

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

June 2012

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLANNING**



OOO OPEN
for Business

 **LOCALISM**

 **QUALITY
ORGANISATION**

STREETS ahead



Cabinet Members

	Councillor Alan Melton
Leader of the Council	

	Councillor Christopher Seaton
Deputy Leader of the Council	

	Councillor Ralph Butcher
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor John Clark
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Mrs Jan French
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Steve Garratt
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Peter Murphy
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor David Oliver
Cabinet Member	

	Councillor Kit Owen
Cabinet Member	

Neighbourhood Planning

NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

Core Strategy

Good progress has been made to date with the Core Strategy, including amendments to ensure alignment with new Government policy (namely, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) along with the incorporation of changes as a result of previous consultation comments from the community and interested stakeholders i.e. CCC, developers, land owners etc.

Cabinet have subsequently approved the amended draft document at its meeting of 21 June 2012 for a further 6 week consultation period commencing in late July 2012.

With the changes to the Core Strategy approach announced in the recent NPPF document the core strategy can now gain planning weight as it goes through the process, consequently the opportunity was taken to include the necessary Interim Planning Policy Leaders Statement (IPPLS) criteria in the latest draft CS document - this will mean that we will continue to accept IPPLS type applications but the approach is now adopted as policy rather than guidance in the emerging CS (subject to successful consultation)

The Council can now start to use the document in making planning decisions. It will still have to have regard to our current Local Plan, but at the same time it can also have regard to this new emerging plan when we make planning decisions. This is excellent news for Fenland and means we can confidently have discussions with developers, encouraging them to invest in Fenland yet at the same time ensuring high quality development.

Nene Waterfront Project

Delivery of the Project remains on target with a focus on:

- Assessing the options for the vacant development sites in a changing economic market
- Development of the Slipway & Boatlift Services
- The exploration of opportunities linked to the off shore wind farms industry

NP2 The built environment

Fenland Renaissance Programme

The team has identified owners of further unkempt properties in Wisbech and letters have been sent with the aim of determining what the owner's future plans for the site are and raising awareness of the visual impact that these properties have on the street scene. Eligible applications for consideration by the Renaissance Team will also be encouraged.

The Renaissance Team will be attending the Fenland Building Design Awards to further promote the scheme to property owners, agents and developers.

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Court Desk Service Preventing Homelessness

Since April 2012, the Council, along with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), have helped keep 4 more families in homes that they were at risk of losing. Following a referral from the Council, CAB assists the applicants by advocating for them at the court hearing. The CAB managed to get the 4 cases suspended by negotiating revised and affordable repayments of arrears with the judge and lender. CAB will continue to work with the families to ensure they keep to their financial plan. Last year, the Council and CAB prevented 59 families from becoming homeless through this service.

Helping vulnerable residents in the private sector improve their home through a minor works grant

A total of 14 households have had their home improved since April 2012, to assist vulnerable occupiers with disabilities to remain in their own homes and live more safely and independently. Examples include a grant to construct a single storey extension which housed a level access shower facility for a disabled gentleman, and assistance given to install a stair lift for a disabled lady.

The Council has recently awarded two grants; one was for an elderly disabled couple who urgently needed a repair to their roof, the other for an elderly disabled lady who was given a grant to renew a broken electrical shower. Both cases have enabled vulnerable people to maintain their independence in a safe environment.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Following Cllr Owen's multi agency meeting with Alan Brace, the senior parliamentary assistant to Steve Barclay MP, we are now fully operational as regards intelligence sharing with the Police and key statutory agencies. This ensures that we share information regarding HMOs effectively, gather intelligence quickly and prioritise action appropriately to the benefit of the residents in HMOs and the wider community.

The Council has investigated 25 HMOs so far this year, including partnership visits with the Police, Fire Service and Community Safety Officers. Numerous category 1 hazards have been identified in properties visited, including risk of fire safety, along with several properties with overcrowding issues. Appropriate remedial actions are being pursued with respective landlords and agents wherever more serious hazards are encountered.

Benefits

Benefit applications remained high during May and performance has changed as a result. We are still working to help customers as soon as we can and an improvement plan is starting to result in improved processing times.

