

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

August 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

Public and Community Transport Issues

Members of the Fenland Strategic Partnership (FSP) Transport & Access Group met with Chatteris Town Councillors in June 2012 to discuss public and community transport issues in the town. A second transport article has been prepared and submitted for the August edition of the Chatteris Centre point magazine. Initial feedback on the new Stagecoach bus services to Ely, Cambridge and Huntingdon are positive. Extended connections for commuters travelling from Chatteris and from Huntingdon Bus Station to the guided bus route were introduced from 23 July 2012.

Rail Development Strategy

A presentation was recently delivered to Manea Parish Council concerning the Rail Development Strategy and the Community Rail Partnership (CRP). There is now a commitment for the District Council and Parish Council to work together on the delivery of the strategy and CRP for Manea. Future meetings are to be established to put in place the framework for joint working.

Coalwharf Road Demonstration Project

The Coalwharf Road Demonstration Project is intended to create an exemplar sustainable development. The project will seek to deliver a high quality, beacon-development to act as a catalyst for high quality design and the use of sustainable technology and construction methods.



The first stage of the Demonstration Project was completed this month. A land swap transaction between FDC and Cambridgeshire County Council was completed, enabling FDC to move forward with the development of a design brief and the formulation of a design competition.

Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey – River Mooring Refurbishment Works

Following reported health and safety issues with this mooring in May 2012, the Council has developed a solution and engaged a local construction company to undertake the works. New pressure treated timber decking and non slip sheeting replaced the rotten timber mooring along with pink granite chippings finishing off the landing stage. The mooring was re-opened for use on 27 July 2012.



NP2 The built environment

Fenland Renaissance Programme

The Fenland Renaissance Team met this month and assessed a grant application for 13 Market Place, Whittlesey. The shop front of the premises is looking very tired and the applicant intends to redecorate the shop front and make some improvements to the roof.



Derelict Properties in Wisbech:

The Phoenix

Expert valuation and development advice has been sought in relation to the Phoenix in accordance with the Cabinet Decision of 19 April. This will inform our options going forward and the intention will be to engage further with the Bank of East Asia with this advice in hand. In addition, the structural engineers responsible for making the remaining façade of the building safe have confirmed its continuing structural safety.

11/12 High Street and 1 Nene Quay

A barrister has been engaged to take forward recovery action against the owners of these properties. In addition, the Council is continuing to monitor the structural integrity of the properties. The 11/12 High Street property is to be considered by the same commercial property valuation expert as The Phoenix which will inform recovery action going forward.

24 High Street

A further valuation has been commissioned in relation to 24 High Street to inform our options going forward. In addition, initial engagements have been made with potentially interested parties in order to ensure maximum interest in the event of a sale. This is seen as the best means of bringing the property back into use. As with The Phoenix, the continued structural integrity of the building has been confirmed with the contractor who carried out the original works to the property to make it safe.

July Summit on affordable homes

In a bid to boost the number of new affordable homes across the district, the Council is seeking to team up with developers to obtain funding from "Get Britain Building", the housing investment programme recently launched by the Government.

The Council will also be taking a close look at all its land assets with a view to possible sales to help foster more development. Further discussions will be held with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to assess the possibility of attracting more money into Fenland, linked to the agency's new priorities.

Other moves include sharing details of land availability with housing associations and working closely together with developers to ensure that sites remain viable. There is also a firm commitment to making the whole planning process as simple and efficient as possible.

These key proposals link to a special meeting with key players in the Fenland Housing Market called by Councillor Owen on July 13.

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Benefits

We are continuing to bring work up to date with the Benefits Recovery Plan. The oldest work ring-fenced when the recovery plan was initiated has been cleared in the last few days, thanks to the dedication and hard-work of staff.

At the same time, we continue to offer a much improved service to customers making new applications for benefit or telling us about changes now.

However the effects of this will not be seen yet as we are still seeking further information from many customers who made applications for benefit some time ago, before we can assess them. It is often the case that after we receive an initial application for benefit that we need to contact the customer for further clarification of their circumstances such as overtime, savings and household details.

At the end of July, we were actioning new claims in an average of 36 days compared with our target of 17 days. At the same time we were updating changes in an average of 13 days compared with a target of 10 days.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) interventions

The Council have visited and investigated 31 HMOs since April in partnership with the Police. A total of 19 cases were identified where interventions were required due to either overcrowding, house condition faults and failings or adverse neighbour impact issues. Contact has been made with landlords and agents where improvements are required. Two of the interventions have resulted in abandonment and temporary closure. The visits have triggered housing, health and safety and neighbour cohesion related actions as well as community safety advice opportunities for the Police. The new approach partnering with the Police is a result of sharing data on a web based system which came from a summit held by Councillor Owen earlier in the year.

