

Fenland District Council

Corporate Plan 2012-15

Contents Page

	Page
Introduction by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive	3
Evidence	4
Fenland Strategic Partnership	6
Fenland Communities Development Plan– The Core Strategy	6
Priorities for Fenland District Council	7
Priority One – Neighbourhood Planning	8
Priority Two – Localism	10
Priority Three – Streets Ahead	12
Priority Four – Open for Business	14
Priority Five - Quality Organisation	15
Efficiency, Risk, Finance & Performance overview	18
Customer Service Excellence and “It’s your Fenland”	19
Inequalities Charter	20

Introduction by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

Welcome to Fenland District Council's Corporate Plan for 2012-15. This plan sets out the priorities for the Council and outlines how we will address the challenges ahead over the next three years.

The Council's priorities are a reflection of the customer feedback we receive which says residents want high quality services and excellent customer care. We strive to deliver this for the Fenland community ensuring we listen to feedback on how we deliver our services and make changes as a result. This approach has reaped rewards with high levels of customer satisfaction and recognition for the way we interact with our customers through the achievement of the government's national standard for excellent customer service.

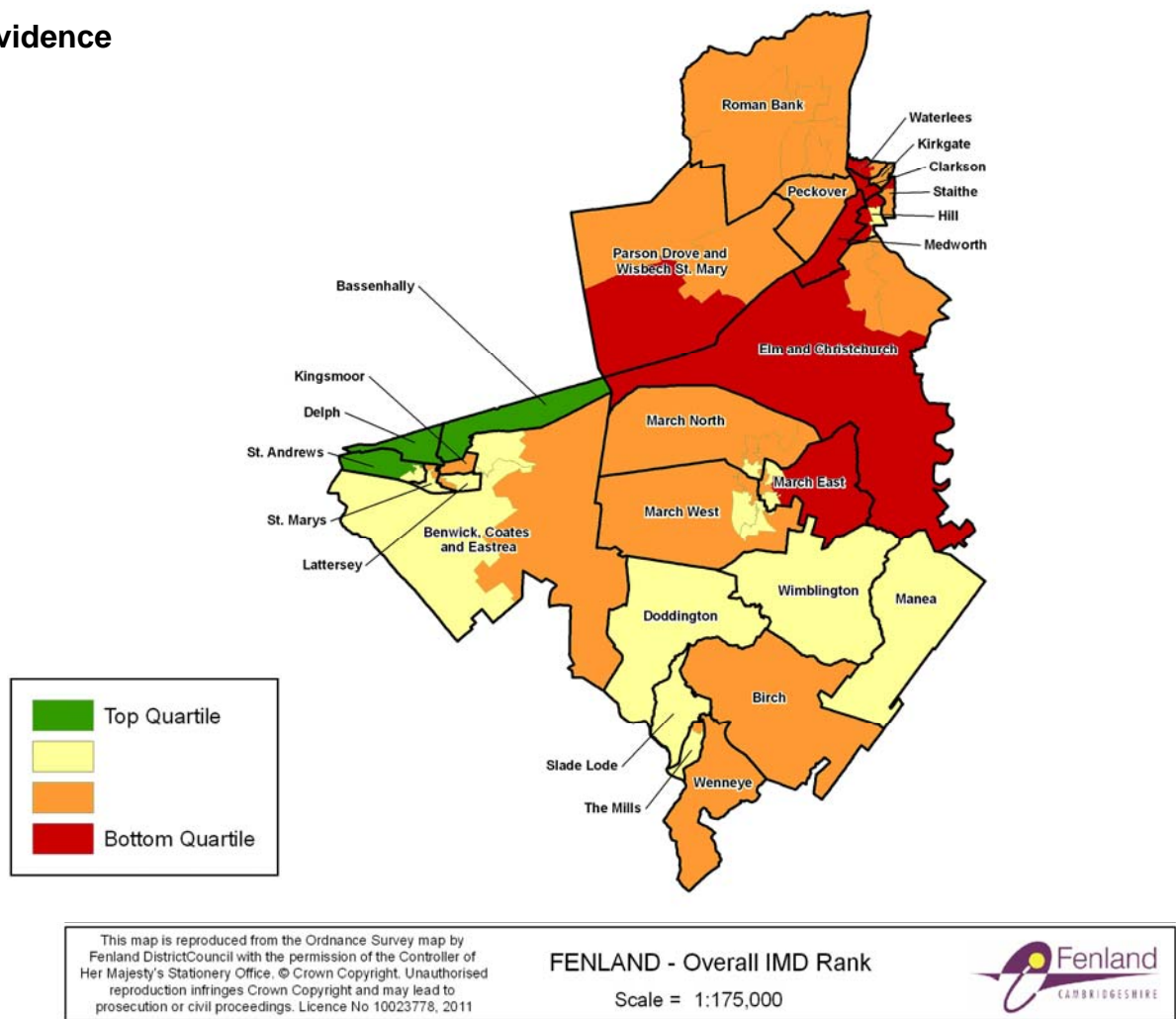
Many residents and businesses in Fenland have also been hit hard by the recession and as a Council, we have looked to support all groups wherever possible. This has included supporting residents to avoid homelessness using initiatives such as the Court Desk project with the Citizens Advice Bureau, processing benefit applications quickly, and assisting local businesses through schemes such as Enterprise Awards, skills training, recruitment assistance and signposting to other support services.

