

Fenland District Council

Business Plan

2018-19

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 2018-19. Our plan explains how we will work in partnership to deliver projects and services in line with our corporate priorities.

A changing landscape

Since last year’s Business Plan was agreed, we now have a directly elected Mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and a Combined Authority. Our devolution deal, the first in the country to include district authorities, is a big opportunity for Fenland. It is already giving us greater control to address important issues such as housing, infrastructure, transport, skills and employment.

The Combined Authority has already committed almost £16 million of funding towards projects in Fenland. £6.5 million of this funding has been dedicated to feasibility studies for a Wisbech Garden Town, which includes a GRIP3 study for a railway link between Wisbech and March and to stations beyond. Although at a very early stage, this could be a fantastic opportunity for Wisbech and the surrounding area. Over the next 40 years, a Garden Town could deliver 12,000 new homes, new jobs, enhanced facilities and transport links and develop the area as a key location for economic growth in the region.

In addition, £10.5million of funding is ready to be drawn down from the Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership for Wisbech Access Study highway improvements. Further indication from the Combined Authority is that it has the desire to invest in a phase 2 package of the Wisbech Access Study along with improvements to upgrade Fenland railway stations and road junction improvements in March. A number of other projects which will benefit Fenland are also being supported by the Combined Authority which includes the creation of a Skills Hub, a University in Peterborough and modular home development as well as feasibility studies on dualling the A47 from Thorney to West Walton and extending the M11 to the A47. These are exciting times and the District Council is looking to position Fenland at the forefront of these funding proposals.

Working together

We achieve more for the community by working with partners. This is crucial to successfully addressing complex issues that cannot be done by one organisation alone, such as improving health and building stronger communities. We also work in partnership to deliver a number of our services including Council Tax and Benefits (as part of Anglia Revenues Partnership), Building Control (with CNC) and Planning (with Peterborough City Council). These shared services continue to save money, but not at the expense of excellent customer service.

Finance and funding

Although the financial situation for local government remains challenging, we have balanced our budget for 2018/19 and identified ways to deliver the required savings. This has been supported by our Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) process, which continues to deliver efficiency projects across the Council.

Nevertheless, we continue to pursue a bold vision for the District and deliver projects that improve the quality of life for local people. We continue to lobby for funding and investment to tackle big issues. Aside from the Combined Authority investments, we support

improvements to the King's Dyke Railway level crossing (Whittlesey) and to the A47 Guyhirn Roundabout. The £2million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund is also supporting improvements to Wisbech High Street; building upon the work of the Wisbech 2020 Vision. A county-wide 'trailblazer' project will trial new approaches to prevent homelessness over the next two years, supported by £736,000 of Government Funding. We also successfully bid for £800,000 from the DCLG 'Controlling Migration Fund'. This will support projects that build stronger communities. We will work together in partnership with other agencies to deliver these important projects for the community.

We are committed to working with all of our towns, villages and rural communities to make Fenland an even better place to live and work. Furthermore, we will continue to advance our aim to improve quality of life for local people.

Councillor Chris Seaton – 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. (ONS, 2017) The beautiful rural landscape is home to 29 villages and attracts visitors from around the country.

A growing population

Fenland has the lowest house prices in Cambridgeshire and plentiful availability of commercial land. As a result, our population is growing quickly. By 2031, it is predicted that there will be over 113,000 people living here. We have plans in place (such as our Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy) to maximise the positive opportunities that growth brings.

Our population is also getting older. 25% of our residents are pensioners, and by 2024, this is expected to rise to 41%. It is important that residents are able to maintain an independent life and are able to connect with others. We know that 1 in 7 pensioners in Fenland live alone and find it difficult to access services due to rurality and transport provision. 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.

