clear following interviews with Members that this position is of considerable importance. This role is also now required to observe Investment Board meetings in addition to those of the Local Authority Trading Company, Fenland Future Ltd (which have resulted from the recent Commercial Investment Strategy) in order to be able to feedback to the wider Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which justified the larger allowances this position attracted. **The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to receive an SRA that is 1.4 X the basic allowance. This equates to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman's allowance of £7,426 pa, an increase from the current scheme of £365 pa or 5.2%**
- 5.9 The Panel considered the role of Planning Committee members, without exception feedback from all members confirmed that the Planning Committee meet more frequently compared to any other committees and option to attend site visits, attend mandatory training, as stipulated in the constitution, in addition to reading significant volumes of reports in order to make informed decisions which directly impact on local residents, place additional responsibilities on committee members which are not comparable with other committees. Members also reflected that the time commitment associated with being a member of the planning committee could potentially be a barrier for some elected members. **The Chairman of the Planning Committee to receive an SRA that is 1.4X the basic allowance. This equates to a Planning Committee Chairman's allowance of £7,426 pa, an increase from the current scheme of £365 pa or 5.2%. The SRA for Members of**

- the Planning Committee and Substitute members of the planning committee to remain unchanged at £523 and £105 respectively.
- 5.10 **The Chairman of the Licensing Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.65 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Licensing Committees Chairman's allowance of £3,448 pa, an increase of £170 pa or 5.2%.**
- 5.11 **The Chairman of the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Conduct Committee Chairman's allowance of £1,856 pa, an increase of £91 pa or 5.2%.**
- 5.12 **The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35 X the basic allowance. This equates to an Audit and Risk Management Committee Chairman's allowance of £1,856 pa, an increase of £91 pa or 5.2%.**
- 5.13 **The Panel considered the fact that the Vice Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee is no longer responsible for Chairmanship of the Audit and Risk Management sub-committee, as this committee has disbanded, and the Employment Committee has recently replaced it. As such The Panel recommend that the SRA for the Vice Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee be withdrawn and that the SRA should instead be paid to the Chairman of the Employment Committee.**
- 5.14 **The Chairman of the Employment Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.35% of the Basic Allowance. This equates to an Employment Committee Chairman's allowance of £1,856 pa. This is a new allowance which replaces the Vice Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.**
- 5.15 **On the basis of the evidence provided during the consultation exercise The Panel agreed that no Vice Chairman roles should receive an SRA.**
- 5.16 **The Chairman of the Council to receive an SRA that is 0.84 X Basic Allowance. This equates to a Chairman of the Council allowance of £4,455 pa, an increase of £218 pa or 5.2%**
- 5.17 **The Leader of the Main Opposition Group to receive an SRA that is 1.2 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Main Opposition Group Leader allowance of £6,365 pa, an increase of £313 pa or 5.2%**
- 5.18 **The Leader of Other Opposition Groups to receive an SRA that is 0.4 X the basic allowance. This equates to an Other Opposition Group Leader's allowance of £2,122 pa an increase of £104 pa or 5.2%. In order to qualify for this allowance, other opposition groups must consist of a minimum of three Members.**
- 5.19 **The Panel recognised that a three new Executive Advisory Committees have recently been constituted including.**
- The Culture, Arts and Heritage Executive Advisory Committee
 - The Rural and Farming Executive Advisory Committee and
 - Project Review Executive Committee
- 5.20 **The Panel were informed that there is great ambition for the Executive Advisory Committees however given that the Committees are in their infancy**

they felt it was too early to establish the level of responsibility associated with the Committee Chairman roles. As such **The Panel recommend that no new SRA should be introduced at this time in respect of the new Executive Advisory Committees but recognised that more information will be available during subsequent reviews, which may influence future considerations in respect of these roles.**