Community House Key Projects / Services

The Council continues to support drop in sessions delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau and North & Waverney Enterprise Service (NWES) on Wednesdays and Fridays respectively. ICT sessions with a trainer are taking place every Friday for the over 55s, and these popular events have increased computer usage at the house throughout the week. We are working with Community Service Volunteers (CSV) on a volunteering recruitment project to help provide additional support to families whose children are in the greatest need. We have worked in conjunction with Roddons to deliver a family activity day (on 25 July) with a focus on healthy living for residents. Over 50 residents attended. Youth

Service Providers are using the Community House for drop in activity during the summer holidays for young people to engage with.

Teens and Toddlers

A celebration event was recently held for the volunteers and participants of the Teens and Toddlers project at the Queen Mary Centre. The event celebrated the journey travelled for the young people and certificates were also awarded. The project helps to reduce the amount of teenage pregnancies in Wisbech and upskill local residents to increase employability chances.

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Migrant homelessness with no recourse to public funds

The Council is working in partnership with the Police to engage with migrants without recourse to public funds. Since this initiative started, there have been 9 migrants who have returned home to Eastern Europe funded by a central government grant. This is where the individuals fail to meet the requirements of EU legislation for their reason for travelling to the UK.

March East Timebanking project

The Council has held a promotional event in March to encourage local residents to sign up to the Timebank project. The team engaged with over 50 people and have sent out a number of enrolment forms to enable residents, both young and old, to volunteer their time and share their skills. The event has also helped to raise the profile of the project in the town.

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Manor Functions Update

The recently refurbished function venue at the Manor Leisure Centre has held many events and functions and the future is looking positive. Functions to date include weddings, birthday parties, dinner dances and other charity events.

Since April 2012, a total of six events have been held. More bookings are in place, including weddings, dinner dances, a New Year's Eve event and Antiques Fayre.

Since the refurbishments of the hall at the centre, FDC has been able to provide a large function and event venue for the community. The hall is much larger than other local venues, as well as being more modern and up to date and has flexibility that other local providers cannot offer.

Mobile Gym Update

The Mobile Gym has moved to a location in Chatteris in readiness for the opening of the new Chatteris Leisure facility.

The new position at Wood Street enables the leisure team to have a base to launch marketing and membership sales for Chatteris Leisure. This will encourage existing customers to venture to the site and customers will be able to see the new building, encouraging them to continue their active lifestyle in the new facility once the mobile gym project ends in September.

Sports Development – FENDIS Golf Day

The FENDIS Golf and Fun day is an event run in partnership with FENDIS (Fenland Disability Sports Forum). This event, which took place on 6 July, is for people with disabilities and runs on an annual basis. The day included a round of golf and a number of other sports experiences.

The aim of the day is to encourage people with disabilities to participate in fun sporting activities and signpost them to a local club where they can further their participation.

This year the golf day attracted around 300 people including participants, carers and volunteers. Despite the wet weather everyone enjoyed the successful event.

Wisbech Safety Zone

Over 350 primary school children from Wisbech visited the Safety Zone which was held at Wisbech Fire Station in July. Safety Zone events are delivered with partner organisations across the county, including Trading Standards, Road Safety, Fire Safety, Safer Fenland, St Johns Ambulance and the Police.

The children are provided with information on a range of issues affecting their health and well being, including healthy eating using the Food Standards Agency Eat Well plate, demonstrating good hand washing before eating with the ultra violet light scanner, personal safety, fire safety, and also internet safety.

The programme of Safety Zones delivered for Fenland school children is a valuable opportunity to communicate key health and well being messages in a format that children find enjoyable.

Fenland Health & Wellbeing Partnership

A successful second meeting of the Fenland Health & Wellbeing Partnership was held in July, attended by councillors and representatives from the Local Commissioning Groups, GPs, Cambs County Council, FDC and the Public Health team.

The Partnership has agreed the following priorities for 2012/13:

1. Engage the local population

- 1.1 Increase the engagement of Fenland residents in their communities and support them to take responsibility for their own health

2. Increase and Improve Communication

- 2.2 Decrease the duplication and lack of knowledge by professionals and the public of available services
- 2.3 Provide communities with appropriate and comprehensive information about current services

3. Increase the effectiveness and integration of services

- 3.1 Ensure that needs are assessed holistically
- 3.2 Increase the integration of services across a wider range of services i.e. health, non-health, statutory and voluntary organisations.

