

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

**December 2024
(For performance in September &
October 2024)**

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)

ARP continue to work to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

- Local Council Tax Support
- Single Person Discount
- Council Tax
- Non-Domestic Rates.

The review of Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes. The ARP team are also working with the largest Social Housing provider in the Authority to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse.

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges, including possible retrospective charges.

The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils collected just under £1.8 million. This has increased from £1m in 2022/23 and is a great result for a small team actioning complex further recovery cases for the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax. The Fraud team's work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £3.8 Million in fraud and error last year, an increase on the previous year. This is due to the further resource funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and has allowed ARP to expand proactive fraud and error identification

ARP also launched a new improved 'Contact Us' online form which signposts customers to online forms to streamline avoidable customer contact. The Annual Billing process was exceptionally well managed achieving tighter deadlines to facilitate the use of economy post for all annual bills and notifications. ARP also successfully implemented PDF attachment e-bills in Q4 of 2023-24 and with the 2024-25 Annual Billing. A Partnership wide e-billing take up campaign is in the early planning stages, to be implemented throughout 2024-25 in conjunction with the Customer Strategy Team.

In terms of performance in 2024-25 so far, Business Rates Collection is on target and Council Tax Collection remains on target year to date. Days taken to process Local Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit is not currently on target. This is due to the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit as migration files have increased, and staff have targeted new claims, so therefore volumes remain high. The staff continue to have focus days to target areas of work, and we are confident that this will tackle the issue over the coming months.

Supporting residents to manage the effects of the costs of living (Cllr Boden)

Our customer facing teams provide support to residents struggling with cost-of-living issues in many ways:

- Issuing food vouchers
- Advising on additional benefits they can claim
- Signposting to other partners who can support
- Assisting with on-line Universal Credit (UC) applications
- Working closely with our ARP colleagues we signpost to avenues where discretionary benefits might assist
- We work with a huge range of partners who can also provide additional support, and we will link our customers into these channels
- We have just launched our Early Help Hub to provide an additional channel of support to residents who may be ready to return to the work environment, having had a protracted spell of ill-health.

On 1 October we commenced the delivery of the Work Well hub function, which is working with other partners to help customers return to employment

Homelessness (Cllr Hoy)

So far in 2024/25 (Apr – Oct) the Housing Options team has successfully addressed the housing issues for 143 households where we assessed they were owed a duty to either remain in their own or found alternative accommodation within either a 56 day prevention period or 56 day relief period. This is broken down to 82 at the prevention stage and 61 at the relief stage.

Prevention means the household has accommodation but are threatened with homelessness. Here we usually attempt to keep the household in their current accommodation.

Relief means they have left that accommodation therefore there is a need to source some alternative accommodation. This is usually the point at which a household would go into emergency interim accommodation.

Number of households seeking advice (homeless presentations) for this period were 1184. The figure last year for the same period was 1275.

Housing advice has been given to 714 households where no duties were owed by the Council. This means that following a housing needs assessment and any interventions there was no need to issue a formal homeless decision.

So far in 2024/25 we accepted 123 prevention duties and 208 relief duties with 79 households being owed a main housing duty (the latter means the Council could not resolve the housing issues presented by the household in either the prevention stage nor the relief stage and we now have a legal duty to find permanent accommodation and must accommodate them until so).

The best outcome is to resolve the housing issue for as many households as possible within the prevention stage as this keeps them in their current accommodation. The second-best outcome is finding alternative accommodation for the household within the relief stage prior to having to make a main housing duty decision. The latter means following an assessment against legislation that we sometimes need to make an adverse decision for the household such as not

being in priority need or that they are intentionally homeless. If a household is owed a main housing duty, then the Council must accommodate the household until we are able to end the duty (usually by an offer of accommodation).

This context is important as it not only demonstrates our commitment to preventative work and that we are keeping people in their home but that we are able to get involved in a household's homelessness situation early. Our prevention success rate so far in 2024/25 is 67% (the number of households prevented at this stage [82] divided by the number of prevention duties owed [123]).

There is a focus to bring this successful prevention work into resolving more households' issues at the relief stage. Our relief success rate so far in 2024/25 is 29%. (the number of households prevented at this stage [61] divided by the number of relief duties owed [208]).

The overall reported performance indicator metric, which is;

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work for the year = 46% (143 preventions divided by 311 households where duties were owed). This is currently orange rated. It is hoped that with new recruitment being in place by December for 2 vacancies in the team and some new affordable rented schemes becoming available for let that this will improve to year end.

Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)

As at the end of October 2024, the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) 5 Project were supporting a total of 17 clients. Of the 17 clients supported during this time; 6 were placed in off the street accommodation, awaiting their move on; 8 were street homeless and 3 were sofa surfing.

To date from this financial year, RSI have supported a total of 55 clients. Of the 55 individuals, we have successfully supported 24 into stable move on accommodation. This includes projects such as Housing First (a housing and support approach which gives people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended. Places no conditions on individuals; however, they should desire to have a tenancy), supported living routes such as Ferry Project or Amicus, the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme with Clarion or reconnected with family or abroad. Of the total 55, 14 had disengaged with services and contact was lost. This means they were no longer rough sleeping in Fenland, and either sourced own accommodation or had an alternative outcome such as prison or left area.

RSI continues to support our core group of entrenched rough sleepers who do not actively engage with support. We speak regularly with our MHCLG advisor regarding these clients who suffer from multiple disadvantages and liaise with partners such as the county wide Changing Futures programme to resolve the most complex cases. This cohort is known as our Target Priority Group with MHCLG and we continue to adopt a multi-agency approach with partners to ensure the most support is being delivered to these individuals.

Housing Enforcement Policy & Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy)

April 2024 – October 2024

Town	HMOs investigated	Other Homes investigated
Wisbech	19	56
March	6	25
Chatteris	8	8
Whittlesey	1	13
Villages	3	19

Total homes investigated is 158.

VILLAGE BREAKDOWN

Benwick = 1
Coates = 1
Coldham = 0
Christchurch = 2
Doddington = 1
Eastrea = 1
Elm = 1
Fridaybridge = 2
Foul Anchor = 0
Gorefield = 3
Guyhirn = 1
Leverington = 1
Manea = 1
Morrow = 0
Newton = 0
Parson Drove = 0
Stonea = 0
Throckenholt = 0
Thorney Toll = 1
Tydd = 3
Turves = 0
Wimblington = 0
Wisbech St Mary = 3

Enforcement:

In summary, since the new approach to enforcement was implemented in September 2019, out of the 162 Enforcement Notices served:

- 126 have been paid in full.
- The remaining debts will continue to be registered as a Local Land Charge on the title deeds until they are paid, or the property is sold, at which stage the debt will be recovered.

Of the 67 Final Civil Penalty Notices (CPN) served:

- 40 have been paid in full,

- 10 are subject to payment arrangements,
 - 2 are subject to formal court action,
 - 4 are with the High Court Bailiff,
 - 3 are proposed to be written off as not recoverable
 - 6 are subject to an ongoing appeal.
 - 2 are subject to early enforcement
- Of the 15 fines issued due to EPC breaches, 12 have been paid. (total £2,400)
- Of the 23 CPN's served for breaches of Electrical Safety Regulations (EICR) (totalling £114,018) £27,859 has been paid with the remaining debts subject to formal enforcement action
- Of the 11 Penalty Notices served for breaches of Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (MEES), totalling £32,500, £19,500 has been paid with the remaining debts subject to formal enforcement action

From April – End of October 2024 the team have issued the following penalties.

- Housing Act CPN's £22,000
- EICR £69,010
- MEES £21,000
- EPC £1,800

These figures can change through Landlord / Agent review processes. As part of the enforcement processes the team have served 20 Housing Act Notices totalling £5,200.

Empty Homes

The tables below represent properties brought back into use up to and including 31 October 2024.

Table 1

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use through officer involvement.

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

	LTE 6-11MTHS	LTEP 12MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	15	31
Total for the period	1.4.24 – 31.3.25	46

Table 2

Represents the number of properties brought back into use for the New Homes Bonus
From 3 October 2023 to 7 October 2024 (annual deadline)

	LTE 6-11MTHS	LTEP 12MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	42	40
Total for the period	3.10.23 - 7.10.24	82

Empty Homes case example Update:

Property Empty since 13 February 2022.

On more than one occasion the Empty Homes Officer provided developer, auction and local estate agent details to the executor and early Autumn a developer viewed the property with a view to making an offer. On 7 October the officer received confirmation that an offer was accepted, and the completion is currently progressing with their legal teams. This property will be fully renovated and used as a rental.

Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)

Two Golden Age Fairs have taken place at Eastrea Centre, Whittlesey on Friday 20 September and Tydd St Giles Community Centre on Friday 13 September 2024.

Both were very well attended by partners and at the events we had the following organisations join us to provide information, advice and guidance; Citizens Advice Rural Cambs, Age UK, Cambridgeshire County Council, College of West Anglia, Whittlesey Community Pantry, Disability Information Services Huntingdon, P3 Charity, CamSight, March Model Railway, Library Service, CPFT, Healthy You, POSH foundation, NHS talking therapies, Cambs Fire and Rescue, Everyturn charity, Anglian Water, Accent Housing, Active Fenland, RAF Benevolent Fund, Social Prescriber, SUN Network, Care Network, Dynamic Health and Clarion Housing.

We had over 100 over 60's visiting the Eastrea event and 88 visiting the Tydd St Giles event with some great feedback from partners and residents.

Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Leisure & Freedom Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)

The leisure centres continue to attract many customers day in day out, however the targets that Freedom have set themselves this year are very challenging, with Q1 attendance numbers slightly below last year. Q2 figures will be available in late November.

The recent turnover of key staff – the Manor Centre manager has recently accepted a job at a neighbouring authority and the George Campbell Manager left to work for a pharmaceutical firm in Cambridge in their staff-only fitness facility – does impact on the service. Recruitment is underway to address this.