- 5.21 **The Panel recommend that there is to be no more than 1 SRA payment with the exception of the defined Combined Authority roles which will attract a new SRA. The Combined Authority roles sit outside of the 1 SRA payment rule.**
- 5.22 The panel considered the roles that members undertake on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) both in respect of constituted committees in addition to the requirements associated with CPCA Board membership. Other constituent Councils of the CPCA have either already agreed to make SRA payments to members fulfilling roles on the CPCA or have been asked to consider making payments as part of their respective Independent Remuneration Panel deliberations. From the extensive feedback and evidence received in relation to this matter the panel recognises the significant responsibilities, extent of decision making and associated time commitment these roles carry above that expected of a District Councillor. The panel also acknowledge the importance and associated potential benefits of having Fenland representatives contributing to the role of the CPCA. The IRP asked all elected members about the potential for a further SRA in respect of the commitments and responsibilities associated with the CPCA. The majority of members who were either interviewed or took part in the survey felt that an additional SRA could be justified because the roles have evolved significantly resulting in the demands and responsibilities associated with these roles being considerably greater than initially anticipated when the CPCA was first implemented. As a result the IRP agreed it is appropriate to move in a direction that is fair to the Members fulfilling these roles whilst recognising that the initial intention was that these roles would not result in any additional costs to the authority.
- 5.23 **The IRP recommend that a series of new SRA's should be introduced linked to the roles undertaken in respect of the CPCA. These roles are limited to the following:**
- **The CPCA Board Member**
 - **CPCA Substitute Board Member**
 - **CPCA Committee Members**
- 5.24 **The Panel recommend that the CPCA Board Members' SRA should be 33% of The Leaders SRA. This would equate to an SRA of £6,126 for the CPCA Board Member**
- 5.25 **The Panel recommend that the Substitute Board Member and all other appointed CPCA Committee Members (excluding other substitute Committee members) should receive a new SRA. The SRA should be 20% of The CPCA Board Members' SRA. This would result in a new SRA of £1,225 for these roles.**

5.26 The Panel also considered the impact of the Commercial Investment Strategy and the associated commitments and requirements of the three Cabinet Members, including the District Council Leader, who make up the Investment Board (a sub-committee of the Cabinet). All Senior Members of the Investment Board (IB) recognise that the IB is a relatively new Committee and that whilst the IB is responsible for overseeing the investment opportunities for both the District Council and the recently created Local Authority Trading Company, (LATCo) Fenland Future Ltd, all Members who took part in the interviews with the IRP or the associated survey stated that a further SRA in respect of the role of the Investment Board was not justifiable. This is primarily because Members of Cabinet are already in receipt of an SRA. **Therefore, the panel recommends that no further SRA should be introduced in respect of the Commercial Investment Strategy including the Investment Board.**

5.27 List of Special Responsibility Allowances:

Special Responsibility Allowance	Current Allowance	Allowance including proposed 22/23 annual increase	New allowance 23/24 baseline	Proportion of basic allowance	% Change
Leader of the Council	£17,654	£18,217	£18,654	3.5 x Basic Allowance	↑5.15%
Cabinet	£8,827	£9,109	£9,282	1.75 x Basic Allowance	↑5.15%
Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny	£7,061	£7,287	£7,426	1.4 x Basic Allowance	↑5.16%
Chairman of Planning Committee	£7,061	£7,287	£7,426	1.4 x Basic Allowance	↑5.16%
Members of Planning Committee	£523	£523	£523	NA	No Change
Substitute Members of Planning Committee	£105	£105	£105	NA	No Change
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£3,278	£3,383	£3,448	0.65 x Basic Allowance	↑5.17%

Chairman of Conduct Committee	£1,765	£1,822	£1,856	0.35 x Basic Allowance	↑5.18%
Chairman of Audit and Risk Management Committee	£1,765	£1,822	£1,856	0.35 x Basic Allowance	↑5.18%
Vice-Chairman of Audit and Risk Management Committee	£1,756	£1,822	Withdrawn		
Chairman of Employment Committee			£1,856 New Allowance to replace Vice-Chairman of ARMC	0.35 x Basic Allowance	
Chairman of Council	£4,237	£4,372	£4,455	0.84 x Basic Allowance	↑5.15%
Leader of Main Opposition Group	£6,052	£6,246	£6,365	1.2 x Basic Allowance	↑5.17%
Leader of other Opposition Groups	£2,018	£2,082	£2,122	0.4 x Basic Allowance	↑5.13%
CPCA Board Member			£6,126 New Allowance	33% of Leaders SRA	
CPCA Substitute Board Member			£1,225 New Allowance	20% of Leaders SRA	
CPCA Committee Members			£1,225 New Allowance	20% of Leaders SRA	