Challenges

Fenland does face some challenges. It is the 80th (out of 326) most deprived area in the country. We recognise the challenges that deprivation brings, particularly around education and health. By lobbying for extra funding and working with partners, we continue to deliver projects that improve the quality of life for local people. These are explained in our Annual Report: www.fenland.gov.uk/annualreport

Fenland District Council

We deliver a variety of high-quality services. Last year we collected 3 million bins, cleaned 210 million square miles of town centres and open spaces, answered 78,000 telephone enquiries, had 750,000 visits to our leisure centres, determined 1,300 planning applications and enabled 75,400 people to vote in elections. These are just a few things we do to support our residents to live a safe and happy life.

Despite financial pressures, our 380 employees are proud to provide high-quality public services. Our distinctive 'one-team' and 'people-driven' culture supports members, officers and partners to effectively work together to serve the community.

We support and invest in our workforce; equipping them with the skills they need to work effectively in their role. This successful approach is recognised by our Investors in People (IiP) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE) re-accreditations. But most importantly, it is recognised by our staff and customers: 82% said they are proud to work for us in our latest Staff Survey and for example 99% of residents said they were satisfied with the refuse and recycling service.

Our work has also been recognised through many national awards. Most recently these have included being a finalist in the 'Efficiency' category in the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2017 and winning 2 Municipal Journal (MJ) awards in 2014 for successfully tackling exploitation and poor private sector housing standards with partners through Operation Pheasant.

Our 2018/19 Business Plan

Our Business Plan explains how we will continue to deliver services whilst managing changes and reductions in local government finance.

We continue to maximise opportunities to become financially self-sufficient, which includes working in new ways and pursuing shared services. Instead of being a direct service provider, we look to move to a commissioner/enabler role to support the development of stronger and more resilient communities.

We continue to build upon our commercial approach for service and asset management. This supports the Council to remain a sustainable organisation that provides services valued the most by our residents.

Our shared service arrangements are returning on investment and have begun to sell services to other organisations. We are part of the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) which delivers Revenues and Benefits service across seven councils. Creation of a successful in-house Bailiff Service and a commercial trading arm build upon ongoing efficiencies and generates additional income for partner authorities.

We also sell our Building Control services in competition with the private sector as part of CNC: a partnership between five councils.

In addition, we have increased our income by modernising and investing in our leisure centres. We are now in the process of investigating the best future management options for our leisure services whilst retaining an excellent offer for the community.

Our CSR has identified further commercial opportunities, which are:

- Using Council owned land and assets to generate income (through house building and advertising)
- Further charging for some services (if legally allowed)
- Looking for more shared services and trading opportunities.

Fenland District Council Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

In July 2015, the Council voted to establish a CSR to help deliver the required £3.1million savings between 2016 and 2020. Our Councillors looked at everything the Council does and considered options to sustainably make savings and generate income. Each Fenland household received a questionnaire and was invited to have their say. This information supported Councillors to confirm their priorities in January 2016.

CSR projects are ongoing, and are outlined in this Business Plan and in our Efficiency Plan. This can be downloaded on our website.

Financial Summary

Please visit our website to view the 2018-19 [Budget Report and Medium Term Financial Forecast](#)

Our Priorities

The Council has a series of priorities it wishes to deliver over the next year. Partnership working is at the heart of all of these priorities to ensure we continue to improve quality of life right in our towns, villages and rural areas across the District. This includes working with the newly formed Combined Authority to seek investment and support for improvements in transport, infrastructure, skills and employment to ensure Fenland is a prosperous place to live and work.

We continue to seek efficiencies in the way we work, especially with partners and encourage a one public sector approach across each tier of government and other partners.

Summary of Corporate Priorities

The table below gives a summary of our corporate priorities. These are displayed in more detail over the next few pages.