4. Increase prevention

- 4.1 Establish a strategic focus upon prevention
- 4.2 Identify key prevention needs across all age groups and target interventions

L5 Engaging young people

Youth District Council (YDC)

The YDC met in July at Cromwell Community College and attendees included members from 4 secondary schools. The meeting was also attended by the Vice-Principal of Neale Wade Community College and representatives from Crossroads Young Carers.

The YDC agreed that one of their aims for 2012/13 will be to work with Fenland Enterprise and Education Project to hold an employability skills event during the next academic year.

YDC Grants 2012/13

The YDC awarded grants to three organisations, including Crossroads Young Carers, Chatteris Action for Youth and Sarah's Street Style Dance club. The YDC have continued to promote their grants scheme to maximise take up.

YDC members invited members from Crossroads Young Carers to present on their proposed projects and explain the responsibilities and pressures that young carers face.

March Cricket Festival (24-26 July)

The Council have worked in partnership with March Cricket Club for their annual Cricket Festival. The event is run over 3 days and encourages children aged 6-13 to partake in positive sports activities and learn about issues connected with social cohesion, raising aspirations, community safety (including internet safety) and team work. The event engaged with approximately 100 children from various schools. The event has received very positive feedback.

Children's Trust Update

Councillor Garratt has been appointed Children's Trust representative for Cambridgeshire second tier authorities. The trust has been streamlined to focus on key issues that require intervention. A key aspect to this will be to highlight to the new Health and Well Being Board where support is needed to improve life chances for young people. The possible priorities for the first year will be:

- Building capacity in universal provision – this will focus on building capacity in the voluntary and community sector to compensate for decreasing universal services
- Working collectively to map needs of families with complex interactions across partners and identifying some joint partnership work to engage and support these families.
- Eastern European families – understanding their needs and issues experienced in supporting them in order to develop a more strategic, multi-agency response

This will be looked at in more detail at the next meeting on the 10 September.

Streets Ahead

SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

Increased Textiles Recycling

Fenland's customers are making every effort to recycle their waste. This is clearly demonstrated through the recent increases in recycling at the Council's textile bring banks across the district.

Recent figures for June demonstrate this trend, where weights are increased to 5 tonnes, compared to 3 tonnes received in May.

This type of recycling also increases income to support services and, with continued publicity and educational support for recycling, these levels are expected to be maintained.

Credit for Recycling

The Council encourages local community groups to accommodate recycling facilities by passing some of the income from the sites back to the local charities for the paper and textile banks they house.

Recent claims have meant that a total of £2,160 was paid to a range of charities, parish councils and scout groups who support recycling in their communities for the first half of 2011/12.

Cleansing Satisfaction

The Council's Cleansing and Rapid Response services are an important part of the Streets Ahead corporate priority. The Cleansing Service has recently changed and now has an increased community focus which incorporates regular feedback on performance from town councils and community groups who rate our performance.

Feedback from the first month has been collated and, from the 120 responses received so far, 86% of customers were satisfied with the quality of cleansing in their community.

This feedback will continue to be encouraged and services altered according to community priorities.

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene

Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey – Overflow Car Park Refurbishment Works

The overflow car park at the Manor Leisure Centre was in need of improvement. A solution of a permeable Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) “grasscrete” paving was proposed and subsequently implemented.

The work was carried out in conjunction with the local mooring refurbishment, thus offering the Council financial and time savings.

The overflow car park is currently closed whilst the new grass seed germinates. It is envisaged that it will be opened middle to late September, depending on the weather.



Street Pride

Whittlesey Street Pride volunteers have not let the bad weather dampen their spirits. They had a fantastic litter pick and tidy up at Kings Delph this month, with 15 bags of rubbish collected. The group has now removed a total of 4.5 tons from this one site alone since focusing their efforts in this area.

Projects like this one, under the ‘Street Pride’ initiative, continue to make Fenland a more attractive place to live and work. Bringing volunteers together helps reinforce the pride residents feel in their towns and contributes to other Street Scene initiatives such as Tidy Fenland.



SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

Council assisting in the detection and reduction of crime and disorder

During April to July 2012, the Council, as part of its community safety agenda, has detected and responded to 1,543 incidents in Fenland, including alcohol related anti-social behaviour, theft shoplifting and violent crime offences.

This resulted in 74 people being arrested, and a further 121 people either being cautioned or fined as a result, thereby supporting our policing partners in tackling crime and disorder in Fenland.