In Q1 2024 attendances compared with the previous year are as follows;

Hudson	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	FY23/24 Q1		Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	FY24/25 Q1	
Total ACTIVE Participation	15169	14501	14335	44005		13526	15280	12539	41345	94%
Freedom Fitness	4429	4395	3975	12799		3301	3607	3245	10153	79%
Group Exercise	2605	2135	2169	6909		2118	2207	2387	6712	97%
Public Swimming	2928	2921	3085	8934		3030	3779	2307	9116	102%
Swimming Lessons	4579	4610	4623	13812		4068	4895	4020	12983	94%
Soft Play	628	440	483	1551		1009	792	580	2381	154%

Manor	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	FY23/24 Q1		Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	FY24/25 Q1	
Total ACTIVE Participation	10013	9904	9651	29568		9699	12731	11007	33437	113%
Freedom Fitness	1749	1756	1792	5297		1875	2010	2101	5986	113%
Group Exercise	1563	1774	1628	4965		2057	2049	1557	5663	114%
Public Swimming	2787	2621	2768	8176		2620	2731	2164	7515	92%
Swimming Lessons	2907	3103	2867	8877		2174	4987	4739	11900	134%
Soft Play	1007	650	596	2253		973	954	446	2373	105%

George Campbell	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	FY23/24 Q1		Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	FY24/25 Q1	
Total ACTIVE Participation	8052	7951	8244	24247		6989	8505	8098	23592	97%
Freedom Fitness	642	933	970	2545		1195	1225	1340	3760	148%
Group Exercise	2541	2106	3023	7670		2395	2522	2499	7416	97%
Public Swimming	3124	3156	2506	8786		1144	1710	1276	4130	47%
Swimming Lessons	1745	1756	1745	5246		2255	3048	2983	8286	158%

Chatteris	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	FY23/24 Q1		Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	FY24/25 Q1	
Total ACTIVE Participation	1819	2351	1815	5985		2587	2443	2416	7446	124%
Freedom Fitness	1000	1410	959	3369		1239	1261	1279	3779	112%
Group Exercise	819	941	856	2616		1348	1182	1137	3667	140%

Memberships:

Fitness Memberships have risen in Q1 by 137 when compared with last year. This, despite a

reduction at the George Campbell of 134 members. Freedom continue to promote memberships, the advantages of being active and have active social media posts going out to the local community regularly.

Swimming Lesson Memberships:

2,893 children were learning to swim in Fenland’s pools every week at the end of June. This is a slight reduction on the same time last year with the Hudson and George Campbell seeing a drop in numbers. This will have been impacted by the pool filter replacement pool closure (2 weeks) at the George Campbell and also the failure of pool pumps (another shorter closure).

With both membership there is usually a change monthly with people dropping out and new people joining each membership. Freedom has set tough sales targets for the year to grow both memberships. At present these are not being met – again the changes in managers will be impacting this.

Marketing:

The information below highlights the number of followers on various social media channels.

Centre	Platform	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Chatteris Leisure Centre	Facebook	1,179 (+30)	1,180 (+1)	1,193 (+13)
Chatteris Leisure Centre	Instagram	409 (+10)	415 (+6)	415
George Campbell Leisure Centre	Facebook	2,222 (+64)	2,222	2,230 (+8)
Hudson Leisure Centre	Facebook	732 (+18)	747 (+15)	749
Hudson Leisure Centre	Instagram	1,942 (+60)	1,947 (+5)	1,962 (+15)
Manor Leisure Centre	Facebook	1,179 (+30)	1,180 (+1)	1,183 (+3)

The reach to current and potential customers of marketing through this media may be seen in the table below:

	Post Reach	Interactions	Posts	Visits	Link Clicks
April 2024					
Chatteris Leisure Centre	21,867	380	62	4,673	1,055
George Campbell Leisure Centre	16,489	276	25	7,871	143
Hudson Leisure Centre	22,645	310	29	3,809	1,062
Manor Leisure Centre	31,225	408	53	6822	886
May 2024					
Chatteris Leisure Centre	18,040	459	77	4,689	332
George Campbell Leisure Centre	27,443	271	27	3,964	1,607
Hudson Leisure Centre	28,429	156	39	2,832	796
Manor Leisure Centre	10,888	151	68	2,568	197
June 2024					
Chatteris Leisure Centre	25,673	370	109	1,711	780
George Campbell Leisure Centre	17,471	86	47	2,142	356
Hudson Leisure Centre	32,728	402	60	2,895	1,008
Manor Leisure Centre	18,183	199	45	2,106	409

Freedom offers a mobile app’ for people to use to access bookings and receive information about their local facility. The number of active app users is as follows:

Centres	Club Users			
	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	Increase in Club Users
Chatteris Leisure Centre	6,441 6,521	6,597	6,675	234
George Campbell Leisure Centre	10,908 11,026	11,166	11,282	374
Hudson Leisure Centre	10,081 10,240	10,405	10,561	480
Manor Leisure Centre	9,394 9,548	9,691	9,816	422

Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)

Healthy You Project

Healthy You is currently running 12 programmes across Fenland, including in Chatteris, March, Whittlesey, Wimblington, and the Wisbech area.

Two Couch to 5k sessions in March and Wisbech are fully booked, and this is a popular programme encouraging participants to get active, meet new people, and work towards a Parkrun event, which is free and held worldwide. Offering participants a goal beyond the programme is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental health benefits.

Yoga sessions are also in high demand, with both Wimblington classes and one Wisbech session fully booked.

Looking ahead, Healthy You is planning a Bootcamp for the new year, as well as new walking groups, which are already in the planning stages. Additionally, several further Couch to 5k sessions will be launched in the new year.

In partnership with Living Sport, we are also developing a Virtual Festival for families and schools, set to take place in January 2025.

Level 4 Activity sessions

Wisbech Diabetes classes running at the Hudson, with Whittlesey sessions at the Manor to follow shortly. Classes in March and Chatteris will be added once a new instructor is trained or recruited. Both self-referral and medical referral pathways are available, with ongoing collaborations with Healthy You and local surgeries.

The **Phase 4 Cardiac Rehab** class at George Campbell is thriving, with referrals from CPFT Phase 3 Cardiac Rehab and Addenbrookes. Active promotion is underway to boost referrals from local surgeries and PCNs. Attendance in Whittlesey remains lower, but outreach efforts continue. Two new classes are planned for Wisbech and Chatteris, pending recruitment of qualified instructors.

Pre-Fit and Strength & Balance classes are successfully running in all towns across the district, greatly benefiting the older community. A new chair-based class will also launch in Doddington in November, providing even greater access at this popular location.

Wellbeing Project

The Wellbeing Programme offers a variety of activities, including Wellbeing Dance & Stretch

and Wellbeing Kickboxing.

Love to Move Dementia community exercise sessions are held in Chatteris and March, and a Care home session being delivered in the Gables, Chatteris. As well as supporting Love to Move delivery at the The Damsons, Alan Hudson Day Treatment Centre & Lyncroft Care home in Wisbech.

Four successful Tea Dances have been held, attracting 40-50 attendees each, with the latest delivered in Chatteris last month.

Rambler's walks continue to grow across the district, with increasing participant numbers. The partnership with the National Trust is flourishing, with 12 sessions delivered over the summer. This success was highlighted during a recent visit by the Duke of Gloucester, where our coordinator, Heidi, was invited to demonstrate and discuss the programme.

Healthy Weight Programme

The Council has secured an extension for our public health-funded Healthy Weight Project. After the departure of our coordinator, we are partnering with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), who have successfully managed a similar project. This partnership ensures continuity and effectiveness, as retraining staff would have been time-consuming and challenging. 3 sessions each have been launched in Wisbech and March. The 12-week course includes a fully funded, complimentary 90-day membership to Freedom gyms, a key benefit made possible by the grant.

This arrangement is expected to deliver the best results given the Council's current capacity constraints.

Active Fenland Participation Figures

	July	August	September	October
No. of NEW participants	53	103	46	31
Participant throughput	1061	1054	595	810
No. of sessions (incl. walks)	135	92	87	97

Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

The Help Hub

The health funded Help Hub has been operational since 3 June and by the end of October, it had triaged 220 residents who are either unemployed or have a GP sick note. Referrals have identified a wide variety of complex issues for which we are able to enable support. The FDC triage team have worked with each client to understand the root cause of any barriers preventing work and referred them to a plethora of supporting agencies either in the voluntary and community sector or the public sector. It has been pleasing to see that there are examples of when the Council is now getting earlier heads up of a potential issue relating to our core services to make earlier and lower cost interventions. Examples of support include:

- Assistance with completing Direct Housing Payments for help with rent arrears and shortfalls in rent.
- Volunteering organisations to help keep active and for social support.
- Referral to the Richmond Fellowship to offer support with existing employer

Two example case studies about the support provided are:

Referral A owned his own business but had a bad experience and lost his confidence spiralling into depression. He hadn't worked for some time and also admitted to a history of physically and verbally abusing partners. He was signposted to Richmond Fellowship, Volunteer centre Fenland, volunteering service, money helper, and given the number for Perpetrators of Domestic abuse. He has been in touch with most of these services and had a job interview as a result of talking to one of the volunteer services. He also has application forms for another 3 jobs, signed up for a relationship workshop and is attending counselling sessions.

Referral B is living with a friend as he couldn't afford the rent where he was. This friend now needs the room. He had an accident in 2010 with permanent injuries including memory issues. He was married but the impact of the accident resulted in divorce. We discussed the Workwell project (see below), and he is interested in this if he hasn't found work by then. Work is an issue as he is an engineer by trade but can no longer understand the drawings. He worked as a delivery driver but due to the injuries, lost that job as was making mistakes. Completed homeless application – given accommodation within 2 days. Ready to start looking for work and will be volunteering in the meantime.