As with all public sector agencies, the Council faces serious financial challenges and has had to make some tough decisions. We will continue to endeavour to minimise the effect of the financial situation on frontline services and maintain our commitment to providing excellent customer service. Although the current financial situation is difficult, there are also many opportunities in which the Council can make a difference through attracting inward investment and making our own investments into projects that matter to local people. This includes exciting partnership projects such as South Fens Business Centre Phase 2 extension, College of West Anglia engineering skills centre and new Chatteris Leisure facilities.

This proactive work with our partners is also reflected in our ambitious Neighbourhood Planning Project. Fenland District Council with its partners has developed a proactive and aspirational vision which will provide the catalyst for a successful and vibrant future for Fenland. This vision was developed through a robust evidence base which seeks to analyse future opportunities for the Fenland area to improve quality of life and increase prosperity over the next 20 years. This work has culminated in the production of the Fenland Communities Development Plan, the Council's draft Core Strategy which looks to ensure the future prosperity of the District through a positive and sustainable approach to growth which will also contribute to improving quality of life for all Fenland residents.

This Corporate Plan identifies our key challenges and opportunities for Fenland over the next three years. We are committed, along with our partners, to work with residents, community groups, and businesses to overcome the key challenges in the district and seize upon any opportunities to ensure we improve quality of life for local residents and make Fenland a great place to live, work and visit for years to come.

The Evidence



The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cambridgeshire (JSNA) shows that in general, residents who live in Fenland do not enjoy the same quality of life as residents who live in other areas of Cambridgeshire. Latest national deprivation figures (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010) show substantial inequalities both across the county and the district. Fenland is ranked 94th of 326 local authorities (where one is the most deprived). Fenland has three wards numbered among the 10% most deprived nationally. Overall these deprivation figures are made up of information from the following seven areas:

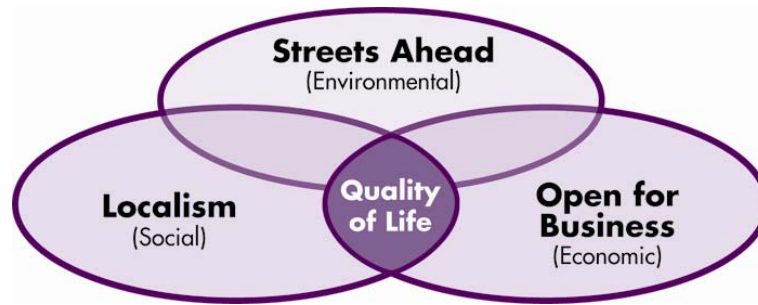
Education
Housing

Environment
Income

Health
Employment

Crime

To tackle deprivation in Fenland, we will focus on delivering projects to achieve three overarching objectives to improve social, economic and environmental contributors to quality of life. The following diagram represents our approach to improving the quality of life of our residents. By focusing on the centre of the model, where the three elements overlap, we will optimise our opportunity to address issues which contribute to overall quality of life.



