

**Fenland District Council  
Business Plan  
2017-18**

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## **Introduction by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive**

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

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Business Plan for 2017-18. This plan is designed to explain how we will deliver our services despite the continued funding reductions we face. We update it every year to make sure we focus on the most important areas.

### **Financial challenges**

The financial situation for local government remains challenging. We continue to deliver our Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which will enable us to make the required of £1.54 million savings by 2021.

Where possible, we will continue to protect frontline services and the priorities that are most important to residents. Nevertheless, the process has required some difficult decisions to be made. Changes to our brown bin collection service, youth district council programme and community grants scheme has gone some way to making savings and generating additional income. The feedback to our Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) from over 6,000 residents has been invaluable in shaping the process so far and we will continue to seek this as further changes are proposed.

### **Our workforce**

Whilst the Council must focus on making the required savings to balance its budget, our 380 employees continue to provide high quality services to the public every day. It is important that we support and empower staff to make effective decisions and we provide the right working environment for this to happen. We invest in our workforce and equip them with appropriate skills. This successful approach is recognised by our Investors in People (IIP) reaccreditation and staff satisfaction: 82% said they are proud to work for us in our most recent Staff Survey (2016).

### **Working together**

We cannot work alone. By continuing to work well with partners, we have achieved more for the community. Our shared services for Council Tax and Benefits (with Anglia Revenues Partnership; ARP), Building Control (with CNC) and Planning (with Peterborough City Council) continue to save money without compromising the high-quality service given to customers. This is shown by our reaccreditation of the corporate Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard.

We continue to lobby for funding and investment, particularly surrounding our local infrastructure. Improvements will be made to the King's Dyke level crossing in Whittlesey. The £2million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will reinvigorate Wisbech High Street and will complement the work that is being achieved as a result of the Wisbech 2020 Vision. Local people also continue to make an important difference to our environment by participating in schemes such as Street Pride and In Bloom.

### **Making decisions at a local level**

Devolution spells an exciting change to how local decisions are made. The newly confirmed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal will give local people greater control over important issues such as Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Employment. This will be an exciting opportunity to improve local services which will benefit many generations to come.

As part of this, further work continues around the proposal of a Wisbech Garden Town. This could bring 10,000 additional homes, a retirement village, a local enterprise zone and other benefits to the town. This would be in exchange for improved infrastructure such as a rail link from Wisbech, dualling of the A47 between Thorney and North Wisbech and a new construction training college. Although at a very early stage, this could prove to be a fantastic opportunity for Wisbech and the surrounding area.

We hope that our Business Plan gives you a flavour of how the Council is working to make Fenland an even better place to live. Whilst some difficult decisions still have to be made, we will continue our aim to improve the quality of life for people living here.

Cllr John Clark – Leader of the Council  
Paul Medd – Chief Executive

## **About Fenland**

Fenland has strong community spirit and pride in its heritage. Over 98,000 people live in the district, with 75% living in the four market towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech. 29 villages are located in its beautiful rural landscape which attracts visitors from around the country.

### **A growing population**

With the lowest house prices in Cambridgeshire and plentiful availability of commercial land, Fenland is an attractive place to live and do business in. As such, our population is growing quickly and by 2031 it is predicted that there will be over 113,000 people living here. We have plans in place (including our Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy) to harness this growth to bring further prosperity. These documents explain how we will build new homes, increase employment and improve transport links and increase leisure opportunities so that residents have the infrastructure they need to live happy and healthy lives.

### **Challenges**

Fenland does face some challenges. It is the 80<sup>th</sup> (out of 326) most deprived area in the country, and has become more so since 2010 (IMD 2015). We recognise the challenges that deprivation brings, particularly around education and health. By lobbying for extra funding and working together with partners, we continue to deliver projects that improve the quality of life for local people. These are explained in more detail in our Annual Report, which is available to download at [www.fenland.gov.uk/annualreport](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/annualreport).

### **Our future population**

Our population is also getting older. 25% of our residents are pensioners, and this is expected to increase to 41% by 2024. It is important that residents are able to maintain an independent life and are able to connect with others. Many older residents face challenges in accessing services. We know that 1 in 7 pensioners in Fenland live alone; many in isolated areas with no transport. We will continue to work with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, Cambridgeshire County Council and voluntary groups to help older people stay connected.