Our targets are to assess new claims in 17 days and changes in 10 days. During May our performance was 36 days and 14 days respectively. Further progress has been made implementing a recovery plan for benefits. Some additional capacity was put in place during May, with further capacity as of 11 June. This means that we will be focusing on new work as it comes in, whilst at the same time starting to respond to the oldest work. This will mean that performance will not start to improve overall for some time yet, even though an increasing percentage of customers will see their applications for benefit and notification of changes being actioned quicker. The recovery plan will look to improve the cumulative performance as the old work is cleared

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Proactive approach to unauthorised traveller encampments

In Fenland we have taken a proactive approach to Gypsy Travellers' living accommodation. Over the years we have developed five permanent sites and numerous private sites, as well as a transit site to address the accommodation needs of those travelling through the district and those who want to stop for seasonal agricultural work or similar.

Therefore we address unauthorised encampments in a proactive way, and in doing so do not have some of the issues associated with unauthorised encampments in other districts/counties.

In May, the district had three unauthorised encampments; all were moved on within seven days and those encamped ensured that the sites were left in a neat and tidy condition on departure. In pursuing the Councils adopted course of action, we resolve these issues in timely and cost effective way.

Encouraging volunteers to use their skills to help others

The Council has been working in partnership with the Volunteer Centre on the new Time Bank project for the March East ward. The aim of the time banking project is to recruit a minimum of 40 local residents of all ages to mutually swap skills and support for each other in the community. The project (which is funded through Improvement East) has employed a development worker for 14 hours per week. A publicity campaign has been developed, including a promotional display in March library. There are 3 information points around the town; The March One Stop Shop, March library and March Town Hall.

Benwick Community Led Plan

The Benwick Community Led Plan group have delivered their plan to the Fenland In Your Patch meeting. The group received support from the Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE in the development of their plan. The group explained to Members how the plan was developed and they discussed actions which may need further support from FDC to meet.

Working with the Wisbech Schools Partnership

The Raising Aspirations project has led to the Wisbech Schools Partnership and FDC working in partnership to scope a new project for primary school children around developing cultural awareness. The project will help to increase cultural activity for Key Stage 2 children to include taster sessions of music, dance, art and theatre. The project is currently in the development stage and timescales for delivery will be shared shortly.

This is currently a self-funding project which links to the 'Raising Aspirations' website funded by the LPSA.

Community House additional services

The Council is continuing to work with partners in the delivery of services from the Community House. Drinksense are running fortnightly sessions and North Waveney Enterprise Services (NWES) and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) are running weekly sessions. Work on the Virtual Community Hub, using the Community House's Community Access Point, has started with the first sessions likely to start before the end of June. These sessions will include the residents of the over 50s mobile home park and families linked to the Children's Centre.

L3 Supporting our ageing population

Golden Age Fair - Fridaybridge

The first Golden Age Fair this year was held on 17 May 2012 at Tower Hall, Fridaybridge, and attracted over 170 attendees. A total of 29 blood pressure tests were carried out and over £4,500 found in potential benefit claims. Among the partners attending were Age UK, Careline, Magpas, Camsight and the feedback from them was very positive.

Comments from those attending included:

"Very informative, great to know so much is available if we require help/advice etc – I have been to previous fairs but my neighbour and I thought this one was the best yet, so thank you very much".

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Quality Review of Leisure

Following funding from Sport England, an externally assessed quality review of leisure services is being undertaken.

This is a tool for continuous improvement, designed primarily for the management of leisure facilities. It identifies and compares the service against industry standards and good practice, and encourages ongoing development and delivery within a customer focused service.

The assessments are being used to highlight where the service is performing well and to highlight areas for improvement. Two centres have been assessed so far and have received very positive reports, particularly noting the friendliness of staff and the significant impact that the recent refurbishment programme and facility investments have had on customer experience.

Fenland Leisure Fitness classes

The Leisure Service runs 98 fitness classes across 3 leisure centres, with an average of 1,400 weekly attendances. The membership bookings system identifies that the average participant attends twice a week.

With this in mind, there is a constant need to keep the fitness class programme fresh. The team uses a 'Traffic Light' system that monitors weekly attendance to every class. The system aims to keep all classes within the green (80%+ capacity). If a class falls below 50% capacity, the team will review that class for possible cancellation or introduction of a new programme.