Crime update for first quarter 2012/13

The Fenland Community Safety Partnership has shown excellent reductions in crime related incidents between April to June 2012

- Reduction in Criminal Damage by 13.2%
- Detection of Shoplifting offences 71.9%
- Reduction in Drug offences 50.8%
- Reduction in ASB currently on target compared to 2011/12 incidents by 150 incidents
- 29 Rough sleepers engaged in Wisbech (79% positive outcomes through support or enforcement)

Reported shoplifting incidents have increased in the Wisbech area. The Partnership are using the new Information Sharing system to refocus businesses in incident reporting using the SIRCS system, which also helps increase the detection rates in this area.

Fenland Community Safety Partnership Violent Crime update

Violent crime has reduced by 15.7% between April and June 2012. This is partly due to focussed Police patrols and strategic deployments in the identified locations from local intelligence and historic analytical data.

There was also extra Police resource in Wisbech and March over the European Football event which saw only one violent crime incident throughout the entire competition, a vast improvement on the World Cup of 2010.

The broader partners in the partnership continue to support the Police in their good work. The Council are developing projects such as empowering licence premises with an accreditation scheme and the re- deployment of CCTV cameras to identified hotspot areas through the new CCTV re-deployment protocol. The Fenland Business Against Crime (FEN-BAC) "Welcome launch" is also planned, which will include training on a shared web based information system called SIRCS to aid our challenge against alcohol related crime.

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Summer Bedding Scheme

As part of this year's summer bedding schemes, the Parks team produced a carpet design with the "Tidy Fenland" logo. The intricate design was laid out within Wisbech Park and depicts the logo that was successfully used across Fenland.

The Anglia In Bloom judges were very impressed with the design and the important message.



Pictured with Cllr Peter Murphy, Judges from Anglia In Bloom, Wisbech In Bloom Chairman and Secretary and Staff from TLG.

Free Running comes to Fenland - Wenny Recreation Ground Chatteris

The first free running site in Fenland will be at the Wenny Recreation Ground in Chatteris. Work is back on schedule and almost complete, with the official opening of the new play equipment set for Friday 17 August with a professional Free Running team who will be giving demonstrations.



Responsible Dog Ownership Public Consultation

A public consultation is taking place into adopting improved powers to tackle dog related community issues in our open spaces. The provisions offer a broader range of powers for controlling dogs in public spaces.

Consultation with the Fenland community started in July, with town councils consulted and offering support for the proposed changes.

Feedback will be received via our website, Street Scene officers, one stop shops and leisure centres until 22 August. Cabinet is due to receive the results of this consultation in September.

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Wisbech Port

Wind Farm traffic continues to bring in extra income through the Port of Wisbech. The Porth Wen (Turbine Transfers) is currently utilising the layby berth at Sutton Bridge. The annual Hydrographic Survey of the river has also been carried out.

The Westmark Knock and Wisbech No.1 buoys have been relayed using capital funding. This will realise efficiency savings as they will no longer require 3rd party maintenance. This work has been carried out in advance of the annual buoy inspection by Trinity House due in August.

Business Centres

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre remains at steady at over 80%, 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 Centre and the Light Industrial Units remains unchanged at 29% and 85% respectively.

A marketing campaign has been established featuring a rotation of adverts for The Boathouse, South Fens, the light industrial units and a general sector advert covering the entire business premises services. To ensure continued awareness of our facilities, the adverts will be running fortnightly in The Wisbech Standard and Cambs Times for the next 6 months.

Increased growth and retention in both commercial and tourism business communities

Nearly 40 businesses attended the Bank of England presentation at the Boathouse on July 13. The aim of the event was to give Fenland businesses a yearly update on the local, national and international economy and to give local businesses an opportunity to help aid their growth and business planning process. The event was very well received by the local business community and feedback suggests that more of the same quality presentations would be most welcomed

A total of 8 local businesses attended the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) event at the Boathouse on July 4. The event was supported by the Council and provided local businesses with the

opportunity to 'Meet your local support'. Both MAS and UKTI provided presentations to the businesses which explained how:

- MAS provide a national service delivered locally by experienced advisors, who will help manufacturing business grow or just become more competitive.
- UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) helps UK-based exporters succeed globally and assists overseas companies to bring high quality investment to the UK.

Revised Economic Development Strategy

The consultation process and programme for the new Fenland Economic Development Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 26 July. Consultation will commence on 6 August and run until 14 September, and will be available via the Council's website, Fenland @ your service shops and the Business Centres.

Stray Dogs & Kennelling

July saw the beginning of the new Stray Dogs Collection and Kennelling Contract. The new contract is part of a consortium between three local small businesses.

By tendering for the contract in a way that allowed for small and large businesses to compete on a level field, we were able to support local businesses and ensure that they had a fair opportunity to competitively apply for a contract.