### **About Fenland District Council**

Fenland District Council (FDC) has 380 staff excluding casual staff and is an innovative and high performing council, with a distinctive organisational culture. Our '100% people driven,' 'can-do' and 'one-team' approach enables members, officers and partners to effectively work together; delivering high-quality services for the community.

The Council must focus on making the necessary efficiency savings required to deliver a balanced budget. However, we also continue to deliver high quality services on a day to day basis through the committed team we have at the Council. Every

year, we collect 3.4 million bins, clean 11,290 miles of streets and 210 million square metres of town centres and open spaces, gave housing advice to 828 different customers, answer 78,044 telephone enquiries, support 110,475 customer visits to our Hubs and Shops, support more than three quarters of a million customer visits to help people stay fit at our leisure centres, determine 1,400 planning and related applications and 320 planning enforcement service requests, complete nearly 500 food hygiene inspections, and enable 75,386 people to vote at elections.

The work of the Council has been recognised through many national awards. We have most recently been shortlisted for a second time in the Efficiency category at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2017 in recognition of our approach to the savings challenges facing the Council. We also won 2 Municipal Journal (MJ) Awards in 2014 for successfully tackling migrant exploitation and poor housing conditions with partners through Operation Pheasant.

### **Fenland District Council Comprehensive Spending Review**

In July 2015, the Council voted to establish a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in light of the £3.1 million savings the Council would have to find between 2016 and 2020. Since then, Members have looked at everything the Council does and assessed the options available to make savings and generate income to ensure we meet our savings targets and remain a sustainable organisation in to the future. This process was supported by a successful District wide public consultation process with surveys delivered to all households to support Members in making their decisions.

Members confirmed their priorities in January 2016. Officers are now in various stages of preparing information to be assessed and subsequently implemented following appropriate consultation. Many CSR projects are reflected in the Council's Business Plan and the Council's Efficiency Plan. The Council has delivered all of the savings required in 2016/17 and now has £1.54m to deliver by the end of 2021. The Council's Efficiency Plan can be found here: <http://fenland.gov.uk/Efficiency-Plan>

## Financial Summary

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) ensures that the commitments made in the Business Plan are funded not only in the year for which the formal approval of the budget is required (2017/18) but for forecast years as well, within a reasonable level of tolerance.

Government grant figures for 2017/18 will be confirmed as part of the final finance settlement in February 2017, together with indicative figures for 2018/19 - 2019/20. The forecast for 2020/21 is consistent with spending announcements in the Autumn Statement 2016. For 2017/18, £601k of savings have been identified and delivered. A further £659k of savings have been identified in 2018/19 which will deliver a forecast balanced budget for that year. For 2019/20 – 2020/21 further savings of £231k are required.

The detail of the budget and Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is available on the Council's website.

	Estimate 2017/18 £000	Forecast Illustrations and Subject to Change		
		Forecast 2018/19 £000	Forecast 2019/20 £000	Forecast 2020/21 £000
Council Tax-base	28,397	28,682	28,972	29,272
Assumed Council Tax increase	1.98%	1.98%	1.98%	1.98%
<b>Resources (Income)</b>				
Revenue Support Grant	925	444	0	0
Business Rates Baseline	3,457	3,568	3,695	3,824
	<b>4,382</b>	<b>4,012</b>	<b>3,695</b>	<b>3,824</b>
Council Tax	<b>7,253</b>	<b>7,471</b>	<b>7,696</b>	<b>7,930</b>
CT Collection Fund surplus	<b>141</b>			
BR Collection Fund deficit	<b>-101</b>			
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>11,675</b>	<b>11,483</b>	<b>11,391</b>	<b>11,754</b>
<b>Forecast Net Expenditure</b>	<b>11,675</b>	<b>12,142</b>	<b>12,306</b>	<b>12,694</b>
<i>Original Savings Target</i>	<i>601</i>			
<i>Savings achieved to date (included above)</i>	<i>-601</i>			
Savings identified 2018/19		-659	-659	-659
Savings identified 2019/20			-50	-50
<b>Forecast Expenditure after identified savings</b>	<b>11,675</b>	<b>11,483</b>	<b>11,597</b>	<b>11,985</b>
<b>Cumulative Funding Gap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>231</b>

<i>Approved Efficiency Plan savings</i>		-206	-206
<b>Funding Gap – In Year (after Efficiency Plan savings)</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Forecast General Fund Balance	2,394	2,394	2,394

