

Overview & Scrutiny

Progress Against Economy Corporate Priority

February 2023

Cabinet Members



**Councillor
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Ian Benney**

Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth



**Councillor
Mrs Jan French**

Deputy Leader of the
Council



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**

Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Mrs Dee Laws**

Portfolio Holder for
Planning



**Councillor
Chris Seaton**

Portfolio Holder for
Social Mobility &
Heritage

Projects from Business Plan:

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

Following the completion of sales of the first group of three sites, a further nine sites have had planning applications submitted prior to disposal. The sites are at Eastwood, Grounds Avenue, Hurst Avenue, Drybread Road, Crown Avenue, Upwell Road, Gibside Avenue, Mile Tree Lane and Riverside Gardens.

Work continues with the Estates team and Portfolio holder to bring forward a set of Tranche 2 properties for members to consider for disposal.

Due to higher than forecast tender returns from the initial tender process, the tender process for South Fens Enterprise Park has now been suspended and bidders notified of this decision. Estates colleagues continue to work with the design team and Combined Authority to identify a solution that will enable a suitable commercial scheme to be delivered.

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

Wisbech Access Strategy

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

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

A Wisbech Access Strategy 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. The work is progressing alongside a full business case project. These projects are now very near to completion with the final land acquisitions expected to be by March 2023. A copy of the main accompanying paper for the meetings mentioned above can be found from the following link:

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

The next step for these 3 projects is to secure funding for their construction.

Ralph Butcher Causeway (Kings Dyke Level Crossing)

The delivery of this project is through Cambridgeshire County Council, Growth Deal Funding by the former Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Transforming Cities Fund. In July 2022, the new Kings Dyke bridge, now named the Ralph Butcher Causeway, opened to traffic. Please see the link below for further details and images.

[King's Dyke bridge opens after 50-year bid to replace level crossing - BBC News](#)

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

March Area Transport Study

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

The main project is currently in detailed design stage with full business case work which is due to complete shortly. Papers confirming the outcome of the previous Outline Business Case (OBC) work including recommendations to draw down funding for detailed design and the final business case, were part of CCC, CPCA and FDC meetings in November and December 2021.

A copy of the OBC report can be found on the County Council website from the following link:

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

In October 2022 a further paper went to CPCA Board. This has secured the drawdown of £962,000 to allow utility and procurement works to commence. This is not new funding but an accelerated approach for schemes in St Peters Road, Peas Hill and Twenty Foot Road.

The MATS project also includes a Walking and Cycling Strategy. £562,800 was also 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

This is a CPCA funded project with current study and assessment work having recently been completed by Network Rail. The outcome of this study work was discussed at the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee in mid-November 2022. The study focussed on light railway and heavy railway options. The CPCA Committee and the CPCA Board agreed to undertake an Options Assessment project to provide the economic analysis on mode options. This will include existing information on heavy rail, based on a service operating between Wisbech and March. This removes the current dependency on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements whilst still being mindful of the future strategy to link into Cambridge. An additional £80,000 was drawn down to facilitate this work. A link to the papers and information for the CPCA November 2022 meeting 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 Dualling (CPCA Project)

It was reported in late 2020 that National Highways (formally Highways England) Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) announcement did not include the A47 dualling project. Discussions between CPCA, National Highways and Government in early 2021 have since continued and negotiations are ongoing. In February 2021 National Highways agreed to undertake a review of the stage 0 work completed by CPCA. This review is to determine if there is any further work needed with a view to National Highways adopting the development work into their own programme. It was also agreed that the work will also consider proposals from East Tilney to A47/A17 junction in Norfolk. We are awaiting the outcome of this project and the release of the final report.

The above information was reported to the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee in March 2021. A link to the paper from that meeting is below.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1973/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

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

All £4m of CPCA funding has now been allocated to Growing Fenland projects. Updates on the projects are shown below:

Chatteris

Chatteris Town Renaissance Fund (£92k)

The Chatteris Town Renaissance Fund project is progressing well and continues to consider and process applications for business grants as a result of the continued promotion of the scheme.

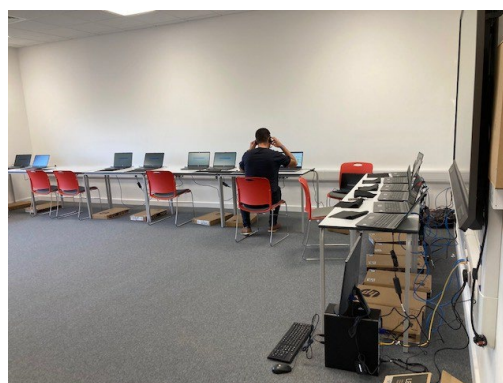
One notable scheme which has received funding is the new shuttering on the Empress Pool building which received grants from the Renaissance Fund and the Town Council. Not only has it vastly improved the look of the building in Park Street, it has also helped to improve security for the Christmas Lights display equipment.

Any future grants will only be offered up to the end of March 2023. It has been agreed by the Combined Authority that any funds remaining can be transferred to the Museum and Community Space project.

The street furniture refurbishment work part of this project is now complete.

Chatteris Skills Development (£36,179)

All of the ICT equipment is now configured and ready for use. West Suffolk College have started marketing Adult Education courses that will be delivered from the North Cambs Training Centre either on the premises, virtually or remotely, using the equipment. Some of the equipment is already being used and usage will increase in the weeks and months ahead as more courses start. The project is now complete.



Chatteris Museum & Community Space (£771,821)

Chatteris Town Council have now purchased 2 Park Street (the former Barclays Bank) and building work is well underway. Listed building consents are being applied for on a regular basis so that agreement can be given on suitable works, but these are resulting in project delays. New security, fire alarm and CCTV systems have been installed. Further unexpected works include the replacement of the existing heating/air con system, an increase in the price of required electrical works and additional preparatory work prior to decoration.

Despite a number of delays, it is hoped that the building will be ready for re-

occupation on 1 April 2023.

Planning permission to extend and convert 14 Church Lane has been agreed in principle, pending further agreements being approved. A schedule of works for this current location of the Town Council and Museum is being drawn up and a revised estimate for the cost of works has been requested.

The Combined Authority have been very supportive and have offered additional funding to ensure both works to 2 Park Street and 14 Church Lane can be completed.