A presentation was given to the North Place partnership Board detailing the progress of the Help Hub pilot and positive feedback was provided by the board.

The success of the pilot can be further evidenced by the successful submission by the council to deliver the Workwell programme. This means that that the council will receive further funding for an additional 18 months, at no cost to the general fund.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

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

Fenland Culture Fund:

Work has started ready to launch the second round of the Fenland Culture Fund in November 2024. This partnership project funded by Arts Council England and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund saw a combined value of more than £34,000 awarded to 19 successful applicants for projects across the district during 2024. The second round will be launched in person with a total value of £50,000 worth of grants available.

Place Partnership Fund: An expression of interest to the Arts Council England Place Partnership was submitted, with Clarion Futures as the lead applicant and FDC as a strategic partner, among other key local partners. If successful, the project will see developed infrastructure and cultural leadership alongside developing festival activity culminating in new district-wide, multi-art festival activity in the summer of 2027. The expression of interest was accepted, and a full application is in development for submission before the end of November.

Fenland Poet Laureate:

Preparations are underway for the 2025 Fenland Poet Laureate Award. It will open for entries in early December and the current Fenland Poet Laureate Hannah Teasdale will be attending various FDC events over the winter period to read her poetry.

Supporting groups to hold public events (Cllr Murphy)

The summer festivals culminated with Whittlesey Festival in September. Local volunteers have worked tirelessly to fund raise this year, gaining several thousand pounds in both public and private sponsorship. This meant that much loved attractions including free children's rides and military displays could be offered.

Despite a torrential down pour at lunchtime the crowds remained, and so did over 100 classic vehicles. Whittlesey Festival Committee is a shining example of local residents and businesses offering their time and skills to deliver incredible things.

Some examples of local volunteers who committed their time and energy include; David Bailey who brought together 2 full stage programmes of musicians, Andrew Stimson for organising over 100 classic vehicles, Marija Lysak for running an all schools art competition and local businessman Carl Flippance who set a website up for the group, through which sponsorship is already being generated. Averil Cosstick, Tina Overton and Jenny Parker worked to generate sponsorship and raise funds.

Over the coming months we will be supporting Wisbech to deliver their Christmas Fayre, providing staffing support to March Christmas market to develop plans for St George's Fayre 2025.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)

Plans are underway for the Pride In Fenland event in 2025

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	9.52 days	10.00 days	11.72	
ARP2	Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	7.37 days	9.00 days	13.34	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	294	250	180	
CELP2	The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work	45%	53%	46%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	86	50	46	
CELP4	Number of Active Fenland sessions delivered and total attendance per year	621	600	789	
CELP5	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	47	38	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP6	Value of Arts, Culture and Creativity Grants achieved in Fenland	£199,000	£201,000	N/A (March 2025)	N/A

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

Comments
The time taken to assess Council Tax Support new claims/changes (ARP1) has not been achieved this month. This is partly down to an increase in claims as Universal Credit migration continues, as well as some host-based system issues experienced in the early part of the year. Focus days have been put in place to address this, the impact of which is starting to be seen (with the in-month performance achieving 9.07 days).

The number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances (ARP2) has not met the target at the end of Quarter 2. Several focus days have been held recently with an emphasis on new claims, the impact of this is starting to be seen (with the in-month performance achieving 9.52 days). We have also made changes to phone rotas and work allocation to improve efficiency.

Environment

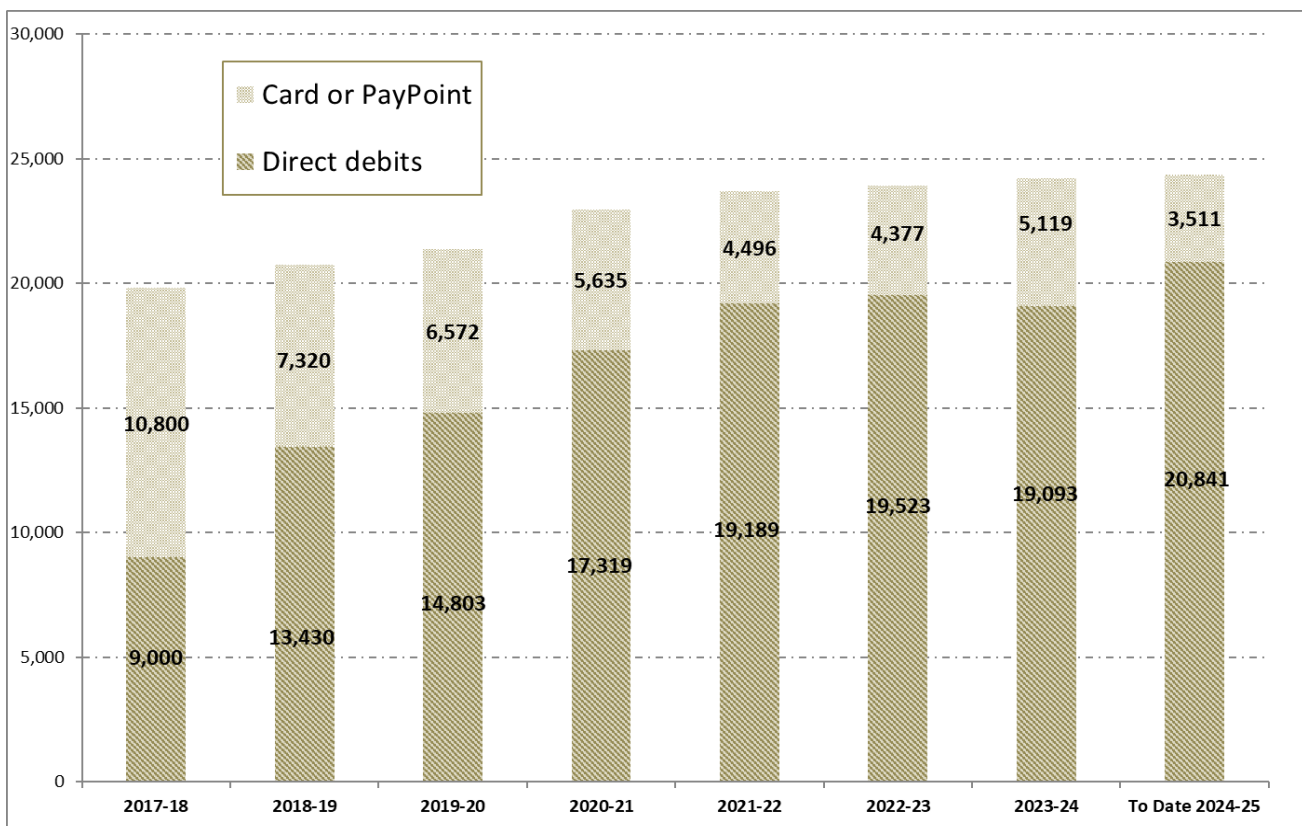
Projects from Business Plan:

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

Garden Waste Collection (Cllr Murphy)

To date this year we have 24,352 subscriptions, with 86% direct debits and a total of £1,111,109 of income to cover the costs of providing the garden waste service. Last year there were a total of 24,212 subscriptions, with 78% direct debits, which generated an income of £985,000. This income covers the costs of providing the service.

Garden Waste Subscriptions 2017-2025



The fees charged for the garden waste service increase as costs for providing the service increase, however with the direct debit fee, Fenland remains one of the lowest priced garden waste services in the Eastern Region.

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.

In the first half of the year, the team have received 774 requests from the public to resolve environmental issues, such as litter, broken glass, flytipping, drug related litter or similar. 90%

(693) of these were attended and dealt with the same or next working 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. Since April, officers have completed 591 surveys for litter and street sweeping and found 578 to be of a suitable standard (98%).

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

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Partnership has delivered jointly procured contracts for the transport, sorting and onward sale of the dry recycling materials collected in blue bins across the area. These contracts commenced in September 2024 and Fenland's dry recycling materials are now being sorted and processed for onward sale by Biffa at their Edmonton plant. This will allow the Council to prepare for the anticipated changes in waste legislation over coming years.

Deliver a competitive trade waste service (Cllr Murphy)

The Council's commercial waste service offers residual, recycling and food waste collections for small to medium sized enterprises across Fenland via wheeled bins and sacks.

The service has 612 customers at present generating just over £250,000 of income in the first half of the year. The team collected a total of 600 tonnes of commercial waste, of which 110 tonnes was recycling or food waste.

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

The Council has received more than £1 million of capital funding from Defra to commence the work developing the food waste services as set out in The Environment Act for April 2026. A cross departmental team will shortly be created to design and manage this project with support from relevant portfolio holders and regular updates to Cabinet and Council.

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 during this time (including August as these were not reported in the previous report). Wisbech rural villages have been the most affected across the district.

Month	Total	Chatteris	March	Whittlesey	Wisbech	Villages
August	173	6	23	14	81	49
Sept	149	7	19	6	75	42
October	176	6	31	9	71	59

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

- 1 female has been issued with a £150 fixed penalty notice for littering in March. This has now been paid.
- 1 male from Wisbech has been issued with a £400 fixed penalty Notice for breaching his householder's duty of care when waste linked back to him was found dumped in Lords Lane.
- 2 Formal Interview Under Cautions have been carried out. All were questioned in connection with waste fund dumped.

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 **6 parking fines** to cars who were found to be parking illegally.

The team have received **a total of 73 reported abandoned vehicles. All were investigated and 5 were removed by our contractor** due to be a danger to the highway.

Maintain parks and open spaces through grounds maintenance contractor (Cllr Murphy)

Fenland and Tivoli, our grounds maintenance contractor continue to work well together. The grass cutting season went very well this year with very few complaints and some compliments received.

Tivoli are into the last year of a 10 year contract now, ending in October 2025, and the Council is currently assessing the best approach to ensure that a cost effective grounds maintenance provider is in place from November 2025 onwards.