Demography of Fenland

An estimated 94,200 people live in Fenland and our residents account for over 15% of Cambridgeshire's population. Fenland is the second least densely populated district within Cambridgeshire. Fenland's population has increased by 12.5% since 2001 with approximately 10,500 more people now resident in the district. Fenland's population is forecast to increase to 113,200 by 2031.

Fenland has an ageing population. Whereas in 2001 around 51% of the Fenland population was younger than 40, in 2021 that proportion is expected to drop to 41%. From 2016 on, the proportion of children and young people (0-19) is forecast to decrease while the proportion aged 65 and over is forecast to increase significantly. Around a quarter of current Fenland residents are pensioners and 1 in 7 households consist of pensioners living alone.

This ageing existing population, combined with the Council's ambitious targets for new housing growth, means that Fenland's population growth will be caused by migration. Fenland is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, however a greater than average proportion (compared nationally) of its population are White British (96.9%).

Almost three-quarters (72%) of our residents live within the four Fenland market towns - Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech – and the rest are spread across our 29 villages and in rural locations throughout the district. . There are currently over 42,000 dwellings in Fenland and the number of dwellings is forecast to increase to 51,000 by 2031.

Fenland Strategic Partnership

The Fenland Strategic Partnership (FSP) brings together key public and voluntary sector organisations to coordinate effective joint working in Fenland. The FSP has recently agreed a new approach to partnership working to reflect the changing financial and policy context all partners find themselves operating within.

The Partnership now meets twice a year to:

- set a number of focused annual priorities for the Fenland Public Service Board to deliver upon;
- jointly review progress against priorities to ensure the delivery of improved outcomes for Fenland residents.

This new approach signals a renewed commitment by all partners to strive to deliver high quality public services to improve quality of life in Fenland together.

Your Fenland, Your Future

Fenland Communities Development Plan – the Core Strategy

Fenland District Council has recently consulted on its draft Core Strategy which looks to ensure the future prosperity of the District through a positive and sustainable approach to growth which will also contribute to improving quality of life. We have developed a Vision Statement for the Core Strategy which states;

“Fenland will nurture, grow and promote its market towns and villages. They will be attractive places to live, set within our unique and protected Fens landscape.

Everyone will recognise the increase in opportunities presented to them, whether that be new homes, a wide range of new job opportunities or places to play.

Between 2011 and 2031, Fenland will be a high growth district, growing by between 11,000 and 16,000 new homes, meeting the housing needs of all our communities. There will be increased employment opportunities across the district, such as in emerging new ‘green’ economies and a bolstered tourism economy. Growth in homes and jobs will be closely linked to each other, with new infrastructure such as schools, roads and open space provision planned and provided at the same time as the new buildings.

Growth will be focused on our four market towns, but villages will not be left behind with appropriate and sensitive development being permitted there to ensure they remain thriving local communities.”

Our Priorities:

1. Neighbourhood Planning
2. Localism
3. Streets Ahead
4. Open for Business
5. Quality Organisation

PRIORITY ONE



Fenland District Council has consistently punched above its weight in order to tackle the big issues that affect local people. We care passionately about our district and we want to improve quality of life for all of our residents.

To achieve this vision, we will build on work already achieved between partners and the local community to build a long term strategy for the district that will see growth go hand in hand with improving the life chances of our residents through initiatives to improve educational attainment and aspirations, skills, housing, health and community cohesion.