March

Match funding for March Future High Street Project (£900k)

Please click on the link to see the update for [March Future High Street Project](#) elsewhere in this document.

Whittlesey

Whittlesey Interactive Highway Signs (£57,500)

Interactive highways signs to help improve travel in and around Whittlesey are now fully operational in the town. The three new variable highways message signs (VHMS) along East Delph and the A605, east and west of the B1040 roundabout, alert drivers when flooding closes the B1040 and/or North Bank alongside the River Nene.



The signs will also be able to warn motorists when the nearby A47 is closed due to accidents and when there are other emergencies or roadworks affecting traffic in the area.

As well as helping to reduce the impact of seasonal flooding at the Whittlesey Washes, the signs will help to mitigate delays caused by the current major improvement works at the Kings Dyke Level Crossing and A605 improvements at Milk Water Drove. Longer-term, they will complement the completed Kings Dyke and Milk Water Drove projects and also support the prospect of a new southern relief road.

Please [click here](#) for further information. This project is now complete.

Whittlesey Heritage Walk (£218,169)

The Whittlesey Heritage Walk was officially opened on 20 October 2022. The new interactive walk will help to encourage people to explore the fascinating and often undiscovered history of town. Walkers will be guided by new signage and wayfinding information boards, and they can also use a walk brochure or an interactive app to help them along the route.

Leading explorers on a circular route of the historic town, the Whittlesey Heritage Walk has options to follow a longer or shorter trail, each beginning and ending in the Market Place, with its late 17th century open market house, the Butter Cross.

The routes take in much-loved landmarks, places of interest, and examples of well-preserved architecture spanning several centuries, highlighting fascinating facts and intriguing histories along the way.



There is also the option to add on a scenic riverside walk or follow routes to the Kings Dyke Nature Reserve, Lattersey Nature Reserve, and Whittlesea Railway Station.

To complete the Whittlesey Heritage Walk, visitors can:



- Head to the Market Place, Whittlesey, and follow the directions on the information boards at various points along the routes.
- **Download the Whittlesey Heritage Walk brochure.** Copies of the brochure are also available for those without internet access from the Whittlesey Town Council offices in Queen Street (**check their website for opening hours**)
- Get a guided tour of the walk on mobile with the **Love Exploring app**. The app, which is free to download, uses an interactive map to guide explorers round the walk and provides interesting insights into the town's hidden histories.

Families and youngsters will particularly enjoy the Love Exploring app's Augmented Reality and GEO-Location features, providing fun and games along the route. The [Love Exploring App](#) includes the Heritage Walk and special Augmented Reality (AR) trails are planned for each school holiday throughout the year. This February will see the launch of a brand new, bespoke AR Straw Bear.

For further information, please see the information page on the Council's website [Whittlesey Heritage Walk - Fenland District Council](#) . This project is now complete.

Whittlesey Heritage Visitor Centre (£500k) – project cancelled

As part of the Growing Fenland work for the town of Whittlesey, the town team requested £500,000 to develop a heritage centre for the town. This facility was to be situated on Forterra land, adjacent to a local nature reserve about ¾ of a mile outside the town.

Following the Combined Authority's (CPCA) approval of the grant to Whittlesey Town Council to support the development of the Heritage Centre, the Town Council put together a project working group consisting of three elected Members. Work on the design of the facility has been underway since 2021 until March 2022. Whilst a design now exists, there is a substantial gap in funding between the expected cost of the new building and the funding available. Other funders have been considered with no success – the funding gap is too large and requires a national funder such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. With the current climate in the construction market, alongside the abnormal inflation seen in the UK, any build project would need to add in a substantial inflationary contingency, as well as contingencies for unforeseen issues encountered during the build. These considerations increase the funding gap further.

The project team has considered the location and the gap in funding, alongside market conditions and believe that continuing with the project at this time is unlikely to produce a facility in a timely, affordable manner. The project will not give good value for money to the taxpayer and has now been cancelled.

Following the cancellation of the Heritage Centre scheme, the Whittlesey Town Team highlighted other options that the remedial funding from the Heritage Centre project could be used for in Whittlesey.

CPCA has agreed to fund the following projects;

£260,000	Strategic Outline Business Case – Whittlesey Relief Road
£55,000	Community basketball / tennis / netball, improvements incl. site investment appraisal
£20,000	Market Place improvements
£10,000	Library display, with anticipated match funding from NLHF / Arts Council
£110,000	Additional solar PV on swimming pool building
£455,000	Total

It should be noted that of these projects the only one that is scalable is the solar PV project. As this is the case, the Town Team in Whittlesey has asked that once procurement of the 4 initial projects is complete, the remaining funding will then be used for the solar PV. With the current disruption that inflation and supply chain issues are causing across many industries, the team is keen to ensure that once firm costs from quotations are available for the 4 initial projects, that the grant funding is flexible enough to accommodate fluctuations in costs that are above estimates.

Whittlesey Business Capital Grants Scheme (£124,331)

All of the grant payments have now been made in Whittlesey.

A residual amount of budget is being allocated to town centre businesses that meet revised criteria and are successful following an application process.

Wisbech

Wisbech Market Place Enhancement Scheme (£200k)

The enhanced Wisbech Market Place was opened on 20 June following 9 weeks of construction work.

Enhancements include new paving, benches, waste bins, planters and other decorative features to provide an improved trading area and community space.

The Market Place is now fully open to the public and market traders with the final touch of the Wisbech Town Council crest to be added at a later date.



For further details please [click here](#). Th

Wisbech Footfall Counters (£19,500)

This funding has been received by the Town Council and spent in full.

Footfall counters have been installed and the Town Council has been receiving data since 13 December 2021. The data shows that in the first 29 weeks of operation, almost 1,500,000 people walked through the Wisbech Market Place area. At the request of the Town Council, the supplier of the footfall counters, Springboard, is now providing not only separate reports for both the Town Council and the Horsefair Shopping Centre (which has its own footfall counters via the same supplier) but a report which combines both sets of data. This data is proving to be very useful, as it shows, for example, the additional footfall that results from events etc being run in the town centre. This project is now complete.

Wisbech Replacement Shopwatch Radio Scheme (£33,800)

This funding has been received in full by the Town Council but none of the money has yet been spent.