6 CO-OPTEE'S ALLOWANCE

6.1 No changes are recommended in respect of the Co-optees allowance.

7 TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE

- 7.1 A scheme of allowances may provide for any councillor to be paid for travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with any of the approved duties specified in section 6 of the current Members Allowances Scheme. The Panel were made aware that the current approved duties list is very prescriptive. As a result of recent changes in the approach to site inspections, for which proper notice is no longer given, this prevents any Member of the Planning Committee attending site inspections, prior to the associated planning application being considered by the Planning Committee, being able to claim mileage for the visits undertaken.
- 7.2 In principle the Panel agreed that site visits are an activity for which mileage should be payable and therefore should be an approved duty. The panel recognise that Officers should set the criteria in respect of the detail of what a qualifying mileage scheme should include. **The Panel recommend that Officers should determine the detail of the approved duties in respect of site inspections but in principle are agreeable that travel undertaken for this purpose should be contained within the approved duties for which travel and subsistence is payable.**
- 7.3 The Panel were also made aware that the Chairman of the Planning Committee is consulted on all Planning Applications which Officers are recommending for refusal, the Chairman considers if the applications should be submitted to Committee for consideration. The Chairman prefers to visit these sites in person before making a recommendation to refer to Committee or otherwise. Given that these visits do not fall within the current remit of the approved duties the panel were asked to consider this matter further and make a recommendation regarding whether or not these duties should attract travelling and subsistence allowances.
- 7.4 The Panel considered whether travel and subsistence should be payable for mileage undertaken by the Chairman of the Planning Committee in order to determine whether or not an application, otherwise recommended for refusal by an Officer, should be called into the Planning Committee for consideration. **The Panel recommend that the decision by the Chairman of Planning Committee, to defer or otherwise, the application to the Planning Committee, should be a purely paper-based decision alone and therefore should not be recognised as an official duty. As a result, any travel undertaken in this regard should not be financially recompensed.**
- 7.5 **The Panel recommend that travelling and subsistence payments should not be made in respect of representing constituents at any FDC Committee meeting as the Panel consider that the basic allowance scheme sufficiently recompenses for these activities.**
- 7.6 **The panel recommend that travel and subsistence should not be paid in respect of District Councillors choosing to observe FDC Committee meetings, as the meetings are all accessible via live web streaming.**

7.7 **The Panel recommend that the amount of travel payable shall continue to be at the maximum levels payable to council staff in line with HM Revenue and Customs' rates.**

8 DEPENDENTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE

8.1 **No changes are recommended in respect of the Dependents' Carers Allowance**

9 PARENTAL LEAVE

9.1 There is no uniform national policy to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity, or adoption leave. The Panel are of the view that support should be provided for parental leave although we do not wish to stipulate an exact policy/procedure.

9.2 The Panel is aware that the Local Government Association has developed a model policy that has been adopted by a growing number of councils across the East of England region.

9.3 There is no legal right to parental leave of any kind for people in elected public office. However, as a way of improving the diversity of Councillors, the Panel would recommend that the Members' Allowance Scheme should be amended to include provisions that clarify that:

- All Councillors shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full for a period up to six months in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave relate to maternity, paternity, adoption shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months, in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave related to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Where for reasons connected with sickness, maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave a Councillor is unable to attend a meeting of the Council for a period of six months, a dispensation by Council can be sought in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972
- If a replacement to cover the period of absence under these provisions is appointed by Council or the Leader (or in the case of a party group position the party group) the replacement shall be entitled to claim a Special Responsibility Allowance pro rata for the period over which the cover is provided

9.4 **The Panel Recommend that the approach outlined is adopted as a basis of a policy to support parental leave for councillors.**

10 BACKDATING ALLOWANCES

- 10.1 The Allowances Regulations allow local authorities to apply amendments to allowances payments to be backdated to the beginning of the financial year. **It is the view of The Panel that the Council's new Members' Allowances Scheme should be effective from 1st April 2023.**