We recognise that growth in our area needs to be carefully managed to ensure new homes also mean new opportunities for Fenland residents. This has to include increased business and job opportunities, a more diverse retail offer and infrastructure improvements to support new and existing communities such as roads, GP surgeries, schools and leisure opportunities to benefit the people of Fenland in the future.

Neighbourhood Planning aims to do just that by coordinating public and private sector investment in the district to the projects that matter most to local residents and to bring forward holistic sustainable growth so that homes, infrastructure and jobs grow in tandem to provide a great future and lasting legacy for people living, working and visiting Fenland in years to come.

The priorities for the Neighbourhood Planning priority are:

1.1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Initiate a Fenland neighbourhood planning approach to growth in the District that helps improve the quality of life of it's community
- Enable and promote quality sustainable housing, energy, economic growth and supporting infrastructure
- Adopt a Core Strategy document and appropriate development proposal and policy documents
- In line with the evolving Core Strategy develop economic and regeneration strategies and for the Fenland Market Towns with an initial focus on Wisbech.
- Promote sustainable transport initiatives within Fenland
- Contribute to the development of a community transport scheme in conjunction with public/private sector partners to aid equal access to services
- Encourage good quality design and construction in Fenland

1.2 The built environment

In the next three years we aim to:

- Facilitate a suitable range of housing types to meet the needs of all Fenland residents
- Deliver the “Pride in Fenland” project (including the Renaissance project) to enhance and protect the Fenland streetscene
- Plan for and enable infrastructure provision to support the delivery of housing and economic growth
- Secure investments in the local area as a result of development.
- Conserve the unique heritage of the Fenland area in a way that facilitates growth
- Be proactive and responsible in our approach to compliance and enforcement.

PRIORITY TWO



The Council is passionate about improving quality of life for Fenland residents and ensuring that our services and those of our partners meet the requirements of the customers who need them most. Residents in Fenland do not enjoy the same quality of life as people in the rest of the county. We are committed to working with our partners to address these issues and influence service provision to make improvements to people's lives.

We are a diverse district with many customers requiring different types of services from the Council to help them to live happy, safe and fulfilled lives. We are committed to endeavour to minimise effects on frontline services through these tough financial times to ensure vulnerable residents are well supported during the downturn.

Last year, the Council transferred Wisbech Market Place to Wisbech Town Council and we are committed to providing further opportunities for Town and Parish Councils and community groups to take on Council assets and services where appropriate.

The priorities for the Localism priority are:

2.1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

In the next three years we aim to:

- Process benefit applications quickly to ensure residents can access financial aid
- Support residents in claiming the benefits they are entitled to.
- Respond to changing government policy regarding the processing of benefits applications
- Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and our statutory Housing Duties
- Work with other agencies to promote new ways of working through the Inequalities Charter

2.2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Deliver the Fenland Community Cohesion Strategy through the Diverse Communities Forum
- Deliver services in the areas of greatest need
- Provide information and guidance to new arrivals to raise their awareness of their rights and responsibilities

2.3 Supporting our ageing population

In the next three years we aim to:

- Deliver a programme of Golden Age events, including Golden Age Fairs and Fenland @ Your Service shop events
- Plan our services to meet the changing needs of an ageing population
- Continue to support community transport services

2.4 Promote healthy lifestyles

In the next three years we aim to:

- Encourage more people in the community to be more active, more often through our leisure facilities
- Promote healthy lifestyles for Fenland residents
- Work with local GP consortia and others to develop and deliver effective commissioning of health services in Fenland

2.5 Engaging young people

In the next three years we aim to:

- Maintain our commitment to engaging with young people and raising their awareness of democratic processes, particularly through events like Democracy Day
- Commit to consulting with young people on issues that affect them
- Maintain the funding distributed to youth projects via the Youth District Council

PRIORITY THREE



We want to ensure that Fenland is clean, green and safe for all residents to enjoy. We cannot do this on our own therefore we are committed to working closely with residents, businesses, community groups and partners to promote personal responsibility and foster community pride in our local areas.