A meeting between the Wisbech Town Council Clerk and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, for the purpose of developing a Service Level Agreement in relation to the council "handing-over" the radio scheme to the Chamber of

Commerce, has taken place. The Town Clerk is in the process of finalising the Service Level Agreement. A representative of the Chamber of Commerce (who is also a member of Wisbech Town Council) has been involved in discussions with the supplier of the equipment regarding some of the pre-installation technical issues. The delay in implementing this scheme is because of the need to secure access to the radio repeater system, which is installed at Exchange Square (the former FDC offices in Wisbech) alongside the CCTV relays. Aarron Locks, the Manager of the joint FDC and Peterborough City Council CCTV service is currently negotiating with the new owners of Exchange Square an agreement to continue to use that space for both the radio repeater system and the CCTV relays. It is understood that that an agreement is close to being reached. As soon as that situation has been resolved, Wisbech Town Council is ready to procure the equipment and issue it to the Chamber of Commerce. This project has been incorporated within the Safer Wisbech Action Plan.

Wisbech Splash Pad (£147,500)

The community splashpad opened in the summer holidays and continued to be open daily, closing on Sunday 25 September. It features a range of fountains and jets designed to keep kids active and cool on hot summer days. The Splashpad also includes a whole host of state-of-the-art features include sequenced displays, touch pads to control water supply and an automatic timer to ensure that water is conserved when the facilities are not in use.

The new facility, with free entry, has proven exceptionally popular with people visiting being very happy with the new facility. This project is now complete.

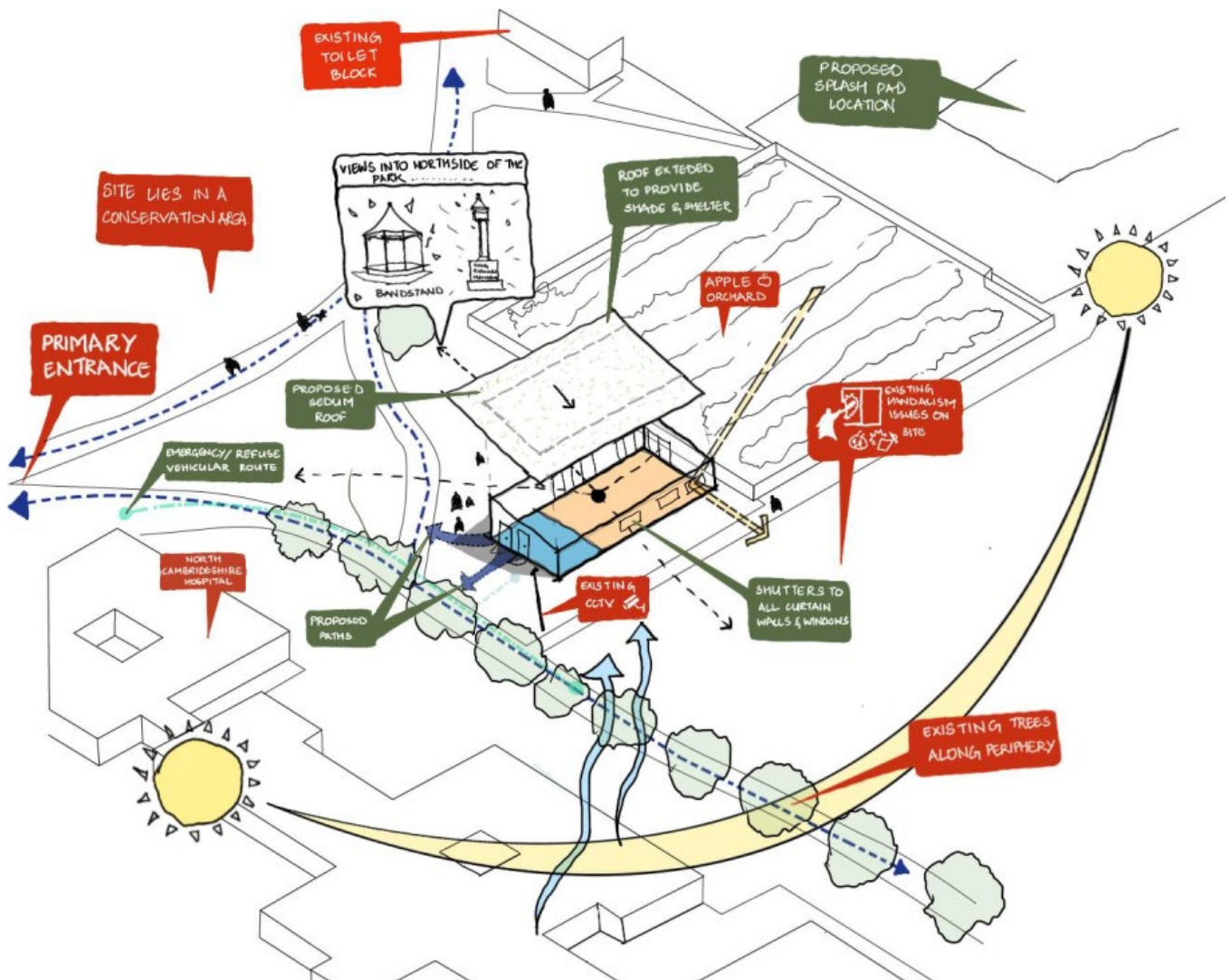


[Wisbech Splashpad Officially Opens - Fenland District Council](#)

Wisbech Park Community Hub (£299,200)

Designs for the Community Hub are complete. The floor plan offers a multi-activity room, café space and servery, indoor toilets, a changing places toilet facility and a small office. Additionally, there are 2 unisex toilets available externally for use as public toilets when the Hub is closed, but public toilets are still required. It should be noted that the glass finishes will all have shutters to prevent vandalism and the public toilets will be fitted with robust toilet fittings. Additionally, the location of the facility sits under one of FDC's CCTV units for added security.

The images below illustrate the position of the building in the park (following consultation with planning officers), along with 3D renders of how the building may look on completion.



The planning application for the community hub has been approved and procurement for a construction partner is underway. Tender returns are due back in mid-February. The building has been designed to the budget available, but given the current state of the construction market, the Council will not have an accurate cost until tenders are returned. Market intelligence is currently highlighting that the cost of materials such as bricks is dropping rapidly due to a slow down in construction, with labour rates also falling for the same reason.