## **Fenland District Council Business Plan 2017-18**

The Council's Business Plan sets out how we will continue to deliver services whilst managing the budget challenges we face. We continue to adapt to changes in local government finances, positively embracing the opportunity to become even more efficient whilst retaining effective service delivery to the public. We will continue to pursue a number of strategies to become financially self-sufficient through embracing new ways of working and transformation opportunities, pursuing shared services, moving from being a direct service provider to a commissioner and enabler of services and build even stronger and more resilient communities. As a Council we will continue to adopt a more commercial and business-like approach to our services and assets. This is not something new for the Council, however, it will more accurately reflect how we will be aiming to deliver services and harness opportunities in future to generate income and efficiencies.

Our current commercial approach has already meant that we have entered shared services arrangements which have borne a return on investment for the Council and have begun to sell services to other organisations. For instance, the Council now shares its revenues and benefits service with 7 other Councils through being a key partner in the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) which as the partnership becomes more efficient returns a revenue to each partner as these efficiencies occur. Also, ARP has set up its bailiff service which is operating very successfully, and a trading arm which enables the partnership to trade with other organisations.

Through our CNC Partnership for Building Control with Norwich City Council, Broadland District Council, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Council and South Norfolk Council, we are selling services in competition with the private sector. We are also leading a shared planning service with Peterborough City Council which in addition to providing services across the two Councils, will be looking to trade and sell these services to other Councils. We also have a shared internal audit service with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.

We have modernised and invested in our leisure centres to reflect current market trends to increase our market share and we have increased income to those centres through this commercial approach. We are now in the process of looking at the best management option for our leisure service for the future. We also operate a fees and charges system for some services to ensure there is not a burden on general Council Tax payers.

Through the FDC Comprehensive Spending Review, further opportunities have been identified whereby the Council could continue to be more commercial in its approach. These opportunities include:

- Using Council owned land and assets to generate income through house building and advertising
- Further charging for some services where we are legally able to do so
- Further identifying shared services and trading opportunities

The Council will continue to seek commercial opportunities within each of its services to maximise revenue to the Council to ensure we remain a sustainable organisation that is able to continue to deliver the services residents' value the most.

## Our priorities

Our aim as a Council is to improve the quality of life for people living in Fenland. To do this, we have designed a series of priorities to address that aim to address social, environmental and economic needs for local people.

### Summary of Corporate Priorities

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

These priorities are explained in detail over the next few pages.

## **Communities**

### **Support vulnerable members of our community**

- Support residents to claim the benefits they are entitled to. Process applications promptly and accurately through our shared service with Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP)
- Continue to respond to changing government policy regarding Welfare Reform. Support Job Centre Plus with the roll out of Universal Credit across Fenland
- Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and statutory Housing Duties. Work with the Home Improvement Agency to award Disabled Facilities Grants
- Work with partners to build capacity and resilience so that residents can support themselves and the community
- Develop multi-disciplinary approaches with partners to deliver co-ordinated interventions for those in need

### **Support our ageing population and young people**

- Encourage a range of partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme
- Offer advice to the Fenland Community Youth Council to help young people engage with democratic processes
- Work with the Children's Trust and Fenland and East Cambs Children's and Young People Partnership to improve life chances for children and young people

### **Promote health and wellbeing for all**

- Deliver the Council's Leisure Strategy:
- Embed the implementation and delivery of an overarching Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Work with local commissioning groups and others to develop a joint plan to deliver effective approaches to improve community health outcomes. Maintain a clear focus upon alcohol misuse, smoking cessation, obesity, coronary heart disease and the needs of older people

## **Environment**

### **Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service**

- Work with partners and the community to divert at least 50% of household waste from landfill
- Maximise the value of materials collected for recycling
- Implement an effective, self-funding Garden Waste collection service
- Deliver clean streets and public spaces as set out in the national code of practice
- Work with key stakeholders to deliver an advanced waste partnership and to update the waste strategy in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

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

- Support property owners, funders and local partner groups to access funding opportunities and improve the appearance of Fenland's streetscene and dilapidated buildings
- Deliver a fair approach to the enforcement of environmental standards such as flytipping, dog fouling and littering through education, guidance and appropriate use of Council powers
- Ensure properly maintained open spaces by working in partnership with ISS world and supporting community groups (such as Street Pride, In Bloom and 'Friends of')
- Improve the viability of town centres by working with Town Councils and the community to provide local markets, market town events and Four Seasons events