We have an excellent track record with our waste and recycling services and are proud to offer a three bin waste system that gives residents a weekly collection for domestic waste. Recycling in Fenland is high and residents and businesses are taking responsibility for reducing the amount of waste that is taken to landfill sites.

Facilitating improved access to the districts green and open spaces will provide areas within which our residents can enjoy leisure and recreational activities. We are also passionate about the diverse environment Fenland benefits from and we want to protect our environmental assets such as our wildlife and waterways to increase the number of visitors to these sites.

Feeling safe in your local neighbourhood is important to residents therefore, we are working with our partners and the community to make Fenland a safe place to live. We are achieving this through our commitment to the Safer Fenland Partnership and schemes such as our CrimeBuster vehicle providing preventative advice in your local community to our CCTV cameras keeping our town centres safe.

The priorities for the Streets Ahead priority are:

3.1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

In the next three years we aim to:

- Deliver the Getting It Sorted waste and recycling service
- Deliver a high performing street cleansing service
- Deliver a high performing Rapid Response fly tipping service
- Deliver the Street Scene Officer service
- Deliver a fair approach to enforcement of environmental standards across the district
- Work with key stakeholders to develop an advanced waste partnership in Cambridgeshire.

3.2 Delivering community projects that improve the environment and our streetscene

In the next three years we aim to:

- Deliver the “Pride in Fenland” campaign
- Support community Street Pride and ‘Friends of’ groups to deliver events within their local areas
- Create more opportunities for the community to help preserve and manage the local environment
- Work with businesses to inform and promote innovative environmental practices
- Provide market town events and activities to improve the viability of our town centres.
- Participate in the ‘In Bloom’ awards scheme

3.3 Promote a Safer Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Continue to deliver the CrimeBuster project in partnership with other agencies to reduce fear of crime
- Work with our partner organisations to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in Fenland
- Help residents improve their safety and reduce the risk of them becoming victims of crime
- Help businesses to tackle crime against them including theft, arson and damage to premises
- Establish partnership actions to target locations of community concern or where incidents of crime and anti social behaviour are high

3.4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Maintain standards in our parks and open spaces
- Increase the availability of community green space
- Work with partners to create more opportunities for residents to enjoy the outdoors and the countryside
- Promote local nature ensuring that habitats and species are sensitively managed
- Maintain existing Green Flag awards for Fenland parks

PRIORITY FOUR



Fenland is an attractive place to do business in, with an excellent location close to important economic centres and good transport links, including rail and road, to Cambridge, Stansted and Peterborough. Fenland has an enviable record for proactively encouraging business and inward investment because of the area's unique offer of a prime location, teamed with reasonably priced land and space to grow.

We will do all we can to encourage economic recovery and growth by pursuing every opportunity to support existing businesses and attract new business into the district. New knowledge-based businesses have already started to set up in the district and the quality of facilities for tourists is improving. We will work with our partners in the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership to do all we can to promote Fenland and the wider LEP area as a great place to visit and in which to do business.

We will build on the success of our flexible business premises which include the South Fens Business Centre, Boathouse Business Centre and our estate of mini factory units. We will promote these premises to encourage new business entrepreneurs and provide a diversity of accommodation to enable businesses to grow within a supported environment.

The priorities for the Open for Business priority are:

4.1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Target new investment in key business and retail sectors and support economic development in Fenland
- Provide and facilitate proactive business support
- Promote the Nene Ports to increase opportunities for leisure and commercial usage
- Promote the delivery of mixed use housing /retail proposal for the Nene Waterfront along with wider regeneration
- Leverage external funding to deliver projects in Fenland
- Deliver South Fens Business Centre Phases 2 and 3
- Ensure Fenland's best interests are represented within County Strategic Planning and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

4.2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

In the next three years we aim to:

- Promote our business assets to encourage investment, jobs and skills
- Promote Fenland as a good place to live, work and visit
- Actively participate in the county wide partnership project to deliver super fast broadband across Fenland and Cambridgeshire
- **4.3** Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

In the next three years we aim to:

- Support further and higher education providers to promote a range of learning opportunities for Fenland residents
- Work with local school head teachers to assist in improving educational attainment and links to industry
- Work with businesses, local schools and Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure a successful Building Schools for the Future programme
- Work with businesses and other partners to raise skills and aspirations in the local workforce.