Wisbech Business Capital Grants Scheme (£200,000)

All of the grant payments have now been made in Wisbech. Discussions are to be held with the Town Team on the best way to allocate a remaining residual amount of budget.

District Wide

Civil Parking Enforcement (£400k)

Following an additional £150k of funding being secured by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to carry out the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) review work, Milestone have now been commissioned to develop work packages for all of the existing TRO's within Fenland to inform the estimated cost of the corrective sign and line works.

Milestone have already prepared an indicative work program with an estimated task completion date for the work package preparation of April 2024. However, FDC have requested this timeline be looked at and shortened where possible.

A change request form was submitted to the CPCA to request that the funding deadline for the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) works is revised from March 2024 to December 2025 to enable delivery of the scheme following completion of the CCC work. This was agreed at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) board meeting held on 25.01.23.

FDC continues to progress the CPE project works where possible and current progress to date and the current focus can be seen below:

- 1) A draft CPE Off Street Parking Places Order has been compiled for all FDC owned/managed parking facilities. The order will be developed further and completed following short and long stay periods and dispensations being agreed for each site.
- 2) A draft FDC/CCC agency and service level agreement has been compiled by Cambridgeshire County Council. However, further development of the document will be required over the coming months by CCC and the FDC project team to minimise both the operational and long-term risk to each organisation. The final agreement will require member approval by both administrations.
- 3) A draft application to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a Civil/Special Enforcement Area Designation Order for the introduction of CPE in Fenland has been prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with FDC. However, as the application requires information relating to the agency agreement and FDC's enforcement and back-office administration service provision which have yet to be agreed, it is likely that the DfT application will not be made until September 2023.

Whilst the initial timeline to implement CPE in Fenland was originally estimated to take 2 years, several factors including available County Council and Contractor resources have now inadvertently resulted in project slippage. It is now estimated that the CPE designation order will be made in Q3 of 2024 with the implementation of CPE in Fenland being in 2025.

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

The community consultation closed in October 2022 and the representations are in the process of being analysed. A revised plan (with a summary of the representations and recommendations on whether or not the Plan should be changed to accommodate them) will be brought before members for approval prior to another round of community consultation.

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

Manea Station

The car park is nearing completion. The car park is expected to be open in early 2023.

March Station

The platform 1 building project and the refurbished and extended station car park are now complete. The official opening event took place in May 2022. A video showing the delivery and completion of the project can be found from the link below.

[New drone video shows March Railway Station works from start to finish, from the air! | Hereward Community Rail Partnership \(herewardcrp.org\)](https://www.herewardcrp.org/)

Whittlesea Station

The second strategic outline business case and options appraisal work is now complete. The Project Board have reviewed the recommendations and have confirmed the next steps for an Outline Business Case (OBC) Project. A high-level proposal for the OBC project has been completed and submitted to CPCA for consideration as part of their funding assessment process. Funding will need to be secured for any future work on this project.

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

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) scheme has continued to progress positively.

Individual property updates are as follows:

13-17 Wisbech High Street - now complete with a certificate of completion received

by the NLHF Officer.

18 Wisbech High Street - has completed 60% of the works to their property with completion programmed for this quarter

19 Wisbech High Street - have now formally completed their grant application with works expected to take place in 2023.

31 Wisbech High Street - formally completed an application for funding which was approved, works commenced in November 2022 and are now complete.

24 Wisbech High Street - FDC are currently in a pre-contractual agreement with ETEC (chosen contractor) to generate a formal target cost for the works. Once received, this cost will be reviewed by the team ahead of commencement onsite in the new financial year.

11-12 Wisbech High Street – Officers are currently exploring two options for development of 11-12 following the departure of the previous private investor. One option is for the creation of a temporary Façade at the site which would plug the gap in the Highstreet but not add any real world usage. The second option continues to work with an external investor and funding partners to create a development similar to that which currently has planning permission. Updates on this will be provided under separate cover at forthcoming Cabinet meetings.

Fenland District Council is also in the process of requesting a further formal extension to the grant funding agreement with the NLHF as funding continues to be allocated and projects progressed. Initial conversations with the NLHF indicate that this should not be an issue.

Activity plan

We have worked with partners at Lincoln Conservation, six artist workshop providers, St Peter's Church Hall and Etcetera Community Hub Studio. We have co-ordinated seven free traditional heritage skills workshop as part of the Wisbech High Street Project activity plan.

We have promoted, organised and been point of contact for the public attending and we have liaised with venues and supported with on the day delivery. Each of these events have been successful with new people joining each workshop and learning about the history of their town, local buildings and interesting opportunities to learn traditional skills. We have received positive feedback from those attending:

24/31 participants were local to Wisbech

14/31 participants have engaged with the project before

31/31 participants said that they learnt something

Comments included:

- “very educational!”
- “excellent and informative day”
- “amazing workshop loved learning a new skill”
- “fantastic event, full day that felt like 10 minutes my favourite day ever!”
- “absolutely great - hope more funding will be made available to bring much needed creative activities to Fenland via the Council”
- “thank you so much for the opportunity...fantastic day, will be telling everyone about this”

Other Projects:

Economic Growth Team Activity (Cllr Ian Benney)

Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25

The Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25 was approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2022. The Refresh was created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031. The Refresh set out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to support economic growth in Fenland.

Within the Refresh, five areas of focus have defined activities and outcomes the progress against each of which is set out below. Delivery of outcomes will continue throughout Q4 in 2023.

In addition to the planned for activities, several other activities were delivered against as required during the year. These additional activities are also set out below.

1. Enterprise

Objective - Maintain and build a thriving enterprise and entrepreneurial culture that encourages businesses to start up and grow.