Implementing this system ensures that the Council is keeping timetables focussed on customers needs and introducing the latest fitness concepts. The Traffic Light system has helped to maximise income, retain customers for longer and reduce poor performance.

Lifestyle Coach for the over 60s

Despite the Fenland Harty Lives project coming to an end, funding was successfully retained for a further 18 months to continue with the Lifestyle Coach element of the programme. The Lifestyle Coach is fully funded by the British Heart Foundation and will now focus on engaging the over 60s across the district in healthy activity.

The first steering group meeting bringing partners together occurred in May, with agencies offering training and support to the wider project.

The first sessions in the community are now scheduled to start in June with Coldham, Gorefield and Wisbech Village park due to benefit from this service first.

L5 Engaging young people

Fenland Youth Bus

The Fenland Youth Bus has had a second successful outing from Manea to the BMX Park at Corby on 19 May. This outing was funded by part of the grant that was given by Fenland Youth District Council to teach the young people skills in planning and organising outings. A second trip will be organised later in the year.

Youth District Council (YDC)

The YDC held their AGM in May, which was attended by students from 4 schools. The meeting was also attended by the Council's Corporate Management Team and elected members. The YDC delivered their annual report, focussing on the positive work over the past year and looking ahead to 2012/13. The YDC also held a healthy discussion around how they can improve participation and raise their profile to maintain an effective youth voice within FDC.

Streets Ahead

SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

Yes we did - CAN you?

That was the message from all those taking part in the "Yes You CAN!" relay organised by the recycling organisation RECAP. The aim of the event was to encourage more Fenland residents to recycle their metal waste, including aerosol and drinks cans, food tins, tin foil and metal trays and to include these items in the blue bins.

The four-day relay took the baton from St Ives to Peterborough via Cambridge and when reaching Fenland, the Manea School of Gardening carried it in a wheelbarrow from Welney to Christchurch. It was then picked up by 1st March Cub Scouts, who walked it on to March and members of March Athletic Club ran with it from the bandstand in West End Park to Turves, from where more volunteers took it on to Whittlesey.

Cleansing

Following a review of the Cleansing Service to improve efficiency and reduce costs of the service, the new system was introduced on 14 May. The 7 days a week system now consists of a 2 shift 4 day working pattern that includes weekends and Bank Holidays with daily working times of 6.00am to 5.30pm.

The new system has changed patterns of work to improve effectiveness and introduced weekend cleansing and a village response service to enhance the recognised quality service already provided by the Cleansing Team. The new scheme is already having a positive impact, demonstrated by monitoring and improved performance indicator results.

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene

Chatteris Street Pride

The good work has continued in Chatteris this month with Cromwell Community College and Street Pride volunteers. The Street Pride volunteers have carried out a litter pick in the skate park area whilst the students from the college have concentrated their efforts in Wenny Recreation ground. The young people litter picked the area, stained one of the slides and also painted some hoarding on the High Street as part of the changing views work.



Responsible Dog Ownership

As part of promoting responsible dog ownership, patrols have been taking place in Chatteris throughout the day, include early morning and late evening patrols. Areas that suffer from dog fouling have been targeted and matters such as cleaning up after pets and keeping dogs under control have been discussed with 33 dog owners. Dog bags have also been handed out.

A presentation about new enforcement powers to deal with these types of dog issues in Fenland's parks and open spaces will be made at the next round of Town Council meetings. The presentation is part of a consultation programme with Town Councils and the wider community.

Eastwood Cemetery Extension

Construction works to extend the capacity of the cemetery are programmed to commence in July and are expected to take approximately 8 weeks.

Chatteris Historic Festival and Jubilee Celebration

The latest 'Fenland Four Season's Event' began on Thursday 31 May and ran through to Monday 4 June.

This year's event was extended due to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and community partners helped to deliver a successful event which attracted many visitors to the benefit of the whole town. Some local businesses set up stalls to promote their goods and services and engage with potential customers in a social setting. Local organisations took spaces and joined in the range of various activities over the weekend. Town and district members were also invited to take part in the festivities.

Despite poor weather conditions, the event was delivered very successfully, with around 3,000 visitors on the Saturday - when the first ever 'Party in the Park' was held. Other activities were staged over the following two days, culminating in an 'It's a Knockout' competition on the Monday.