Support community groups including Street Pride, In Bloom, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of groups (Cllr Murphy)

In October, a newly appointed environmental projects officer joined the council in order to continue support for the important community volunteers who commit their time to improve the environment.

The Street Pride groups continued to deliver their regular works across the Fenland market towns and villages, ensuring the district remains a clean, safe and pleasant place to live, work and visit.

Whilst there are challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers across the voluntary sector, many of Fenlands Street Pride groups have maintained excellent numbers and utilised their various skill sets to grow their resources through running fundraising events and championing their work. We are immensely proud of our groups for the hard work they commit to maintaining a strong volunteer workforce, which is not limited to our market towns.

Murrow Street Pride meet regularly and have become pillars of their community, regularly running litter picks, planting and even sourcing a community bench and bus shelter for Murrow. They feel their success is largely owed to how they promote the social element to volunteering, by encouraging their volunteers to meet for coffee and cake (and sometimes a pub visit).

Going forward, we are looking to facilitate improved learning and skill sharing between Street Pride groups and find new ways to promote the excellent work they achieve. A new monthly Street Pride Network was launched in October as an opportunity to bring together representatives from all the volunteer groups to discuss what they have been up to and to share successes and challenges. The Network will meet on the last Thursday of each month via Microsoft Teams, chaired by FDC's new Environmental Projects Officer.

Deliver the Council's carbon reduction and climate adaption plan (Cllr Tierney)

Working in partnership with Cambridgeshire Energy and Retrofit Partnership, the allocation of home energy upgrade funding has continued positively in Fenland with 154 properties approved for grant funding. This equates to grant funding in the region of £300,000 in 2024. This is the second year of a 2-year funding stream and the partnership are currently expressing an interest in the Warmer Homes grant funds that may be accessed for 2025 and beyond. Cambridgeshire Combined Authority have also offered support to bridge any gaps between one fund ending and another beginning. The table below shows progress across the county area.

	No. of approved properties	No. of clean heat measures	No. of energy efficiency measures
Cambridge City Council	6	6	17
East Cambridgeshire District Council	85	48	153
Fenland District Council	154	64	259
Huntingdonshire District Council	20	10	31
South Cambridgeshire District Council	66	17	99

In May 2024 the county wide solar together scheme closed as period of the contract had ended. The scheme, which is part of a community switching programme, is open to any resident to enter therefore the Cambridgeshire contract was no longer required.

The council has been successful in accessing a grant under the Net Zero Village fund which is funding made available by the Combined Authority. The grant is a maximum amount of £93,000 with 10% of the fund eligible for assigning to any administrative costs incurred.

The Grant is for capital projects up to the value of £30,000 and only for community assets. For

example, projects could relate to buildings, land, equipment or other capital-related expenditure.

The criteria for the fund includes:

- Tackling energy use and/or support energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings,
- Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport,
- Nature based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings or reduce risk of flooding,

The net zero fund will be launched in December for early expressions of interest from local community groups. Applications will be considered in early 2025 and projects awarded for completion by 2026.

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

There is no further update on the implementation of the CPE project. Currently progress on the implementation of CPE has been paused until such time as additional funding in region of £500,000 is found or committed.

Reference should be made to the joint portfolio holder report for May and the Cabinet report dated 18/12/2023 - Property, Assets & Major Projects – On and Off-Street Parking Enforcement Update Paper.

An alternative for regulating FDC's off-street car parks could be to implement a District Wide off-street parking places order across all FDC owned car parks. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £75,000. Whilst this would not provide enforcement for on-street highway areas, this would enable off-street parking areas owned by FDC to be regulated and enforced which in turn would free up parking spaces associated with misuse and help reduce on-street parking contraventions.

Street Lighting (Cllr French)

Streetlight Repairs & Maintenance

A total of seventy-two streetlight faults were reported and attended to during the months of September and October by Fenlands streetlight maintenance contractor on behalf of FDC, Clarion Housing Association and the seven Parish Councils that FDC provide streetlight services for. Forty-two of the reported faults related to District Council streetlights during this period.

An overview of the fault attendance can be seen below. These figures exclude any programmed replacement or upgrade works.

Fenland DC -	42 Fault Reports
Clarion -	2 Fault Reports
Parish -	28 Fault Reports

The above figures include three faults which required emergency attendance.

The streetlight service provider contract with Cable Test Ltd ended on 3rd November 2024. Following an open national tendered exercise Woodstock Streetlighting Services Ltd from Harlow have been appointed. The contract will initially be for a three-year term with the option to extend for a further two years. The new streetlight repairs, maintenance and replacement works contract commenced on 4th November, however due to some long material lead in times some items required for replacement works are unlikely to be in stock until late December/January.

Capital Streetlight Replacement Works

The vast majority of streetlight replacement or upgrade works ordered through the former contract with CTL were completed at the end of October. Any outstanding works will be carried forward to the new contract with Woodstock. Some permanent connectivity works are still outstanding with UKPN and officers continue to progress these.

The remaining capital streetlight replacement and upgrade works shall be ordered through the new contract with Woodstock following the initial settling in period. The vast majority of the streetlight electrical and structural testing works which commenced in August were completed at the end of October. Testing works associated with approximately 175 streetlights that could not be accessed remain outstanding and will require a return visit. Most of streetlights that could not be accessed was due to vegetation overgrowth.

FDC Car Park Maintenance (Cllr French)

FDC's public car park asset inspections are due to be undertaken in November/December and any associated defects shall be quantified and actioned.

The FDC car park gully and surface water drain cleansing works contract has been tendered and ADC appointed as the service provider for the next three years. Gully cleansing works will commence in January/February 2025 following the seasonal leaf fall.

The car park winter gritting contract has been tendered and Ringway Infrastructure Services appointed for the winter gritting provision.

Progress is being made with the National Trust, associated with the Chapel Road car park lease renewal which is being overseen by the FDC Estates Team. FDC's former lease will hold over on a protected lease arrangement until the new lease agreement has been agreed.

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)

- Rural engagement has taken place in Parson Drove and Manea. There was good attendance at both by partners and public. The Manea session was held at the fire station and might provide a bit of a blueprint for future events.

- A Community Safety Partnership Engagement session took place in March Library on 25/09/2024, coordinated by the community safety team at FDC. It was supported by police, Bobby Scheme and Neighbourhood Watch and Cambs Fire & Rescue. Residents were assisted with issues relating to scams, parking, neighbourhood disputes, and how to access the police complaints procedure.
- FDC Community Safety joined the Police on Safer Business Week where visits were made to retail premises to discuss concerns linked to crime and ASB. This also provided opportunity to restore public confidence in general policing. Businesses engaged well and were provided with advice and guidance on reporting and reducing shoplifting. Information was collated regarding known and new profiled offenders, enabling the neighbourhood police to update their intelligence systems.
- Development and distribution of a reporting leaflet, which gave guidance on who to contact in different situations. The leaflets were developed alongside Police and distributed in partnership.
- FDC staff accompanying Police on high visibility patrols linked to Op Luscombe, the police led partnership approach to tackling street based ASB/nuisance.
- The Third-Party Hate Crime Reporting Centre list for Fenland has been refreshed, with new centres participating in the scheme, including organisations that work primarily with youth and sports such as Martial Arts and Kick Boxing.
- Hate crime awareness sessions held:
 - Diverse Communities Forum annual conference,
 - Clarion Wisbech community day
 - The CSP Wisbech community engagement event in November.
- Under the Safer Streets 5 initiative, a joint FDC and Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) promotion was conducted at a residential area in Wisbech to increase membership of NHW South Brink Scheme. It is expected this session will see the scheme increase from 4 to 14. There were 17 addresses where a calling card was left which may see the 14 increase further.

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

The Diversity Forum was founded to assist in addressing the cultural and structural inequalities around diversity and gain representation on local matters from all parts of our communities. The Council and its partners are keen to engage with local community groups, including Black Minority Ethnic and perceived hard to reach groups. The Forum has representatives from agencies and community groups working across Fenland and neighbouring areas.

Members of the Forum continue to work to minimise community tension and build community cohesion. Members have demonstratable knowledge, experience and expertise in equality and diversity issues so they can make a significant contribution to the work of the partnership,

minimise any potential duplication of effort and maximise and focus on agreed partnership outcomes. The Forum provides ongoing links with and between partners in the statutory, community & voluntary services as well as faith groups.

It also helps celebrate and raise awareness of many key dates such as Diwali, LGBT, Black History & Gypsy Roma Traveller Months, Hate Crime Awareness Week and other key days throughout the year.

All partners work together to provide services that meet the needs of everyone in the community. In order to establish how we can improve services, there are regular group meetings to discuss this, and an agreed DCF action plan is refreshed annually to develop/ deliver projects to assist in integration and provide appropriate Information, Advice and Guidance to help people to access mainstream services. We also work through these contacts to share positive messages back out to the community, on the importance of good community relations and counter misinformation to resolve tensions before they can escalate.

The action plan has six agreed themes to achieve the change partners seek.

- Better life opportunities – Education, aspiration and skills;
- People have a sense of belonging to the area – Improving access to services;
- People have a sense of belonging – Integration and celebration;
- Positive relationships within & between communities – including crime reduction & promoting a safer community;
- Diversity is valued – supporting the most vulnerable people;
- Health & Welfare.

The partnership action plan is driven, coordinated and managed through a core partnership group and primarily focuses on positive community outcomes. All proposals are then shared and agreed with our local community and agreed or tweaked following this engagement. An example of the partnership's work is shown below

Members of the DCF assist, have supported Western/ Eastern European communities to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme who otherwise were unable to apply due to lack of language, literacy or computer skills who otherwise would not have been able to apply.