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Community Renewal Fund “Start & Grow” programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 supported enterprises • 8 jobs safeguarded • 25 new businesses • 25 new products • £150k investment attracted • £725k grants paid <p>The programme runs until 31.12.22 and it is forecast by CPCA that all outcomes</p>	Awaiting CPCA final figures

	will be delivered.	
Maintain regular meetings with the business community, including the Fenland Chamber of Commerce (FCC)	Quarterly meeting with FCC. Working closely with new Chair of FCC to re-establish in Fenland. Meetings also take place with The Federation of Small Business and The Smart Manufacturing Association,	
Develop the Fenland for Business website to support businesses with signposting to advice and guidance and information	Working with the Council's communications team, we have redesigned the Fenland for Business website with sections for Start Ups, Growing Businesses and Inward Investors. We will continue to develop the website, including utilising video content via YouTube. 10% increase year on year of visitors to the Fenland for Business website and the number of Twitter followers.	
Annual business start-up inserts in Council Tax bills – targeting the hard to reach home based businesses	An insert was included in 2022-23 featuring information on the assisted provided to businesses by the Economic Growth Team and partner organisations Plans are in place for insert into 2023-24	
Economic Growth Team Service	15 enquiries per year converting to 3 businesses per year finding new premises/site - 14 enquiries since 1/3/22 2 inward investors moved into premises and 1 company moved to larger premises within the District. Inward investor comment ' <i>Thanks for all you've done so far it's very professional. Provided some very useful info as a follow up</i> ' Currently working with Fenland Businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large business expansion creating a second location at Chatteris. • Large business expansion • 2 Large business new site location search • 2 Medium business new site or existing site expansion • 3 Medium business expansion 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 small businesses looking for new premises <p>Inward Investors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 businesses located in Fenland, sign off regarding EG team support will be obtained 2 current projects - 1 Indian agrifood company establishing an EU HQ in Fenland, 1 UK Construction company establishing a manufacturing and technology facility. Planning permission granted 	
--	--	--

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Partner business support introductions	<p>Smart Manufacturing Association regarding Industry 4.0 adoption and grants</p> <p>Business and Intellectual Property Centre (March) regarding Start Up support and grants</p> <p>Growth Works Coaching regarding revenue grants to help companies develop their websites or engage professional assistance</p>	

2. Workforce development

Objective - Help ensure that current supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Improved access to employment, training, and skills for balanced economic participation.

The Team will act as a key intermediary between business and key training and skills providers including the CPCA, colleges, developing North Cambs Training Centre and emerging University of Peterborough.

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
To engage with CA Growth Works with Skills - demand-led skills service connecting learners and employers with opportunities that enable growth.	<p>Number of referrals per annum – 14 to date</p> <p>EG Team also arranged joint meetings with Growth Works with Skills with 4 large employers. 7 further meetings planned. Growth Works with Skills had a stand at</p>	

	the Fenland for Business Skills and Recruitment event.	
To engage with North Cambs Training Centre (Stainless Metalcraft)	Number of company referrals per annum – 10 companies referred Quarterly meetings. NCTC had a stand at the Fenland for Business Skills and Recruitment event. EG team attended the NCTC Careers event	
Encourage businesses to utilise Growth Works with Skills Turning Point scheme	Number of employers referred to the scheme which concludes in March 2022. 57 applications 35 approved 26 businesses completed the Turning Point Scheme	
Work collaboratively with Jobcentre Plus to help raise awareness to businesses of enterprise opportunities and work placements.	4 meetings per annum with Jobcentre Plus. 8 meetings to date 3 listings per annum of DWP in programmes in the Team's e-newsletter. 3 listings to date DWP had a stand at the Fenland for Business Skills and Recruitment event. EG Team attended the DWP Jobs fair in Wisbech	
Work collaboratively with College of West Anglia (COWA), North Cambridgeshire Training Centre (NCTC) and ARU Peterborough to deliver programmes that meet the needs of local business including quarterly collaboration meetings	4 meetings per annum with COWA – 3 meetings to date 4 meetings per annum with ARU Peterborough – 3 meetings to date 4 meetings per annum with North Cambridgeshire Training Centre – 4 meetings to date COWA, ARU Peterborough and NCTC exhibited at the EG Team's Skills and Recruitment event EG Team attended the NCTC Careers event	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Skills & Employment Event	A half day Skills & Employment event was held at The Boathouse in October featuring eight exhibitors, including DWP, North Cambs Training Centre and Growth Works Skills. A total of 14 major	

	<p>businesses attended and we received very positive feedback from them all about how they will make use of the information and take part in follow up meetings to help them with their recruitment and retention of staff. For those major employers that could not attend we have held a number of onsite meetings along with Growth Works with Skills. Interest from the employers is focussed on upskilling the existing workforce and apprenticeships.</p>	
--	---	--

3. Enabling infrastructure

Objective - The provision of excellent underpinning infrastructure, which, as well as providing serviced land and available premises, to include road and transport linkages and the provision of superfast broadband.

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
<p>Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments.</p>	<p>Internal FDC created and objectives agreed. Currently assessing which sites to focus on within the project. Forecast that reports will be completed July 2023.</p>	
<p>Work with partners to encourage and promote sustainable low carbon green infrastructure.</p>	<p>Ongoing dialogue.</p>	
<p>Support the development of sustainable and enhanced broadband infrastructure including completing the delivery of the Fenland component within the Connecting Cambridgeshire project</p>	<p>Engaging with partners including the private sector e.g. CityFibre to help them deliver by 2022-23 >97% premises (homes and businesses) having access to broadband speeds of at least 24mbps. Meetings undertaken with City Fibre and UPP regarding fibre installation in Wisbech and March</p>	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
----------	----------	----------

Investment Zones	<p>Four Expressions of Interest have been submitted to the Combined Authority (CPCA) for Investment Zones in Fenland for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whittlesey Science & Technology Park (ex-brickworks site) - Nene Waterfront, Wisbech - Advanced Manufacturing Park, Chatteris (Stainless Metalcraft) - South Wisbech (previous location for potential enterprise zone). <p>The CPCA have forwarded all the EoI's to DLUHC and we await their decision as to whether we are to take any to full application.</p>	
Discretionary Business Rates Scheme	Cabinet & Council in October approved a new discretionary business rates scheme aimed at encouraging developers to build new business units with the potential of not having to pay business rates for up to 12 months until the unit is occupied.	

4. Business retention & growth

Objective - The District is seen as an exciting place to seek to start or grow a business. This objective recognises the importance of proactively targeting and supporting growth-oriented employers in Fenland; helping them to grow through enhanced access to finance, expert advice, suitable premises, and locations.

