

# **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 20<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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

<b>No.s of Notices Served Apr-Oct 2023</b>	<b>S.11 Improvement Notice *</b>	<b>S.12 Improvement Notice **</b>	<b>Notice of Intent ***</b>	<b>Final Civil Penalty Notice ****</b>	<b>EICR *****</b>	<b>MEES *****</b>	<b>EPC *****</b>
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	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

\* 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 +
<b>Total Officer involvement</b>	46	5
<b>Total for the period</b>	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+
<b>Total Officer Involvement</b>	71	6
<b>Total for the period</b>	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
<b>Total for the period</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>143</b>

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
<b>Total for the period</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>167</b>

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> October, and will close on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and the deadline for submissions is Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 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

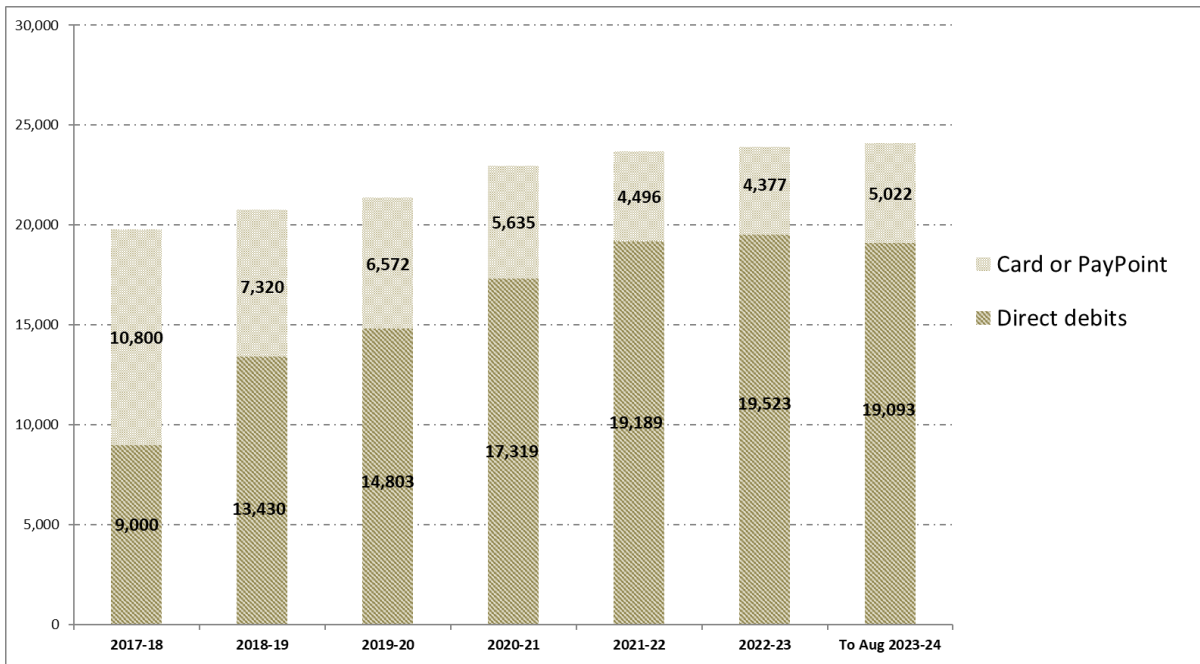




bins. Of these 655 bins inspected, 48% (316) were actively recycling and 7% contained incorrect materials (46). During November all 45,500 properties have received the winter collection calendar including information on recycling better.

**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 8<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September and several community groups within March & Wisbech held events to coincide.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> September focusing on the wildlife, monuments and chapel. Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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/ccc\\_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1529/Committee/62/Default.aspx](https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/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%	Green
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	62%	70%	62%	Yellow
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	81%	80%	85%	Green
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	93.9%	90%	93.4%	Green
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	99%	100%	99%	Green

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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%
<b>Stage 1</b>			
CELP	36	31	86%
GI	2	2	100%
PRCS	13	12	92%
<b>Stage 2</b>			
CELP	6	5	83%
GI	0	0	N/A
PRCS	0	0	N/A
<b>Stage 3</b>			
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 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The annual report on Investment Board activity was presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 19<sup>th</sup> 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	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Audit & Governance Sub Committee	17.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Business Board	13.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Combined Authority Board	29.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Employment & Skills Board	10.10.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	13.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Human Resources Committee	10.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Human Resources Committee	16.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Skills & Employment Committee	06.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	15.11.23	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF	LINK
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	<b>MEETING</b>	
Audit & Governance Committee	12.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Business Board	15.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Combined Authority Board	31.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	22.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Human Resources Committee	05.02.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	29.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Skills & Employment Committee	15.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	17.01.24	<a href="#">CMIS &gt; Meetings</a>

**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