The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is a registration process for EU nationals and their family members who wish to stay in the UK after the UK left the EU. All EU nationals who do not have British citizenship will need to apply for settled status.

The EU Settlement Scheme (also referred to as Indefinite Leave to Remain) allows people who came here from Europe prior to BREXIT to continue to live, work and study here in the UK. It also means that they continue to be eligible for:

- public services, such as healthcare and schools
- public funds and pensions
- British citizenship if you want to apply and meet the requirements.

The latest local quarterly figures show the numbers of people who have obtained settled status in Fenland and other local authorities nearby:

- Cambridge – 35,340 – very high numbers of Italians – previous quarter 34,710 people.
- ECDC – 8,560 previous quarter 8140.

- Fenland – 20,640 – previously the last quarter showed 20,080 people, of these 6,230 people were from Lithuania, 5,730 people from Bulgaria. We have one of the largest Bulgarian communities in the East of England for a district council and only Boston outside of a large Town/ City has more Bulgarian people. From the figures and feedback from the community the Bulgarian population continues to grow, and anecdotal information also states that many Bulgarians are relocating to Fenland from other areas. These numbers are not included in this information as they may have gained settled status elsewhere in the UK.
- Hunts – 14,260 previous quarter 14,010 people.
- WNKLCB – 15,000 previous quarter 14,540.
- Peterborough – 75,150 previous quarter 74,350 people.
- SCDC – 14,400 previous quarter 14,010.
- S Holland – 21,200 previous quarter 20,820.

If people do have settled status, then they can then be out of the UK for 5 years (4 years if they are Swiss) without losing their status. Returning to the UK for visits will 'reset the clock' so they can be away for a further 5 (or 4 if you are Swiss) years – people need to carefully keep the evidence of returning to the UK or they can lose this status/ right to remain in the UK.

Community Safety Grant Agreement updates (Cllr Wallwork)

- Signposted a victim of domestic abuse who was looking for help with several areas including housing, cost of living and children special education needs. The customer attended a rural engagement event and whilst the advice sought wasn't primarily about community safety, we were able to support them with appropriate advice. At the same event we were able to help support and signpost a person who was seeking advice linked to their hearing loss. Arrangements were also made for Cambs Fire & Rescue to contact them to provide advice on smoke alarms
- An elderly customer suffering from complex health issues who presented to FDC extremely distressed, was supported with concerns about a long-standing neighbourhood dispute with their neighbour. The customer was taken to safe space in Fenland Hall to understand their concerns. Joint visits with police were made to the customer and the alleged perpetrator in an attempt to resolve the situation.
- Worked with Streetscene to look at options for dealing with cars advertising services without permission – this has been an ongoing project where we have looked at all options open to us to best deal with the problems including reaching out to other councils for advice.
- Ongoing ASB/Environmental/Empty Homes Case. Subject's house was in a poor state of repair, insecure, and overgrown garden that were attracting young people who were causing nuisance which was negatively impacting the immediate neighbour and others nearby. The subject and owner of the house was not engaging with FDC teams. Following the serving of a Closure warning notice the subject contacted FDC and agreed to work with FDC and take action to improve the overall situation. This remains an on-going piece of work involving regular contact with the owner and site visits to continue to offer support and advice.
- Potential waste management operation and storage of collected goods had blighted a

private residents car park linked to a residential area. Community Safety working with planning enforcement, licencing and external partners appears to have satisfactorily resolved the situation.

- Op Luscombe, the police led partnership response to street based ASB in Wisbech, continues and is referenced in the above section. Additional patrol activity is provided through external UKSPF funding.
- ASB Hotspot initiative (Op Dante) continues to provide greater police visibility in two geographic areas of Wisbech. Access to the OP Dante community fund has been successful for a match funded CCTV camera and a current bid is under consideration for portable floodlights which will allow young people to participate in physical activity during the winter months.
- UKSPF ASB project has entered its final stages. Work is being undertaken to ensure all allocated funding is spent before the March 31st, 2025, deadline.

Serious Violence Duty (SVD)

- Two projects being delivered by the CSP following a successful bid for funding to the OPCC (Police Crime Commissioner)/SVD project lead.
- Partnership work involving County Council, Fenland District Council, Police and a range of CIC Youth Groups and private enterprises.
- Focussed on Chatteris, March and Whittlesey. Wisbech secured other funding for similar project work led by the County Council.
- Youth Detached Outreach work
- Engagement in social media
- Participation in sport
- Opportunities for coaching/mentoring

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

The CCTV shared service has successfully maintained its 100% operational status across a 24/7 period, 365 days a year.

From April to 31 October 2024, the CCTV service responded to 778 incidents, an increase of 39 compared to the previous year, across our four market towns. These incidents included:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Criminal damage
- Violent crime
- Illegal drug use
- Possession of weapons
- Theft

As a direct result of CCTV intervention, 124 arrests were made by Cambridgeshire Police, marking a significant increase of 39 arrests from last year. This underscores the important role CCTV services play in supporting the council and partners in crime response, enhancing community safety, and reducing the fear of crime.

In addition to its reactive response capabilities, the CCTV service remains proactive in addressing crime and anti-social behaviour by conducting regular camera patrols of the four market towns and other key locations. Since April, the CCTV team has completed 2,867 patrols, ensuring that:

- Communities are monitored around the clock.
- Any issues or concerns are identified and managed promptly, regardless of the time of day or night.

The CCTV service also provides the council's 'out of hours' telephone contact services, managing a variety of urgent matters, such as:

- Homelessness
- Stray and lost dogs
- Cleansing incidents
- Dangerous buildings and structures
- Environmental complaints

From April to 31 October 2024, the team has responded to over 218 calls, delivering vital support to council functions outside of regular working hours.

Additionally, the CCTV service recently completed a joint procurement process with Peterborough City Council for a new CCTV maintenance contract. This contract, covering both preventative and planned maintenance, is critical to ensuring the system operates efficiently, effectively, and meets the required quality standards. The new contract will:

- Replace the existing contract starting on 3rd January 2025.
- Cover a five-year term, with an option to extend by two years under annual increments.
- Provide a robust and comprehensive maintenance strategy to secure the system's longevity and reliability.
- All done within the budget envelope for maintenance of the system.

Street Drinking Update (Cllr Wallwork)

- Community stakeholder meeting took place in October to discuss the issues at the Octavia Gardens area, Wisbech. Several actions were agreed at this meeting and further opportunities are being investigated. Positive actions include more police patrols, better signage, newer CCTV and a resident's advisory and support leaflet. Funding opportunities are also being explored to assist with the project.
- Regular Op Luscombe Patrols appear to be having a positive impact, including the joint police/FDC patrol time. We are ensuring patrols are completed at different times and days.
- During Business Awareness Week, feedback from retailers/business owners indicated the visible police activity was having a positive influence.
- Generally repeat offenders are not coming to notice during joint patrol activity which suggests the tiered support/intervention approach is working in the main.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 22/23	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP7	Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	93%	90%	88%	
CELP8	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	97%	93%	98%	
CELP9	% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling (1 month in arrears)	26.6%	28%	26.7%	
CELP10	Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services	93.6%	90%	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP11	Customer satisfaction with our garden waste service	89.8%	85%	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP12	Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	255	204	115	
CELP13	% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	100%	95%	100%	
CELP14	% of those asked who are satisfied with events	97%	90%	97%	

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

Comments

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 (EG) team hosted the recently recruited CPCA Sector Specialists for a tour of Fenland, including the site of the proposed Advanced Manufacturing Park in Chatteris, the proposed Science and Technology Park in Whittlesey, PCML in March and Del Monte in Wisbech. The EG team presented the benefits to businesses of locating in Fenland and sector clusters in the District.

Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)

Attendance at networking events in association with Fenland Chamber of Commerce, Fenland Network and North Cambridgeshire Training Centre.

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

The Estates team remain actively engaged with tenants of all sites. Overall occupancy across the investment estate remains high at 94.1%

All industrial units are fully occupied.

Boathouse occupancy has now risen to 100%.

South Fens Business Centre (SFBC) has fallen to 62.6%

Disappointingly we continue to have had a high turnover of tenants at SFBC. However, the relaxation of the rents we are able to charge is assisting the estate manager in pursuing new tenants or where applicable retaining existing ones.

Skills Update (Cllr Benney)

The EG Team attended the CPCA Skills Provider Forum and are working with the new CPCA Skills Team on their projects to improve skills in the CPCA area – All Age Careers Service, Digital Badges and Internships. The Fenland for Business Newsletter is used to inform businesses of the skills support available.

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)

During September and October, 50 business support interventions were undertaken where food hygiene rating scores were awarded. The number of high scoring business remains positive. Two businesses requested a rescore very quickly after resolving issues of non-compliance with food safety requirements.

Food Hygiene Rating / Month	5	4	3	2	1	0
September	20	2	0	0	0	0
October	23	2	0	1	1	1
Total	43	4	0	1	1	1

During this time the food standards agency also announced 15 food alerts for serious contamination issues such as peanut and food poisoning risks such as salmonella. All of these products were removed from shelves by retailers.

With Christmas-time approaching, the number of inspections will reduce until 2025 as business premises become very busy and have limited capacity to meet with council staff.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

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

The vacancies within the Development Management and Enforcement team have remained and the service is still staffed by 3. no agency staff. These officers are still required to deliver the service and to deal with the backlog generated over the extended period of vacancies.

The scheme of delegation, which decides which planning applications are determined by committee as opposed to officers, has been amended and a greater level of delegation has been provided to officers. However, the level of delegation is still significantly below the Government guidance of 90%. This continues to put pressure on the ability for Officer's to meet the statutory deadlines for planning applications. This is particularly relevant for the smaller and less controversial planning applications. The resulting impact is also of lengthy meeting agendas, or additional meetings, and the associated significant impact on those engaged in delivery.