Local feedback indicates that despite the weather, this was a great festival and more local individuals have already offered to become involved in the planning of the 2013 event.

Green Business Club

Members of the Green Business Club were invited along to a free web development session in May. The session was funded by a County-wide support grant and was led by a tutor from Bedford College.

The aim of the event was to help smaller businesses design their own or make better use of existing websites. This will ensure costs are saved on printing and distributing materials. Delegates from many businesses sectors attended including car repairs and the food industry.

Feedback from the event was very positive and a further session will now be booked for the summer.

New Public Toilets

Three of the new improved Public Conveniences were recently opened in Chatteris, Wisbech and March and were available in time for the weekend festivities celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The new facilities were launched in Chatteris by the Leader, Councillor Alan Melton, and Portfolio Holder, Councillor Pete Murphy, along with some of the Cleansing staff who will

maintain the cleanliness of the toilets. The remaining toilets being provided in Whittlesey are due to be completed and opened in July.

These clean, modern toilets provide single cubicles for the public to use with improved facilities whilst also cutting the annual costs of upkeep. Between them, they will save the council £60,000 each year and significantly reduce the amount of time that staff spend maintaining them. The investment will preserve excellent services at a reduced cost to Council Tax payers in the future.



SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

CCTV detections hits new heights

The Council was able to respond to and/or detect over 435 incidents during May, allowing for 39 positive outcomes to be achieved as a result. These included over 27 people being arrested as a result of CCTV, and a further 9 people being fined or reported for offences.

These outcomes clearly demonstrate the continued focus and drive by the Council to further support the Police in supporting Fenland's community safety priority.

PubWatch schemes get further partnership support

The district's PubWatch schemes have been provided with a new information sharing database called SIRCS to enable all PubWatch members to be made aware of offending persons and reports in their areas instantly and securely.

This system has been introduced with funding from the Community Safety Partnership for the first year to support relevant partners and business members to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder. The system will also be provided to the local ShopWatch schemes to support the reduction in theft.

A series of training sessions have already been completed with local PubWatch scheme members and the system was operational in readiness for the Jubilee events, as well as the upcoming football tournaments and Olympic games.

Home Office - Focus on ASB Victims

The Cambridgeshire trial which took place in Fenland last year has been highlighted nationally for the work undertaken. Fenland was the only trial area to submit their findings and improvements as a Community Safety Partnership, where others stayed within their respective police force areas.

The Council, Roddons Housing Association, Fire & Rescue and Cambridgeshire Constabulary were the main authorities to implement these changes, which will be used as best practice to roll out across the whole of Cambridgeshire. The focus on victims rather than the causes continues to be the main focus, reducing immediate risk before tackling the longer term issues.

The full report can be found at

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/asb-call-handling-trials-report/asb-focus-on-the-victim>

Tackling Street Drinking

Fenland District Council continues to work in partnership to identify and deliver appropriate support or enforcement for street drinking, including:

- Using tactics of early morning detached patrols with FDC, Police and an officer specialised in dealing with rough sleepers who have "no recourse to public funds". A total of 22 rough sleepers have been identified and engaged with in the initial 3 months.
- The web based system called ECINS has also been used to monitor, create actions and manage the caseload for this project; this includes some ground-breaking work with the UK Border agencies where enforcement is required.

- As part of the project, further work with Octavia View, The Night Shelter and the Rosmini centre also highlights the improvements made working with new partners.

Much of the work is underpinned through information fed through from the Council's CCTV service.

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Outdoor Play Space at the Manor Leisure Centre

The first stage in the consultation process has been launched for a potential new play area at the Manor Leisure Centre site.

The survey was launched on the Fenlander Page and the Shape Your Place website. Residents are being asked their opinion on whether a new play area is needed and if so, where it might be located within the Manor Leisure Centre. This consultation work is required to help establish the need for the project and must be completed before the Council starts the funding application through WREN, a funding organisation linked to waste and recycling. The questionnaire can be completed on line and is also available in the 'Whittlesey @ your service' shop and Manor Leisure Centre reception.

Once the responses are received the Council will move forward with the application over the summer period.