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Undertake a proactive account management business engagement programme with larger employers and potential growth companies	<p>4 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team. 5 case studies completed</p> <p>Group of 40 businesses receive 1:2:1 "account management" service with 40 businesses visited per annum 37 companies meeting completed from March to date resulting in the identification of 13 active expansion projects involving the support of the EG Team.</p>	

	<p>Whittlesey – Multinational Logistics company expansion and creation of UK headquarters</p> <p>Whittlesey – Multinational Logistics company seeking larger facility</p> <p>Wisbech – Multinational Agrifood company expansion to consolidate other facility from outside Fenland</p> <p>Wisbech – 2 advanced engineering companies expanding, new premises</p> <p>March – Biotech/Pharma Precision Engineering company expansion</p> <p>March – company seeking new premises for exhibition area and science research</p> <p>Chatteris – Construction sector company expansion</p> <p>Chatteris – advanced engineering company expansion</p>	
Undertake a proactive business engagement programme with all known employers and business owners	<p>2,500 businesses have so far received 6 e-newsletters communications from the Team.</p> <p>Reactive follow up to engagement with Team from businesses</p> <p>Economic Growth leaflet included in Business rate bills in 2022 and planned for 2023</p>	
CA Growth Works Business Coaching Service – 1:2:1 consultancy, masterclasses, grant funding	<p>Team to refer a minimum of 20 businesses for 1:2:1 consultancy and grant support per annum</p> <p>16 direct referrals year to date</p> <p>Service and schemes featured in Fenland for Business Newsletter and Twitter Account</p>	
South Fens Enterprise Park additional light industrial units Phase I and Phase II (additional funding will be required to deliver Phase II)	The Team handed over the lead role to FDC Estates. The Estates Team are currently assessing the specification for the buildings, etc to seek a reduction in the build costs.	
Work with agents and developers to bring forward employment land provision, encourage investment in 'move on' opportunities	2 agents and developers forum meetings per annum	

Work with Growth Hub - Peer to Peer network to recruit SME leaders to create strong peer-to-peer networks	<p>Team to recruit 5 businesses and enable continuing engaged in the network in the first year. 8 companies recruited in Year 1</p> <p>Team to enable a rolling group of 10 businesses in the network from 2023-24 Pilot scheme was not continued as funding was withdrawn</p>	Peer to Peer Networks will not be funded in 2023. Negative feedback from 2 businesses received about the scheme.
Develop joint Business events with partners to encourage networking, share business issues, etc	<p>2 joint partner business events per annum</p> <p>Fenland for Business Skills and Recruitment Event Oct 2022 with 7 partner organisations</p> <p>Event in planning stage with Innovate UK Edge in March 2023 regarding support for research and development (date to be moved due to purdah)</p>	
Services for Business - All businesses registered for business rates receive information advising them of the services available to them from the Council and its partners such as Growth Works.	Every business registered for business rates received communication from the Team. Plans are underway for an insert for 2023-34.	
Adopt a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data management	Assessments are underway with a potential CRM provider and it is forecast that a CRM system will be in place by 31st March 2023.	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)	SPF funding of £1.25m over three years has been bid for by the Team and approved for Fenland.	
Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)	The Team have bid for £436k of funding over two years. The bid along with bids from three other Cambridgeshire LA's were submitted to DLUHC in November. Decisions are expected early 2023.	

5. Inward investment

Objective - To maintain and increase the level of employment in the district and improve the quality of employment locally to provide all ages of the community with the opportunities that match their skills and aspirations. This will require the district to secure new inward investment to compliment current local employers

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Work closely with and respond to information enquiries from CA Growth Works Inward Investment Team	Working with the Growth Works Inward Investment Team: 10 inward investment enquiries per annum 9 GW enquiries received 1 inward investment per annum 1 GW inward investment at negotiation stage	Current project may not complete before the end of March 2023
Economic Growth Team inward investment service	2 inward investment enquiries per annum 7 inward investment enquiries 1 inward investment per annum 6 businesses located in Fenland, sign off regarding EG team support will be obtained 1 global consultancy and construction company establishing a manufacturing and technology facility	
Continue to market Fenland propositions to target growth sectors, individual businesses and locations including: • Supermarkets, fast-food brands, hotels, etc • Inward Investor Pack • Targeted Business Exhibitions • Programme of strategic marketing	Email and telephone contact undertaken with major hotels, fast food companies and supermarkets Creation of Inward Investor Pack. To be completed Q4 Attendance at a targeted business exhibition per annum and generated of 3 quality leads. Attended Built Environment Networking event June 2022 Event attendance planned at NEC event in Q4	Attendance is low at exhibitions following Covid. Very few exhibitions took place in 2022
Deliver 'soft landing' tools that support an aftercare programme for new and recently established investors, through:	Creation of soft-landing package. Marketing of package to potential investors, intermediaries i.e., agents, lawyers, banks and partners i.e., Growth Works Inward Investment.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings • Free office accommodation • Priority planning applications 	<p>Intermediaries identified. Meetings to take place, pack produced and marketed in Q4</p>	
<p>Collate Insight/data – targeted market research to include opportunities for attracting an hotel into Fenland, high quality manufacturing and engineering, research institutions, etc</p>	<p>1 research project undertaken per annum. Research organisation to deliver project identified</p> <p>1 proposition created for a target market per annum. Initial Agrifood proposition created. EG Team working with NIAB to develop Agritech information as a subsector of the proposition Initial Advanced Manufacturing/Precision Engineering proposition created</p>	
<p>Enable a Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) at Chatteris study</p>	<p>Study highlighting the options to market the MTC for inward investment.</p>	<p>Funding for the MTC is not currently available. May need to be carried over to 2023/24</p>
<p>Work closely Thinking Place and potential Place Board</p>	<p>Brand strategy and prospectus. Proposition information created for Thinking Place covering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and Training • Agri-Food • High Value Manufacturing / Precision Engineering • Micro Businesses and Start-ups 	<p>EG team reactive to requests to provide information.</p>
<p>Consider Discretionary Business Rate Relief to incentivise businesses to locate in Fenland and commercial developments to be brought forward. Any relief is totally discretionary and only considered where it acts as a real incentive to business.</p>	<p>To date no business has been considered suitable for consideration. However, it may be that in Q4 2022-23 suitable candidate businesses do emerge.</p>	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance

Other updates

We welcomed Cherrie Gatty, My Fenland Technical Officer, to the team who in addition to her My Fenland duties will provide much needed support to the Economic Growth Team. Her first objective is to cleanse and add to the data the team hold on local businesses and provide contact and other information on businesses we are targeting to attract into Fenland. She will then concentrate on improving communication with Fenland companies through social media.