The Planning Service has recently introduced a new offer, both in terms of options and fees, for the pre-application service. As well as this a new Local Validation List has recently been adopted. The new list is aimed at speeding up the validation process, whilst providing a clearer direction to Developers and Agents.

The Planning Policy team have recently undertaken a review of work undertaken to date on the emerging Local Plan. This review has indicated that a number of key evidence documents need to be reviewed and updated before we can pull together the Publication Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19 consultation document). There may also be a need to undertake some additional consultation with key stakeholders but the scope and timing of any engagement is still to be determined and would be linked to material changes in evidence. The Planning Policy team are keen to undertake further engagement with Elected Members to better understand current place priorities and help ensure that emerging policies deliver good growth

for Fenland - an initial meeting with Members will be set up in the new year.

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

As the year enters the second half, we have had to revise the total number of units expected in the current financial year down slightly as some of the project delivery timelines have slipping into 2025/26.

The revised forecast total of affordable units for 2024/25 is now 210. This is therefore not dissimilar to last year's total of 244. Additional units may still fall into the current financial year as some are due in March/April.

Looking forward

- 12 known developments with target delivery in 2025/26 of 400+ affordable units including 3 sites that are looking to deliver 290 units as 100% affordable developments (2 in March, 1 in Whittlesey)
- Currently 3 known developments with target delivery in 2026/27 of 250+ affordable units.

External funding bid and major projects updates (Cllr Boden)

Long-Term Plan for Towns, Wisbech (Cllr Hoy, Cllr Tierney, Cllr Wallwork)

Fenland District Council in partnership with the Wisbech Town Board are in a positive position in relation to the Long-Term Plans For Towns programme.

The Board have successfully drafted and approved in principle both the 3-year investment plan and the 10 year vision documents. The Board will be in a position to submit this work as soon as Government announce revisions and/or the opening of the application process.

Following the most recent budget, it was confirmed that the £20m funding will not be cancelled, however it will be revised and re-visited. This means there may be an element of change that the Town Board need to implement once further guidance is received, but the board remains in a strong position, nonetheless.

Further updates will follow once Government release further information/guidance.

Accommodation Review (Cllr Boden)

A confidential report was considered by Cabinet on 30 September which presented a short list of possible future accommodation options. Cabinet agreed their preferred option is the acquisition of Hereward Hall.

The confirmation of a preferred option does not commit FDC to any course of action at this stage as a final decision is dependent on

- The results of a Full Business Case
- A formal decision by Cambridgeshire County Council that Hereward Hall is an asset that they wish to dispose of. This decision was confirmed by CCC on 15/10
- A separate formal decision by CCC to agree the sale of Hereward Hall.

The Full Business Case is currently being commissioned which will ultimately be presented to Members for consideration. If Members agree the Full Business Case this will initiate the implementation of the Accommodation Review project (subject to the CCC decision as outlined above).

The Corporate Accommodation Review forms a fundamental element of the Councils work in seeking to reduce costs and/ or make savings without any impact on service provision to our customers.

Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (Cllr Benney)

Significant work has been undertaken by the Economic Growth Team during September and October to process as many grant applications as possible and submit funding claims to the CPCA. All the SPF & REPF projects are on track and delivering.

One of the Community & Place REPF original projects to improve the currently empty and unused space at Station Road Cemetery Chapel in March is expected to be replaced by an extension to the King Edward Community Centre in Chatteris. This is due to cost proposals received from contractors being excessive and the resultant value for money being so poor.

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

The March Future Highstreets Fund Project continues to make significant strides in its objective to regenerate and revitalise the town centre of March. This initiative, supported by the UK Government's Future High Streets Fund, aims to create a vibrant, sustainable, and attractive town centre for the benefit of local residents, businesses, and visitors. This report provides an update on key developments, including the completion of major schemes, ongoing initiatives, and planned future activities.

Key Achievements and Progress

The project has made significant progress in a number of key areas, and the following highlights demonstrate the positive impact being achieved:

Broad Street Capital Regeneration Scheme

The practical completion of the Broad Street regeneration scheme represents a major milestone in the project. Delivered in partnership with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), this project has transformed the appearance and functionality of the area. The scheme included improvements to the streetscape, better pedestrian facilities, enhanced green spaces, and upgraded lighting. Feedback from the public and key partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting the improved aesthetic appeal and increased footfall in the area.

Completion of the Marketplace Regeneration

The regeneration of the Marketplace, which forms a central focal point of March's high street, has also been successfully completed. The improvements to this space have enhanced its appeal as a community hub, with better seating areas, more greenery, and improved pedestrian walkways.

Barclays Building – Purchase and Demolition Planning

A key acquisition in the project is the successful purchase of the former Barclays Bank

building. Planning is now underway for its demolition, with the aim of redeveloping the site that will further support the regeneration goals of the town centre. This redevelopment will provide an opportunity to create additional retail, commercial, or community space that will further bolster the high street's vibrancy.

Shopfront Grants and Local Business Support

The shopfront grants scheme is ongoing, with 30 expressions of interest (EOIs) received from local businesses keen to upgrade their premises. Full applications will be sought throughout December with works planned for the new year.

March Toilet Block – Tendering Process

March toilet block is now out to tender, with construction scheduled to begin in January 2025.

Next Steps and Future Developments

The project team, in collaboration with the Member Steering Group, is actively exploring opportunities to maximize the remaining underspend, with a focus on enhancing the infrastructure and accessibility of the town centre. Key planned initiatives include:

Gray's Lane Resurfacing and Crossing Improvements

A full resurfacing of Gray's Lane has been completed and this has been made possible in partnership with CPCA MATS funding underspend being shared across the project. Alongside this improvement the installation of crossing improvements across the town are already in the planning stages, with work expected to commence throughout December.

City Road Car Park Expansion

Plans are currently being costed to create additional parking spaces within the City Road car park. This expansion will help accommodate the increased footfall in the town centre and will offset the loss of Broadstreet parking spaces for the town.

March Gateway Physical Regeneration

A small-scale physical regeneration project is being considered for the March Gateway area outside the Iceland building on High Street. This project aims to create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre, enhancing the first impression for visitors and residents to the town centre. The plans include using the same urban design principles as Broad Street and the marketplace to enhance continuity through the town.

11-12 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Boden, Cllr Hoy & Cllr Tierney) and 24 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Boden, Cllr Hoy & Cllr Tierney)

Please see recent Cabinet Reports.

The Elms, Chatteris (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney, Cllr Tierney)

Final layout to account for flood risk analysis is agreed to undertake pre planning application process.

Nene Waterfront Development (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney, Cllr Tierney)

Extra Care scheme design being finalised for planning and options being finalised for remaining 4 plots.

Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)

Chatteris Projects

The Chatteris Town Council managed Chatteris Museum project is now almost complete. The museum has moved into its new premises (the old Barclay's bank building in the High Street) as scheduled. There is a slight problem with rising damp in the museum, as the Council was not permitted to put in a damp proof course, but the cause is being investigated and hopefully a solution will be found within the remaining budget.

The building works are now complete at Church Lane and the Town Council moved back in during September. Members are very pleased with the works which have been carried out and are enjoying the refurbished council chambers.

The community rooms are already being used. Citizens Advice are in every Wednesday running a drop-in service, Specsavers are renting a room twice a week to carry out hearing tests (a service previously lacking in Chatteris) and MarketPlace are making use of a room twice a month. Other groups have shown an interest and hopefully more rooms will be used in the New Year.

The two residential flats above the Council Chambers are occupied and the tenants appear to be happy with their bright, warm and modern accommodation. The rental income will help to keep down the council tax and allow the Council to give even greater support to groups in the town - such as the Christmas Lights committee and the Museum.

The Town Council is delighted to report that the project has been delivered within budget and is very grateful to the Combined Authority for the funding.

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 (please see update on page 39).
- Add additional solar PV to the Manor swimming pool;
Business case developed. Procurement phase completed, awaiting results. Application to UKPN underway – awaiting notice from UKPN to proceed, prior to an order being placed. Expectation is that the solar will be fitted early in the new year – subject to UKPN G99 notice permission.
- Whittlesey Buttercross
Work is yet to commence on the minor improvements in this area.

Wisbech Projects

Please find below minutes arising from the Wisbech Town Council's Resources Committee meeting held on 28.10.24:

Members considered re-allocation, subject to the approval of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), of the sum of £33,800 which had been awarded to Wisbech Town Council by the CPCA for the implementation of a new Shop Watch radio scheme in Wisbech.

Councillors Hoy and Wallwork informed members of the reasons why the proposed Shop Watch radio scheme would no longer be a viable proposition, both from a technical and operational perspective.

There was discussion by members of possible alternative schemes for the use of the funding which been awarded by the CPCA to the Town Council.

The Clerk (and RFO) informed members that he had discussed with the relevant officer at the CPCA the possibility/feasibility of the re-allocation of this funding to another capital project and had received a positive response. Members were informed by the Clerk (and RFO) that the CPCA would be particularly supportive of a scheme which would add value to schemes which had already received funding under the CPCA's Market Towns Programme, such as the developments and improvements in Wisbech Park.

Members were informed by the Clerk (and RFO) that the deadline for spending monies from the Market Towns Programme is 31 March 2025.

Members decided that the Shop Watch radio scheme no longer be pursued and that an application be made to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the funding which had been allocated to Wisbech Town Council for the implementation of such scheme to be re-allocated to fund the installation of a new electricity supply at Wisbech Park (to support the delivery of activities and events that benefit the community).

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 engage as a key stakeholder in the ongoing accommodation review and to work with appointed agents in preparation of and the presentation of the full business case to members in due course.