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Sutton Bridge Leisure and Commercial Moorings

Tenders for the installation of the new leisure mooring facility and refurbishment of the Council's commercial moorings at Sutton Bridge have been received. The project is being developed by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) in partnership with FDC and will enable the replacement of ageing FDC infrastructure which supports the Fenland pilot boat and other commercial operations. The completed facility will also add to the local economy, create an attractive enhancement to the river on the important Nene gateway and compliment the Councils highly regarded facilities in Wisbech.

The award of the contract will enable the successful contractor to progress with the detailed design and programme construction works.

Business Centres

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre currently stands at 84.5%, whilst occupancy at The Boathouse remains at 71%. Conference facilities at both business centres remain popular and are generating a healthy income for the Council.

Occupancy at the South Fens Business Premises Phase III remains at 29% as a result of 2 tenants leasing units, and we currently have an 85% occupancy rate for our Light Industrial Units.

Official Opening of South Fens Enterprise Space

Members of the Cabinet and officers from Cambridgeshire County Council attended the official opening of Phase Three of South Fens Enterprise Space on 4 May. The opening was also attended by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cllr Chris Seaton, and from our co-funders, Cambridgeshire County Council. Over the last twelve months, the Council has now been successful in securing over £1.2 million worth of funding that supports the development of both business and employment growth in Fenland

OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

Broadband Marketing Campaign

The Broadband marketing campaign is now underway, with community awareness events planned for the 11 June (March One Stop Shop), 12 June (Whittlesey One Stop Shop) and 14 June (Wisbech One Stop Shop). These events

are to raise awareness and stimulate demand for superfast broadband in Fenland.

Promoting Fenland to Businesses

The Council recently attended a Business to Business Expo event held in Ely. This event provided the opportunity to promote Fenland's business support and accommodation offer and stimulate interest in relocation opportunities to Fenland.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Fenland Horticultural and Land-based Skills Centre

The LEP has unveiled the projects that have been shortlisted to receive Growing Places Funding, and FDC has been successful in bidding for £230,000 to create the Fenland Horticulture and Land-based Skills Centre, one of only two grant funding bids has been endorsed by the LEP Investment Sub-group and Board for Phase 1 Growing Places Funding subject to due diligence.

Set within the existing boundaries of Delamore Ltd, the aim of the Skills Centre is to create a fully functional and self-contained technical environment in which student learners can develop or obtain the necessary skills and qualifications. The project will act as a catalyst to grow a sector skilled labour pool and lift supply in order to meet employer demand which would significantly improve employment and apprenticeship development opportunities for young people in Fenland, regionally and possibly nationally.

The training facility will also offer College of West Anglia Land-based study students access to realistic work environment to compliment studies at the college.

OB4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and visitor destination

Fenland Tourism Board

The Fenland Tourism Board (FTB) has held its second meeting which focussed on:

- Tourism Branding - looking at developing a consistent brand that will be recognisable to tourism in Fenland
- Tourism Promotions – developing healthy press relationships and regular adverts to promote Fenland
- Website Developments – developing a standalone website
- FTB Delivery Plan – a recording and reporting mechanism for FTB
- Market Town Mini Guides – 4 new leaflets are being created combining 8 current leaflets into 4 new leaflets

The Council also met with a local cultural provider to offer advice on new business ideas, and potential funding streams.

As part of this work, the Council helped two new areas develop tourist information hubs within their businesses. These hubs are designed to add value for the promotion of local 'things to do' activities to increase visitor stay and return custom.

The local tourism offer was also promoted at the recent Friday Bridge Golden Age Fair and Middle Level Waterways Commissioners have been engaged to discuss a more joined up approach to promoting tourism and the waterways in Fenland.

Tourism Award at the Fenland Enterprise Business Awards

The marketing for this year's Fenland Enterprise Business Awards, supported by FDC, has begun. This year, to reflect the development of the new Fenland Tourism Board and in recognition of the importance of the tourism industry in Fenland, a Tourism Award has been included. This year's awards dinner will take place on 5 October at the March Braza Club.