11 ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT OF ALLOWANCES

- 11.1 A scheme of allowances may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances in line with a specified index. The present scheme makes provision for the basic allowance, the special responsibility allowances and Independent Persons allowance to be adjusted annually in line with staff salaries. The principle of aligning the annual adjustment of Member allowances with staff salaries was sound when staff salaries were adjusted by an agreed percentage increase. In 22/23 this however was not the case as the national staff award was a fixed increase of £1925 for all staff, regardless of grade.
- 11.2 The previously agreed IRP report did not allow for annual adjustments outside the alignment to staff increases. As a result, had the fixed increase of £1925 been applied to Member allowances then this would have represented an increase of 38.16%, which members deemed inappropriate. Therefore members agreed not to award any annual increase during 22/23 and instead await the statutory IRP review of allowance scheduled for later in 2023 to make a recommendation in respect of this issue and what the increase should be in regarding the financial year 22/23.
- 11.3 The Panel acknowledged that it is important that member allowances do not fall behind that of comparator councils and therefore The Panel agreed that consideration should be given to recommending an increase in respect of all member allowances for 22/23 and their associated backdating. The Panel identified that the fixed salary increase of £1925 represented a percentage increase of 7.136% to the median staff salary point. Members of The Panel felt this would be a disproportionate increase and therefore considered what the £1,925 increase represented in terms of median percentage increase to all locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer. The £1925 pay award represented a median increase of 3.19% across these pay scales. **The Panel recommend that an annual increase to member allowances of 3.19% for the period 22/23 would be proportionate and that this increase should be back dated to 01/04/22.**
- 11.4 The Panel then considered the annual adjustment of allowances for 2023 onwards. For the period 2023/24 staff salaries have again not universally increased by a fixed percentage increase. On this occasion All NJC Spinal Column Points 2 - 40 (Bands 2 - 9 inclusive) have been awarded a flat increase of £1,925, however all locally determined pay points above the NJC pay spine but graded below chief officer (i.e. Hay grades) will be increased by 3.88 per cent. Given the challenges this approach poses in relation to aligning member allowance annual increases to staff salaries **The Panel recommend that the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Independent Persons**

Allowance be increased annually in line with the percentage increase in staff salaries where all staff are awarded a universal percentage increase. In instances where staff are awarded a lump sum payment or variation of lump sum and percentage increase then members allowances will be linked to the what the lump sum increase represented in terms of median percentage increase to all locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer. The recommendation is for the above-mentioned annual increase to take place from April 2023 for a period of up to four years. After this period, the Scheme shall be reviewed again by an independent remuneration panel.

- 11.5 **As a result, the annual increase for 2023/24 in respect of the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Persons Allowance should be 3.88% and this increase should be back dated to April 2023.**

12 INDEPENDENT PERSON AND DEPUTY INDEPENDENT PERSON

- 12.1 The Panel considered the fact that the allowances in respect of the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person should continue to be linked proportionately to the Basic Allowance for consistency and transparency. **As such the IRP recommend that the Independent Person for the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.20 X the basic allowance. This equates to an Independent Person allowance of £1,061 pa, an increase of £52 pa or 5.2%.**
- 12.2 **The Deputy Independent Person for the Conduct Committee to receive an SRA that is 0.10 X the basic allowance. This equates to a Deputy Independent allowance of £530 pa an increase of £25 pa or 5.2%.**

13 PENSIONS

- 13.1 Councillors are not eligible to enter the Local Government Pension Scheme.

14 MEMBERS' ICT/EQUIPMENT & CONSUMABLES

- 14.1 **No changes are recommended in respect of Members' ICT/ Equipment and Consumables as the panel deemed the current arrangement to be acceptable.**
- 14.2 **Revocation of current Scheme of Allowances / Implementation of new Scheme.**
- 14.3 The 2003 Regulations provide that a scheme of allowances may only be revoked with effect from the beginning of a financial year, and that this may only take effect on the basis that the authority makes a further scheme of allowances for the period beginning with the date of revocation. The Panel therefore recommend that the new scheme of allowances to be agreed by the Council be implemented with effect from the beginning of the 2023-24

financial year, at which time the current scheme of allowances will be revoked.

15 FUTURE REVIEWS OF THE SCHEME

- 15.1 The next review of Members' allowances will be a statutory review and therefore the timescales for which are prescribed and required to take place no later than December 2027.

16 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 The provision of Members' Allowances (Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances) currently costs the Council **£352,957** per annum. The recommendations within this report, if adopted, will result in Members' Allowances costs of **£384,549 in 2023/24, an increase of £31,592 or 8.95%**. These figures include the increase for 2022/23 and the new allowances for the CPCA.