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

- Work with our partner organisations to reduce crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour in Fenland through the Community Safety Partnership action plan
- Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland Community Cohesion Strategy

## **Economy**

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

- Working with our partners, local businesses, the GCGP LEP and the Combined Authority we will:
  - Work with education providers to help improve education attainment and link skills & courses with the needs of local businesses
  - Target inward investment to establish new business opportunities, jobs and economic growth
  - Facilitate local business support to encourage business growth and improve job diversity & skills
  - Improve the business profile of Fenland and create an environment of pro-active growth
  - Explore and develop funding bids which support business, skills and infrastructure projects
  - Influence how the Housing Delivery Grant and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth in Fenland
- Promote and develop our business premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and our light industrial estates to encourage investment, job creation and skills diversification
- Stimulate the delivery of mixed use development at the Nene Waterfront alongside the delivery of our wider regeneration objectives
- Deliver a proactive and effective Marine Service to meet our statutory obligations and promote business opportunities for the River Nene environment
- Further develop, proactively contribute to and work with partners to deliver with Wisbech 2020 Action Plan

### **Promote Fenland as a tourism and visitor destination**

- Support the Cambridgeshire Fens Tourism Partnership to develop and deliver a comprehensive Tourism Strategy for Fenland through 'Visit Cambridgeshire Fens' branding

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

- Enable appropriate growth and development through the delivery of a proactive and effective shared Planning Service
- Develop, enable and deliver economic, infrastructure and regeneration strategies/projects through Fenland's Regeneration Programme
- Develop and help deliver a viable holistic regeneration and growth proposal to Government for a Wisbech Garden Town as part of the Devolution agreement

### **Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the District**

- Promote sustainable transport (infrastructure and community) initiatives with Fenland including rail, road and community transport

- Engage with partners on the feasibility and delivery of major infrastructure projects across Fenland, including A47 and A605 improvements and the Wisbech-March-Cambridge rail link
- Use the Council's assets to support and deliver sustainable economic and residential growth across the district

## **Quality Organisation**

Our 'Quality Organisation' priorities are in place to support effective service delivery. They contribute to the strong foundations of the Council; making sure that it runs smoothly day-to-day and that we can deliver our priorities.

### **Good Customer Service**

- Provide good quality customer service through our Fenland @ your service shops and Community Hubs in line with the national standards of Customer Service excellence
- Make services more digitally accessible and increase self-serve opportunities as detailed in our Channel Shift strategy

### **Strong Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management**

- Maintain robust and effective financial standards, robust internal controls and effective risk management. Evidence this in our Annual Audit Letter, Risk Management Strategy, Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

### **Transformation and Efficiency**

- Continue to embrace innovation and new ways of working as outlined in our four year CLG Efficiency Plan and Comprehensive Spending Review
- Appropriately pursue shared services, joint working arrangements and collaborations, whilst ensuring robust performance management
- Deliver required savings whilst remaining a stable and sustainable organisation

### **Commercial**

- Seek opportunities to generate income opportunities for the Council. Explore sharing services, trading services, charging for services (where legally able to do so) and maximising asset use

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- Appropriately engage and consult with residents about Council services and proposals
- Respond to customer feedback to improve service delivery
- Refresh the Council's approach to consultation through a revised Consultation Strategy

### **Performance Management**

- Set challenging performance targets to ensure effective delivery of the priorities in our Business Plan
- Report regularly on performance for both in-house and shared services to the Corporate Management Team, Councillors and the Public

### **Equalities**

- Meet the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act through our core service delivery
- Publish an Annual Equality Report

**Asset Management and Investment**

- Ensure the Council's asset base is suitable, sustainable and maximises service and income benefits
- Continue working jointly with the public, private and third sector partners
- Develop and deliver a commercial investment strategy

**Workforce Development**

- Maintain an effective workforce with the right skills to deliver the priorities of the Council
- Support and empower staff to make effective decisions within a pleasant working environment

**Enforcement**

- Take a fair and equitable approach to positively improve living, working and environmental standards

**Health and Safety**

- Maintain effective Health and Safety policies and systems to comply with relevant legislation and local requirements
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the Council's workforce, partners and wider community