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Equality Service Champions

Following consolidation and revision of the Equality Laws, the internal Equality Service Champions meetings have been revised and refreshed to ensure they are in line with current thinking. They act as leaders for diversity and equality in their service area. The Champions meet regularly for training sessions to receive training and guidance to act as a role model, giving advice, assisting with completion of the work required and developing their own personal competencies around diversity and equality issues. They ask questions to check that diversity in its broadest sense is being recognised, understood and considered as integral to the decision making and evaluation processes of their service.

At the last meeting the champions received:-

- A presentation on the new Equality Act, its implications on the Council and how we will address these.
- Revised guidance notes and templates relating to the new Customer Impact Assessments (formerly Equality Impact Assessments).

The end result is to ensure that the Council complies with the Equality Act 2010 in the most streamlined and cost effective way ensuring fairness for all.

Tacking Benefit Fraud

We continue to target customers who deliberately apply for benefit when they are not entitled. Fraud is a clear pressure on public funds, where benefit goes to those who do not deserve it and we take bringing them to justice very seriously, always ensuring that we are recovering money that they claimed fraudulently at the same time as taking them to court.

Two more people have now been successfully prosecuted for benefit fraud following tip-offs from members of the public.

Council Tax Collection

As part of our Council Tax collection process, we have started to take recover action against those who have not made any payment at all this year. So far, 782 court summonses have been issued for arrears totaling £776,000. Customers failing to make payment arrangements with us are being given a last opportunity to make payment before we look at using Bailiffs and deductions directly from salaries to recover debts.

Customer Access

May was another very busy month for our Telephone Contact Centre which received 12% more telephone calls than this time last year. Despite this increase, we were still able to improve performance from April, ensuring that 68% of calls were answered within our standard of 20 seconds and only 9% of customers abandoned their calls before speaking to us. However we do have a phone-back service, so during busy times customers can choose not to wait and leave their contact details, so that we can return their call later the same day.

Local Council Tax Benefit

Preparations continue in advance of the move of Council Tax Benefit from local to national control in April 2013 as first highlighted in last month's briefing. We are currently modelling the financial effects on both customers' entitlement and our budget of different benefit schemes. New modelling tools are being made available by our computer software supplier in June that will help us more finely tune these models, in order that we can bring the first set of options to Cabinet in July. After that we will be looking to consult widely with existing benefits customers, the wider community, special interest groups and also other public bodies that will be affected by this major change.

Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively

Licensing training for Customer Access Staff

A 6 week course of Customer Service Advisor (CSA) training for licensing processes has been completed. As part the training, the CSA staff gave the Licensing team valuable feedback on how we can assist one another better and plans are being developed to work on these suggestions before further training in October.

Training on changes in Licensing Legislation

Member and officer training took place on 28 May with James Button, licensing solicitor on the new amendments to the Licensing Act 2003. Part of the day included a workshop of licensing case studies which helped the attendees put the theory into practice on decision making.

Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way

Proactive Licensing Compliance work

Multi-agency officer visits took place in Wisbech during the month of May with officers discovering a huge store of illegal cigarettes and bags of cash on a routine inspection of licensed premises.

Licensing Hearing Update

The Rose & Crown Hotel, Wisbech went to Licensing panel on 15 May after police served a representation of object to an application made by the new owners. Licensing Committee listened to both applicant and objectors and decided to grant the licence subject to agreed conditions.

Boundary Commission - Fenland Electoral Review

The Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) regarding future warding arrangements is due to be considered by Full Council on 26 July. The Council decided that it would seek to put forward its own proposals at each stage of the LGBCE review project. As a result, a cross party Member Working Group, made up primarily of Group Leaders, was formulated to lead the Council through the LGBCE process. The Member Working Group was informed by in depth consultation feedback from three cycles of Member Focus Groups which involved all 40 Councillors. This has ensured the District Council submission has been refined over a period of time and represents the most appropriate solution for the future warding arrangements for the District.

The Boundary Commission will consult on its draft scheme for Fenland's future ward boundaries for a 12 week period in the autumn and any changes to the current arrangements will come into effect from the 2015 local elections.

Annual Canvass

Annual Canvass is now underway with voter registration forms being sent to all households. This process is occurring two months earlier this year due to the Police and Crime Commissioner election being held on 15 November 2012. Voter registration forms are required to be filled in every year even if details have not changed, therefore, it is important residents return these forms as soon as possible for the electoral services team to maintain an accurate and up to date electoral register.