Quality Organisation Supporting effective delivery of our priorities and services	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support vulnerable members of our community • Promote health and wellbeing for all • Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service • Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene • Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland • Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland • Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

Communities

Support vulnerable members of our community

- Support residents to maximise their income by accessing the benefits they are entitled to. Process applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support quickly and accurately through our shared service (Anglia Revenues Partnership; ARP)
- Support residents in managing the effects of welfare reform changes by working with partners including Jobcentre Plus and the CAB, and helping them access Universal Credit online
- Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and 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
- Encourage a range of partners to support the delivery of the Golden Age programme to support older people
- Deliver the Wisbech 2020 Action Plan across the themes of Education and Skills, Health, Wellbeing and Cohesion, Infrastructure and the Built Environment and Local Economy

Promote Health and Wellbeing for all

- Deliver the Council's Leisure Strategy
- Reduce inequality and deprivation by working collaboratively with others & deliver the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy to tackle our local health priorities, including mental wellbeing

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

- Work with local stakeholders to develop a Culture Strategy for Fenland; strengthening links between the wider Fenland communities and as well as promoting the area to people outside the district, including supporting the development of Must Farm in Whittlesey.

Environment

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

- Work with partners, the community and volunteers to divert at least 50% of Cambridgeshire's household waste from landfill
- Maximise the value of materials collected for recycling including through Recycling Champions
- Deliver 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 effective waste partnership and to update the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough waste strategy

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

- Support improvements to Fenland's streetscene and heritage
- Use education, guidance and Council powers to fairly enforce environmental standards and tackle issues such as fly tipping, dog fouling and littering
- Ensure well maintained open spaces by working in partnership with ISS World and supporting community groups (such as Street Pride, In Bloom and 'Friends of')
- Work 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 partner organisations to reduce crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour through the Community Safety Partnership
- Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion Action Plan and project resourced by the Controlling Migration Fund

Economy

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

- Working with our partners, local businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Combined Authority, we will raise the business profile of Fenland to attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities
- Facilitate local business support to encourage business growth, improve job diversity and skills. Explore funding streams which support jobs and economic growth
- Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and our Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, job creation and skills diversification
- Run a proactive and effective Marine Service to meet statutory obligations and promote business opportunities for the River Nene environment

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

- Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through the delivery of a proactive and effective Planning Service and Local Plan
- Work with partners to further develop and help deliver a viable holistic regeneration and growth proposition of Wisbech Garden Town
- Use the Council's assets to support and deliver sustainable economic and residential growth across the district, including the delivery of mixed use development at the Nene Waterfront

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across Fenland

- Promote sustainable transport (infrastructure and community) initiatives within Fenland including road, rail and community transport to improve links to employment
- Engage with partners on the feasibility and delivery of major infrastructure projects across Fenland including road (Wisbech and March Access studies, A47 and Kings Dyke improvements) and rail (Rail Strategy, improvements to railway stations and the March to Wisbech link)
- Promote and influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth in Fenland through working with the Combined Authority

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 it runs smoothly day-to-day delivering our priorities.

Governance, Financial Control and Risk Management

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

Transformation and Efficiency

- Engage with the Combined Authority's Public Service Reform agenda
- Pursue transformation and commercialisation opportunities, including colocation, to support effective ways of working and deliver additional income
- Deliver required savings (as outlined in our CLG Efficiency Plan and Comprehensive Spending Review) whilst remaining a stable and sustainable organisation

Performance Management

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

Consultation and Engagement

- Appropriately consult with residents about Council services and proposals as outlined in our Consultation Strategy. Use feedback to improve service delivery

Excellent Customer Service

- Provide good service at our Fenland @ your service shops and Community Hubs in line with Customer Service Excellence standards
- Help residents become digitally enabled and able to self-serve (as outlined in our Channel Shift strategy) to allow us to provide more support for vulnerable customers and complex queries

Equalities

- Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by delivering the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act through our core service delivery. Publish an Annual Equality Report to demonstrate how we do this.

Asset Management and Commercialisation

- Ensure our asset base is suitable, sustainable and maximises income benefits
- Work jointly with public, private and third sector partners to maximise value
- Develop and deliver a commercial investment strategy

Workforce Development

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

Enforcement

- Use a fair and proportionate approach to 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