Future High Streets Fund (Cllr Ian Benney, Cllr Chris Seaton & Cllr Jan French)

Broad Street/Riverside:

Projects were put out to tender in early October. The tender response date has now passed and two tenders for the work have been received. A contractor will be appointed shortly.

Work has commenced on the replacement of the gas main at the northern end of Broad Street. These works will take some three months and will, unfortunately, cause traffic disruption. Due to the nature of the works this disruption cannot be avoided.

Marketplace:

Marketplace works began as programmed on January 9th. Materials have now been delivered to the site with initial plaining and excavation of the existing site under way. Arrangements to relocate market traders onto City Road car park are now in place with the first Market trading days going well. Feedback from traders in attendance has been good to date.

All business surrounding the marketplace were written to in early December to inform them of the closure of the marketplace for the duration of the works. The contractor's liaison officer has visited all affected properties to discuss working with them to facilitate the works in a manner that results in the least disruption to their businesses.

Planning:

The planning application for the relocation of the fountain in Broad Street was approved on at the Planning Committee meeting held on 8 February 2023.

A planning application for the demolition of the existing toilet in Broad Street was also

approved on at the Planning Committee meeting held on 8 February 2023.

Planned Communications:

FDC have updated all information on the website and are currently pushing a social media campaign to keep residents informed of the works.

Communication throughout the new year will focus on the different projects that make up the programme and making clear the separate streams and objective of the individual parts of the programme.

Members will shortly receive an invite to a press photo opportunity for “breaking ground” on the March Marketplace once a date has been confirmed with the contractor.

Car parking

Additional parking is to be made available at City Road car park with the removal of the bring bank. Bring bank sites are also located in Sainsbury’s car park, as well as Tesco. A switch to car parking will add several extra spaces in this location. Additionally, the fencing surrounding the current area would be removed, enhancing how the space looks. Further spaces will be developed in the location of the former toilet block in City Road car park.

Taxi rank and Bus stop locations for duration of works

Temporary bus stops will be provided within Broad Street for the duration of the works and bus operators have been notified of this.

FDC officers have also looked to accelerate the lining of new disabled parking bays and taxi bays that are included within the plans on Station Road specifically to ensure capacity remains whilst the Broad Street Taxi bays are closed from March 2023.

Programme and Key Dates:

The March Market Place work commenced on 9 January 2023 and is expected to last for 10 weeks (weather dependent).

Broad Street and Riverside works will be split. Cadent Gas commenced work on 13 February 2023 with the FHSF and MATS work beginning thereafter May 2023, for one year.

The public toilet works will be completed following all other works in 2024 and will be delivered by FDC’s engineering team as a separate project to the Future High Street Fund and MATS projects.

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

The Estates team continue to work with tenants of all sites to ensure the properties remain occupied and profitable. As of October, all industrial units are fully occupied whilst the Boathouse is at 88.8% occupancy and the South Fens Business Centre is at 71%.

The Boathouse occupancy is lower for this period as two tenants have had funding withdrawn and have therefore vacated. However new tenants have been identified and ongoing work to secure the new leases is progressing.

The process of reviewing the occupancies of the industrial units continues with offices 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 25.87% on the estates actioned as well as the management benefit of the agreements being on new standardised modern lease terms.

Affordable Homes (Cllr Sam Hoy)

The new affordable home completions total has reduced from a forecast of 170 units to a total of 60 units expected during 2022/2023. This is due to the following:

- Elm High Road, Wisbech was expecting 79 units to handover during 2022/23 but these have now all slipped into 2023/24
- Bassenhally Phase 3, Whittlesey was expecting 27 units to handover during 2022/23 but some of these completions have slipped. We are currently forecasting 7 units for 2022/23 and the remainder during 2023/24
- Wisbech Road, March was expecting 10 units to handover during 2022/23 but these have now slipped into 2023/24
- Kingswood Park is still showing 27 units forecast for handover during 2022/23 but these are at risk of slipping into next financial year, due to the original Contractor going into administration. This means Sanctuary need to reappoint the contractors to finish up and complete the units and retest all the installations.

We have a forecast for 174 affordable homes to be completed in 23/24 with 43 will be home ownership products and 131 affordable rented.

Planning (Cllr Dee Laws)

Overview

The year has been and remains very challenging not least due to at scale staff

turnover (5 permanent members of staff and 5 agency) recruitment difficulties. A total of 50% of the case officers below manager level are agency or equivalent. This has impacted significantly on our performance on the speed of decision making due to the breaks in the continuity of staff resourcing. Whilst we are currently meeting the national performance standards, there is a risk that by December 2023 we will not. The amended scheme of delegation, which decides which planning applications are determined by committee as opposed to officers, continues to result in lengthy meeting agendas and has an associated significant impact on those engaged in delivery of them.

In the early part of the year, the validation team had substantial backlogs of applications to process which equated to some 6-7 weeks work). Through the use of a short-term temporary resource, this was reduced down to 1 week but, with the resource coming to an end, the backlogs have increased to 3 weeks. So far this year the team have dealt with 1400 applications of various types and so the workload remains substantial.

In December 2022, Peterborough City Council informed us that its support for Planning Policy (including Neighbourhood Plans), Development Viability & S106 Management and Ecology was being withdrawn as of 31 March 2023.

Workstreams that are ongoing in relation to the above include:

- Review of the recruitment package
- Planning performance agreements to help fund additional resources
- Use of Capita as an alternative route for the provision of temporary staffing
- Exploration of how we can meet our Policy, Ecology and Viability / S106 needs going forward

In addition, we are working with colleagues in the MyFenland Team on a multistage Transformation project which is already implementing change within the service. The objective of the transformation project is to identify and implement efficiencies.

Activity	Outcomes	Performance Against Target
Speed of Determination of Planning applications 2022/23 to date	Majors	75%
	Minors	62%
	Others	81%
The national performance requirement is measured over a 24-month rolling monitoring period and in relation to this we are performing as follows: Major 81% (against a target of 60%) Non-Major 78% (against a target of 70%)		

Activity	Outcome
Planning Appeals 2022/23 to date	5

No. won by FDC	3
No. Lost by FDC	2
Awards of cost	None

Income 2022/23 to date	
Application Fee	£888 k (up £34k on previous year)
Pre-application fee	£44k (down £2k on previous year)

Activity	Outcomes
Local Plan	The Local Plan was published for public consultation in late 2022

With the pending loss of policy support from Peterborough, other potential resources for delivering the plan are being assessed and an option paper is being prepared on this issue.