The first tranche of disposal continues as planning consents are granted followed by either a sale via auction or by private treaty. In the case of private treaty sales, to ensure fair value an independent valuation by a local RICS qualified surveyor is undertaken prior to disposal. Receipts to date have amounted to £486K with an additional £275K agreed in principle

Work has now concluded in relation to identifying potential sites for a further tranche of disposals, and these will be discussed with members for approval in due course prior to any disposal work commencing.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

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

Whittlesea Station

The Outline Business Case (OBC) is continuing to progress. Following a public consultation in late 2023, the CPCA approved up to £3 million pounds for Whittlesea Station from April 2024 to end of March 2027. The grant funding agreement with the combined authority is nearing completion. The Project Board have been reviewing options for the Station looking at the potential to lengthen the platforms and provide a pedestrian bridge along with car parking and access arrangements. Early-stage feasibility work is assessing what might be possible within the constraints of the station site. Further details about the Whittlesea Station funding are available here [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx)

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

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

There is no specific update on this project.

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 latest version was adopted in November 2023 by the CPCA Board. This version of the document includes the full LTCP with the district chapters, the main report and all the appendices. It can be viewed from the link below.

[CMIS > Meetings](#)

Wisbech Access Strategy

There is no specific update on 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 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

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.

The following are currently being progressed following approval by the CPCA to draw down an additional £7million pounds for spend between 2024 and 2026 in July 2024:

- A141 / Twenty Foot Road Signals scheme delivery
- High Street / St Peter's Road Traffic Signal Improvements scheme delivery
- Development of a full business case and detailed design work for Northern Industrial Link Road (NILR)

The link below provides further details of the July 2024 meeting.

[Agenda for Transport and Infrastructure Committee on Monday, 22nd July, 2024, 1.00 pm](#)

Additional delivery funding is required for the A141 / Peas Hill Roundabout Upgrade (52m ICD), including the creation of an all-movement signalised junction at the A141 / Hostmoor Avenue Junction.

March to Wisbech Railway Line

There is no specific update for this project. An update is expected at the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee in November 2024.

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. 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. 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 late 2024 or early 2025.

Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project is being 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 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

Base line data reports and option development has been completed along with the case for change. Stakeholder workshops have also been completed to seek wider technical input. The project remains on target.

A public consultation is being held during October and November 2024. This is to explain the work that has been completed to date and to seek the views of local people on the scheme options. Further information and the consultation boards can be found from the link below.

[Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC Consultation Survey](#)

Work with CPCA to influence housing and infrastructure funding to stimulate housing development and economic growth (Cllr Boden)

The Council is working collaboratively with the CPCA and constituent Councils of the CPCA to submit a Local Growth Plan by the summer of 2025. This will link to the Comprehensive Spending review and the emerging National Industrial Strategy.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 21/22	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	92.5%	70%	94%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	68%	70%	86%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	85.75%	80%	88%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	94.2%	95%	94%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	95%	97%	85%	

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

Comments

Quality Organisation

Projects from Business Plan:

Excellent Customer Service

Customer Service Excellence accreditation (Cllr Tierney)

Our annual assessment took place on 13th June 2024, and we were successfully re-accredited with the Customer Service Excellence Standard (CSE) for another year.

The CSE is a national government benchmark for excellence in customer service, awarded to public service organisations that demonstrate excellent customer service standards and a customer-focused culture.

The standard is awarded after a rigorous assessment process which involves organisations being evaluated against 57 criteria areas. The assessment places focus on using and developing customer insight, the culture of the organisation, customer information and access, delivery, timeliness, and quality of service.

The achievement underscores the Council's commitment to continuous improvement and providing the highest quality service to our customers.

Our independent assessor Neil Potentier found that the Council "continues to demonstrate how they put residents at the heart of service delivery", with examples of reduced Council Tax, introduction of new services, such as the Early Help Hub, and extending digital access while maintaining traditional channels for the elderly, vulnerable or people who do not have a digital access.

Additionally, six elements which were awarded CSE 'Compliance Plus' in 2023 were reviewed and maintained, recognising the Council's continued adherence to best practices.

Key strengths highlighted in the assessment report include:

- High levels of staff insight increased further, empowering staff to implement their own ideas to improve service delivery.
- New customer access channels created through Council's ongoing Transformation Project, and new services.
- Number and range of partner organisations is constantly increasing to meet the needs of a diverse community, including areas of deprivation.
- Strategies, policies and procedures "strongly influenced" by resident insight.

Supporting vulnerable customers with complex queries (Cllr Wallwork)

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

Elections Update (Cllr Boden)

Changes to European Union Voting and Candidacy Rights (EUVCR)

As previously reported, from 7 May 2024, following a change to legislation, European Union (EU) electors will only be able to vote or stand at Local Government elections in England if they are:

- a qualifying EU citizen - a citizen from EU countries with reciprocal agreements with the UK, currently Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain (referred to as the EU5), or
- an EU citizen with retained rights - EU citizens from other EU countries who were legally resident in the UK before 31 December 2020 (referred to as the EU19)

Eligibility Confirmation Review Process (ECR)

We carried out an ECR on any electors that were not confirmed as a qualifying EU Citizen via a DWP data check and by local data checks carried out by the team.

We wrote to all affected electors to explain the situation and to either confirm they are entitled to remain on the Electoral Register or to ask them to confirm one of the qualifying statuses above. Approx 5000 electors were confirmed as a qualifying EU citizen, 800 electors were sent a reminder to respond, and personal visits/deliveries were undertaken by Canvassers where necessary.

The process is now complete and 603 electors who confirmed that they were not a qualifying EU citizen or those who failed to respond were sent a notice and removed from the electoral roll.

Annual Canvass 2024

As previously reported, the start of the annual canvass project this year was delayed when the snap Parliamentary General Election was announced. Because of this delay, the canvass timetable had to be pushed back, and the revised register will be published on 1 February 2025.

Households of matched properties with email addresses held in the system, who are allocated to Route 1 were sent a Canvass Communication A (CCA) email in August. We sent emails to approximately 25,000 households.

After the email deadline, non-responding households and those without email addresses received a CCA letter and households of unmatched properties allocated to Route 2 received a *Canvass Communication B (CCB) letter*. *These 39,000 letters were hand delivered by Canvassers.*

A total of 7669 reminders were sent by post to non-responding Route 2 households in September and Canvassers are currently completing household visits to 3828 addresses.

3C's Update (Cllr Tierney) – CW

August – October 2024	Total received	On time	% On time
Correspondence			
	33	24	73%
Stage 1			
CELP	28	21	75%
GI	0	N/A	N/A
PRCS	13	12	92%
Stage 2			
CELP	4	2	50%
GI	0	N/A	N/A
PRCS	3	3	100%
Stage 3			
CELP	0	N/A	N/A
GI	0	N/A	N/A
PRCS	2	2	100%

Governance, Financial Control & Risk Management

Finance and internal audit updates (Cllr Boden)

The contractor Auditor finished at FDC at the end of September and a permanent auditor had already started. Work against the agreed Audit Plan continues although a significant number of days has been resourced towards completion of the 2023/24 audits which has impacted the 2024/25 Plan. The training burden of a new starter has created another impact on the Plan. However, progress to date for the year shows that 6 audits have been completed from the 2024/25 Plan with a further 2 at draft report stage and 3 more in progress. Issues from audits completed will be included in the Progress Report to ARMC in December.

It is anticipated that some audits may need to be removed from the Plan or carried forward to

next year in order to accommodate capacity and capability. This will be discussed with the Chair and notified in the Progress Report to Committee.

Internal Audit sits on the Corporate Governance Group and Risk Management Group, has participated in other ad hoc working groups, and assisted with/advised on various Transformation issues as they arise (port, overtime, car loans scheme, debt policy, performance indicators).

We are currently reviewing all outstanding and overdue agreed audit actions to ensure they are either implemented or progress is underway. This will be reported to ARMC at the December meeting.

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 in Private Sector Housing and ARP requiring no further action. The breaches were human error that resulted in information being given to third parties not entitled to receive the information.

In the same period, there have been 5 data subject access requests.

Transformation and Efficiency

Transformation Project updates (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

Transformation - Our Aims

Transformation Agenda 2 (TA2) is building on the successes of TA1. The TA2 programme outlines how the Council is moving forward to provide more value and benefits to residents and businesses in the district and aims to further accelerate the process of modernisation across the council, enabling the delivery of high quality, cost-effective, efficient services in a challenging environment.

TA2 aims to drive significant change and innovation throughout the Council and help us provide the very best outcomes with the resources available. It includes the following:

- Be a modern, innovative, and dynamic organisation.
- Achieve a sustainable financial future successfully addressing the potential financial deficit
- Develop a skilled and flexible workforce
- Deliver more purposeful, high-quality services to meet customer needs at reduced cost to the Council.

Transformation – Our Principles



Transformation – Our Approach

Service reviews represent the majority share of the TA2 Programme. There are currently 31 services across the council, each of which are included in the service review programme. All services have completed a matrix that has been analysed by the transformation team. The completed matrices inform the Service Prioritisation score.

The Service Prioritisation Score is calculated by multiplying the potential risk factors score by the potential opportunities score. This ensures reviews are prioritised for services which represent the greatest potential savings, risk management and wider opportunities.

The scores inform the timing of the associated Transformation Team service review, prioritising those with the greatest potential for cashable savings, risk mitigation as well as wider scale efficiencies. The Service Review timings have been agreed by CMT and Management Team and are mapped on the resulting Transformation Programme Plan.

Transformation – Our Successes

- In addition to the £1m cashable savings achieved in TA1 a further £105.5k of cashable savings have been achieved as a direct result of TA2
- Service reviews have resulted in a further £6.8k of income generation, £17k of cost avoidance and £7.6k in debt reduction
- In addition, the service reviews have also released Officer capacity as a result of introducing more efficient processes and maximising the use of technology releasing 1,800 officer hours in 2023/24 and on course to release a further 2,000 officer hours in 2024/25.