4.4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and Visitor destination

In the next three years we aim to:

- Encourage tourists to visit Fenland and enjoy exploring the areas many unique attractions.
- Work with partners to continue to deliver a comprehensive tourism strategy for the District.

4.5 PRIORITY FIVE



We are committed to providing high quality customer services in places that are accessible by our residents whether that is on the high street of one of our market towns or in the village hall of one of our more remote communities. Through the ethos of Customer Service Excellence, we consult with our customers on our services, act on any feedback and inform our customers what we have changed as a result of their comments. This ensures that our services are designed around the needs of our customers and not around what we think our customers need. Within that we can evidence there is fairness for all in our service delivery and fulfil our requirements of the new Equality Act 2010

Staff across the Council are dedicated to achieving this vision through our 100% People Driven approach. This ensures that high quality services are maintained to residents through investment in training and development to ensure we have the right skills within the organisation to deliver excellent services out in the community.

To maintain a Quality Organisation we must use all of our resources effectively, including our finances, people, technology and assets especially during these challenging financial times for local government. Over the coming year we will also be assessing the impact on the Council of the Local Government Resource Review and Welfare Reform. Through prioritising services that residents need most, we will continue to deliver quality services which are important to local people.

The priorities for the Quality Organisation priority are:

5.1 Providing good quality customer services that are accessible to the community

In the next three years we aim to:

- Offer a range of services at our Fenland @ Your Service shops and ensure a high number of enquiries are resolved at the first point of contact
- Offer a range of partner organisations services through our Fenland @ Your Service shops
- Offer a number of self serve opportunities through our website
- Ensure our requirements of the 2010 Equality Act are met through our core service delivery and publish on a yearly basis our success in achieving this

5.2 Continue to use our resources effectively

In the next three years we aim to:

- Maintain our commitment to finding savings whilst endeavouring to minimise the impact on frontline services
- Maintain robust and effective financial standards, and resilience across the council
- Maintain robust internal controls and strong governance
- Manage and utilise our assets effectively
- Maintain an effective workforce with the right skills to deliver outcomes for Fenland residents
- Continue to maximise Council Tax and Business Rates collection to ensure we continue to provide quality services
- Establish the impact on the Council of the Localisation of Business Rates proposal (Local Government Resource Review)
- Establish the impact on the Council of the Localising of Council Tax Benefit (Welfare Reform)

5.3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way

In the next three years we aim to:

- Provide businesses with information and training support to help them achieve regulatory compliance
- Maintain a supportive and fair approach to enforcement and regulatory services
- Provide a single point of contact for regulatory services enquiries within the Council

Corporate approach to efficiency

We are committed to meeting the challenging budget reduction savings set by the coalition government. During these difficult financial times, we will maintain a commitment to providing excellent customer service and endeavour to minimise effects on frontline services.

The Council is committed to the principle of value for money, and will work to fulfil its responsibilities of continuously improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness of services. The Council's approach to securing value for money through procurement is set out in the Procurement Strategy and Code of Procurement. The Council achieved a three star rating for value for money during its last Use of Resources assessment.

Corporate approach to risk management

The Corporate Plan 2012 -15 links closely to the Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register. The Council has a comprehensive approach to risk management which ensures that all strategic risks are appropriately identified, managed and mitigated against.