Activity	Outcomes
Neighbourhood Planning	The Whittlesey Plan went to consultation and examination in 2022. A referendum on the Plan is due to take place in February 2023.

Activity	Outcomes
Enforcement (2022/23 year to date)	No. of Service Requests – 159 No. of Cases Closed (following investigation / mitigation action) – 213 No. of pending cases - 266

Activity	Outcomes
5 Year Land Supply	Published July 2022 – 6.34 years (passed)
Housing Delivery Test	Published January 2022 – 95% (passed)
Annual Monitoring Report	Published Feb 2022

Activity	Outcomes
Review of Local Validation List	Adopted February 2023

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

Fresh social media campaign

As part of our work to support businesses, a fresh series of social media posts commenced in September. Each time business achieves a score of 5 in the Food

Hygiene Rating Scheme we offer to publicise this score. The monthly social media posts are going well and receiving many views.

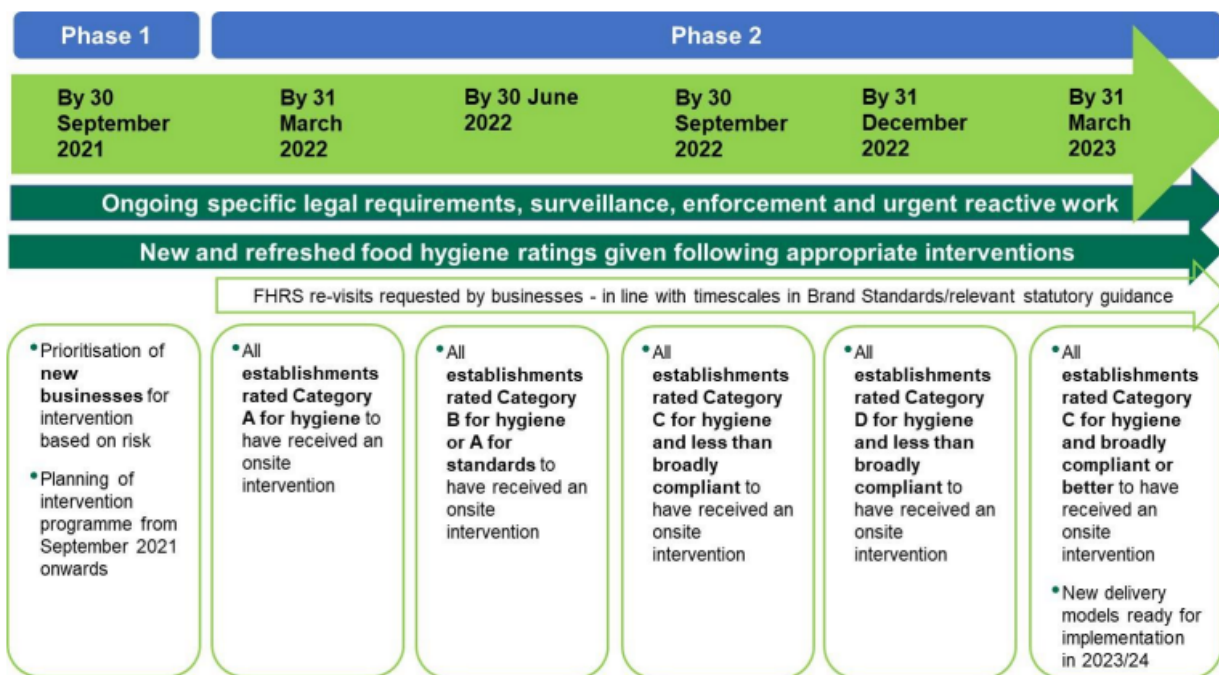
The list of successful businesses is published on our website and the social media post contains the link that leads to this.

[Food Hygiene Rating Scheme - Fenland District Council](#)

Statutory inspection programme

In October, the Food Standards Agency requested information in relation to the Council's progress to meet the Agency's recovery plan. This plan allows some flexibility to the normal inspection programme due to councils continuing to 'catch up' following the COVID pandemic and businesses being closed or restricted in terms of their activities.

Our feedback was positive and that we continue to meet the requirements and timescales of the plan below:



Inspections completed

From April to December 2022, the team carried out 242 food safety interventions. This includes in person inspections as well as self-assessment questionnaires for low-risk premises.

There were 22 formal interventions required with most businesses achieving high ratings through the food hygiene rating scheme.

Please note not all businesses are published on the Food Hygiene Rating website as

they may be exempt from the scheme for various reasons.

Month	Number inspected	Number rated 4 or above
August	25	25
September	52	49
October	33	26
November	3	3
December	9	9
Total	113	103

The Council continues to receive complaints about food and food premises and take appropriate action. There were 43 reports of food safety or hygiene issues from April to December 2022.

We also received 30 enquiries regarding a new business start-up or existing businesses' queries. Further we dealt with 6 applications for rescore visits (where businesses achieved Food Hygiene Rating 4 or below and requested an unannounced rescore inspection that needs to take place within 3 months of the application being made).

Health and Safety at work inspection programme

Progress against this statutory plan has continued throughout the reporting period. This service plan sets out the regulatory requirements for health and safety in the workplace.

Of particular focus has been those businesses offering skin piercing and beauty treatments. During this period there have been 9 new tattoo businesses licensed and 11 full inspections to support businesses with their regulatory compliance.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 21/22	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks (or within extension of time)	92%	70%	75%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks (or within extension of time)	72%	70%	62%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks (or within extension of time)	84%	80%	81%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	91.2%	92%	93.6%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour (85 berths)	94%	95%	98% (August)	
CELP18	% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	100%	96%	100%	

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

Comments
Performance in relation to Minor applications, whilst below target, has improved since the figures were last reported. There has been a 3% improvement since the previous month. Performance on Major and Other applications exceed our performance target. The team remain under considerable pressure with caseloads higher than benchmark levels and turnover of agency staff as we have been unable to fill all the vacant post we have in the team.