Service Reviews currently In Progress

- Public Health Funerals, add resilience.
- Cemeteries Service Review, remove risk and improve processes.
- Finance Service Review. Better administrative processes.
- My Fenland Contact Centre
- Garden Waste Direct Debit process automation

- Sports Development Service Review.
- ARP Service Review, optimise relationships
- Marine Service Review, reduce risk and officer efficiencies.
- Housing Options Service Review.
- Private Sector Housing
- Environmental Services
- Environmental Health
- Fleet, reduce costs and risk
- Planning Service, save officer time

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

Individual project updates are as detailed elsewhere in this report. A full review of 2022-23 was published in the Annual Report as approved by Cabinet on 17th July 2023. The report is available on our website. A review of 2023-24 was presented to Cabinet in September 2024.

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 = 11. We also created an additional 2 news articles we published on our website.

Highlights include:

- Customer Service Excellence quality mark maintained by Fenland District Council
- Discover services and support available to the over 60s at free event
- Apply now for £10k to help your farm or business
- Don't lose your vote! Residents in Fenland urged to check their voter registration details
- Don't lose your vote! Residents in Fenland urged to check their voter registration details
- March town centre regeneration enters final phase
- Consultation launched as district council reviews local validation requirements for planning applications

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in October = 10. We also created an additional 2 news articles we published on our website.

Highlights include:

- Customer Service Excellence quality mark maintained by Fenland District Council.
- Much tougher penalties for littering, fly-tipping and flyposting
- District Council investigates moving headquarters as part of accommodation review
- Chance to chat all things rail at latest Meet the Manager event

- Respects paid to former Councillor and Mayor of Wisbech
- Appeal to donate Christmas gifts for Fenland's older people
- Consultation launched as latest stage of Wimblington and Stonea Neighbourhood Plan gets underway

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, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts:

September:

Twitter = 115
 Facebook = 106
 LinkedIn = 59

October:

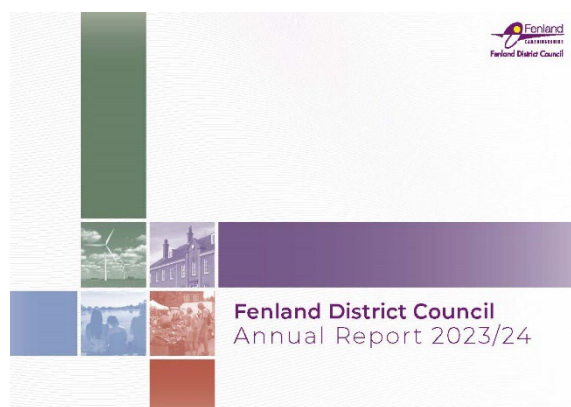
Twitter = 110
 Facebook = 120
 LinkedIn = 62

We currently have 8,106 followers on Facebook, 8,749 followers on twitter and 1,835 on LinkedIn.

Consultation Summary:

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – 8 July – 15 September 2024
- Fenland Play Zones – August – 8 September 2024
- Draft Local Validation List – September – 14 October
- Whittlesey Relief Road – 23 October – 22 November
- Wimblington and Stonea Neighbourhood Plan – 28 October – 9 December

Annual Report 2023/24



The Annual Report of the Council 2023/24 sets out the Council's performance over the last year, linking to the priorities detailed in our Business Plan. These priorities are designed to deliver outcomes that improve the quality of life for Fenland residents and are listed under the key headings of Communities, Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation.

The achievements outlined in the Annual Report are not exhaustive but reflect some of our successful projects over the last year. Notable examples are given of how we have worked closely with the community and partners to tackle important local issues in a collaborative and efficient way.

Like other local authorities, Fenland District Council faces significant financial challenges and increased demand upon services. Nevertheless, we continue to provide high quality services whilst keeping our budget balanced.

Our Cabinet members have also committed to building on the success of the transformation agenda and to develop a second phase. Spanning across all services within the council, the Transformation Agenda 2 programme ties together all major change initiatives that are looking to improve how the council works and delivers services. The programme will aim to ensure we are an effective and efficient council for the future.

Cabinet approved the Annual Report of the Council 2023/24 on 30 September 2024.

Asset Management and Commercialisation

Capital Programme and Corporate Asset Management Plan updates (Cllr Boden)

A capital update report will be taken to Cabinet on 16th December as part of the draft budget process for 2025-26.

The current Asset Management Plan (AMP) is out of date and a new version is currently being worked on. It is anticipated that the first draft of this will be produced in Q1 2025.

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 2024, £4m of this facility has been utilised to fund the acquisition of a commercial investment in Wisbech and a house in March. These acquisitions were approved at Investment Board meetings held on 16th March 2021 and 3rd December 2021 respectively. Further utilisation of this facility was used to fund the development of the two sites now owned by Fenland Future Ltd in line with the agreed Business Plan for 2024/25 has now been agreed.

The Commercial Investment in Wisbech has delivered a rental income of £230k every year since acquisition in March 2021 and continues to be on track for 2024/25. 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.

The most recent updates on the work of the Investment Board were presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 15 July 2024. The annual report on Investment Board activity was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee held on 21 October 2024.

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 also 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 (appraisal) discussion and regular 121's, which include a discussion about the learning needs and aspirations for each member of staff
- Recruitment

In the first few months of this financial year, we have arranged and delivered numerous development interventions based on the requests of our workforce, such as:

- IT skills courses
- Qualified project management skills courses

- Fire safety training
- First Aid training.
- People management skills workshops

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.

This year we will be carrying out pulse surveys for our staff via our new HR/Payroll system app to obtain more immediate feedback.

Enforcement

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

5 Market Place, Wisbech

Works have been approved to remediate the damage caused by the fire. At this time it appears that the works being carried out are in accordance with the approved remedial works.

A review of fixed penalty notices for environmental crimes has been undertaken and each fine increased to be in keeping with near neighbours and government guidance.

Fixed penalty notices for fly tipping are now £600 or £1000 (reduced to £450 or £850 if paid within 10 days) depending on the scale of the fly tip.

Littering, fly posting and graffiti are now £300 (£250 if paid within 10 days) and duty of care offences are £600 (£450 if paid within 10 days).

These new fines will be implemented from November 2024. The increased values of these fines will support the council in meeting increasing costs of investigation of environmental crimes, cost of waste disposal and act as a deterrent.

Health & Safety

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

Work continues to drive forward improvements in health and safety management where required, with ongoing progress to deliver our objectives as set out in the health and safety action plan. Some of the actions are highlighted below:

- The final 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 7.71, which is an increase of 1.4 on the previous.
- Health and Safety corporate training was delivered to a total of 65 staff.
- A programme of audits and inspections undertaken.

The internal development and roll out of various health and safety e-learning courses has continued during the reporting year, with Health and Safety Management and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) added to the available courses.

A key part of the function of Corporate Health and Safety is the provision of policies, codes of practice (COPs) and guidance to provide managers and employees with the necessary support to meet their health and safety obligations.

The Council has a programme of ongoing review and implementation to support effective health and safety management.

Health and safety training needs are identified in several ways including springboards, regular one to ones, team meetings and through the Council's Health and Safety Panel. A corporate health and safety matrix has been developed during the reporting year which is now available on the health and safety intranet pages. This details all courses available either via e-learning, internally or externally delivered and which courses are applicable to specific services/teams.

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 \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

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

Office 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
Combined Authority Board	16.10.24	Agenda for Combined Authority Board on Wednesday, 16th October, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Combined Authority Board	13.11.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=147&Ver=4
Audit & Governance Committee	08.11.24	Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Friday, 8th November, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Audit & Governance Committee	28.11.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=155&Ver=4
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	07.11.24	Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 7th November, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	25.10.24	Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee on Friday, 25th October, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	11.12.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=117&Ver=4
Skills & Employment Committee	21.10.24	Agenda for Skills and Employment Committee on Monday, 21st October, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	04.11.24	Agenda for Transport and Infrastructure Committee on Monday, 4th November, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Human Resources Committee	14.10.24	Agenda for Human Resources Committee on Monday, 14th October, 2024, 1.00 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Investment Committee	21.10.24	Agenda for Investment Committee on Monday, 21st October, 2024, 2.00 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Business Board	11.11.24	Agenda for Business Board on Monday, 11th November, 2024, 2.30 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Employment & Skills Board	12.11.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=219&Ver=4
Mayors Question Time	12.09.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=175&MId=226&Ver=4

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Combined Authority Board	22.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=148&Ver=4
Combined Authority Board	19.03.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=149&Ver=4
Audit & Governance Committee	21.02.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=156&Ver=4
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	26.01.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=162&Ver=4
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27.03.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=164&Ver=4
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	29.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=121&Ver=4
Skills & Employment Committee	27.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=133&Ver=4
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	24.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=126&Ver=4
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	05.02.24	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=128&Ver=4
Investment Committee	13.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=211&Ver=4
Business Board	20.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=142&Ver=4
Business Board	31.03.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=143&Ver=4

Employment & Skills Board	07.01.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=220&Ver=4
Employment & Skills Board	11.02.25	https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=221&Ver=4

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Target 24/25	Cumulative Target	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
PRC1	% of customer queries processed at the first point of contact	99%	85%	96.36%	
PRC2	% of customers satisfied with our service (measured annually in February)	97.94%	-	N/A (Feb 2025)	
PRC3	% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	43.96%	46.5%	54.59%	
PRC4	% of contact centre calls handled	83.46%	80%	89.12%	
ARP3	In year % of Council Tax collected	100%	65.24%	64.75%	
ARP4	Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£73,595,060	£48,014,491	£48,175,619	
ARP5	In year % of NNDR collected	96.57%	62.75%	64.78%	
ARP6	NNDR net collection fund receipts	£28,409,318	£18,308,398	£19,556,133	
HR2	% of staff that feel proud to work for FDC	87%	-	N/A (Dec 2024)	

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

Comments