Financing our priorities

This Corporate Plan is accompanied by the Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2012-15. These documents ensure that resources are available for the delivery of the corporate plan. Our approach to developing the budget proposals for 2012-15 has been to ensure provision of sufficient resources to maintain performance in priority services whilst protecting frontline services, as well as ensuring we have sufficient resources to develop the Council's ambitious agenda to shape the future of the district.

Measuring and evaluating our performance

- To ensure the priorities stated in the corporate plan are delivered we will develop a set of performance indicators which will be monitored jointly by the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team to ensure we are delivering on our promises to the community.

Cabinet Members will also receive monthly reports on performance in delivering each of the corporate plan objectives as part of the monthly Portfolio Holder Briefing. Service team action plans will also be developed to achieve the corporate vision for the district. Progress against service plans will be monitored by the Corporate Management Team.

Cabinet members and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will receive regular corporate performance monitoring reports. These will enable monitoring of improvements across key services. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel also ensures the executive (the Cabinet) is acting within the policies agreed by the whole Council and in the best interests of the district.

Our commitment to **Customer Service Excellence** (CSE), the government’s national standard for the provision of excellent customer services ensures that we are designing our services around the needs of our residents. We actively seek the views of our residents on our services and make changes based on their feedback.

We achieved corporate wide accreditation for CSE in 2009, the first organisation in the country to do it and have since achieved reaccreditation in 2010 and 2011. We have achieved compliance plus in a number of areas in which our assessor says we are best practice. This includes our mobile Crimebuster to help reduce fear of crime and the Octavia View development to tackle homelessness.

Leon Winston, our Customer Service Excellence Assessor commented that *“Fenland District Council places a great deal of emphasis on achieving the highest standards in front-line service delivery.”*

Gaining CSE has helped us to continuously improve our services through engaging with our customers in a proactive way.



The “Pride in Fenland” **campaign** will celebrate and promote Fenland’s unique environment and encourage residents, community groups, tourists and businesses alike to look after our unique heritage and take pride in Fenland.

In fact, the majority of Fenland people take such a pride that each year thousands of hours of volunteer time are contributed to keeping Fenland looking its best through a range of initiatives including Street Pride, Friends Of parks groups and In Bloom groups.

As part of the Council’s Pride in Fenland campaign, a series of innovative environmental campaigns will be promoted for residents to get involved in.



Cambridgeshire's 2010 – 2015

signposts to success

We will take action to ensure people in the most need have the opportunity to be:

ACTIVE AND WELL

Tackle health inequalities by reducing inequalities in the most deprived areas and amongst the most vulnerable

Preventing health inequalities in our new communities.

Make sure that all our communities are places where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

LIVING IN A SAFE & PLEASANT PLACE

Improve the provision of housing with a focus on deprived areas and vulnerable groups.

Make sure that people who live in the 25 most deprived areas can access the services they need.

Reduce the number of people who are homeless.

Reduce crime associated with the most vulnerable people and in areas where it is highest.

EDUCATED, SKILLED & IN EMPLOYMENT

Ensure that children living in areas of relative deprivation get the best possible start in life and that the gap in educational attainment is narrowed.

Target action to increase the number of people who continue in education and training after the age of 16.

Work with other organisations to increase reasonably paid job opportunities in areas of higher unemployment.

We're committed to working together to make Cambridgeshire a great place, with great people and prospects for everyone.

Cambridgeshire's public services have agreed to publish this shared Charter of Priorities which sets out a new way of working together for the benefit of local people.

We will develop new approaches and work differently together by:

- Co-operating with each other to ensure that resources are aligned to where improvements in delivery and outcomes are most required
- Regularly informing our communities about the progress of our work
- Making it simpler for people to access services
- Working with our communities to raise aspirations and shape our services around their needs
- Support the role of elected representatives, ensuring strong leadership and accountability on behalf of local communities
- Making sure we make the best use of every pound we spend
- Focusing on outcomes for the community or individual, not on inputs and outputs
- Recognising that progress against our priorities requires action by our communities as well as by our own organisations