The contract has focussed on customer services to ensure that our customers continue to receive a high quality of service. The contract will run for three years.

Green Business Club Success

Local businesses took up free training on website development to help boost online trade, whilst reducing impact on the environment. The session was free and was made possible as a result of working in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and Bedford College to utilise their project funding for business assistance in the East of England.

Before attending the training, companies admitted to paying in excess of £30 a month for websites over which they have little control. After the workshop, delivered by a professional ICT tutor, they had the tools to create their own webpages for no cost and manage them to increase trade and reduce costs, such as postage costs and fuel usage.

The Green Business Club is the Council's flagship project to encourage innovative environmental practice in business. The club will continue to deliver practical environmental workshops in response to the demand of local firms to ensure that Fenland remains 'Open for Business' and local trade continues to

thrive. This Autumn will include a repeat website development workshop and a buddy scheme for local trades people wishing to diversify into renewable energy installation.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Supporting the Thomas Clarkson Academy Performance Space delivery

FDC held a meeting on July 16 with the Thomas Clarkson Academy (TCA) to rejuvenate the proceedings following a pause during the transformation of the College into the Academy. The group reflected on the progress to date, and on the keys issues constraining the project, which is mainly the need for TCA to confirm operational/managerial leads for the performance space.

An operational steering group will be convened in August, in keeping with the principles outlined in the Governance/Management document.

Industry Day

During July, the Council took part in the Industry Day at Sir Harry Smith Community College. The Council ran four sessions with classes of 15 year olds to demonstrate the range of opportunities available working in local government, as well as the opportunities and aspirations available in the District of Fenland.

The sessions demonstrated the benefits of team working, appreciating other people's skills and the rewards of achieving goals. The winning students from each group have been rewarded with a sports voucher.

OB4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and visitor destination

Supporting the Fenland Tourism Board (FTB)

The FTB held a meeting on July 3 and received updates on progress around work with CCC regarding the Brown Sign Policy for Cambridgeshire. Work is still ongoing but FTB have fed back provider comments on the process which will be taken into consideration.

The FTB are also in the process of developing a logo for Tourism in Fenland that can be used as a consistent brand for Tourism.

The FTB formed two working groups to support officers in developing the tourism website and the Welcome to Cambridgeshire Fens, Visitor and Accommodation Guide 2013. Work on the 2013 brochure is due to start in August.

The FTB are in the early stages of organising an end of season stakeholder event. This event will provide a chance for the FTB to tell providers what they have been delivering and also encourage all tourism providers to tell the FTB about the recent tourism season, what needs improving, what went well and if they require any help from the FTB.

Marketing of Tourism in Fenland

FDC and FTB members are currently pulling together a series of 3 positive press releases to promote Fenland. These will be distributed to local, regional and national news papers, clubs etc.

The FTB has also purchased advert space in 'Discover Britain for Groups' for July and August. This advert will enable the Council to gain an invaluable source of data and enquiries from the Group Travel Organisers who will monitor the success of the campaign. To date, 11 enquiries have been made from tour operators and coach companies all showing an interest in bringing groups to Fenland.

Supporting local groups with tourism and culture opportunities

Building on last year's success, the Council is once again working with the Heritage Open Days (HOD) event in 2012. Heritage Open Days celebrates fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to properties that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. It is a once-a-year chance to discover hidden architectural treasures and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities which bring to life local history and culture. All events to date have been published on the national HOD website, and a local brochure is being collated to promote the event. Heritage Open Days 2012 will take place on 6-9 September

Building on the previous year's success, the Council is working with local organisations to participate in the National Bandstand Marathon. This year's event ties into the Heritage Open Days and the Closing Ceremony of the Paralympics. The Bandstand Marathon brings live music performance to bandstands and outdoor performance spaces across the UK, all at the same time on the same day. Chatteris, March and Whittlesey will all be participating within Fenland on Sunday 9 September 2012 between 1-5pm. For further information, please go to <http://bandstandmarathon.org.uk/>

Improve the visibility of Fenland as a place to visit

Initial conversations have started between FDC and the Yacht Club on future developments around promoting the Harbour and Yacht Club in Wisbech. Officers are investigating the potential to involve the Yacht club in next years annual Rose Fair, and also into organising an open day in 2013, where boats will be invited to Wisbech for the day.

FDC held a meeting on July 18 to discuss partnership working with the Middle Level Waterways Commission. The meeting looked at better ways to promote the waterways, including the appearance of the market towns from the waterways, management and monitoring of the mooring.

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Customer Access

In July we further improved Contact Centre performance by answering 77% of all calls within our service standard of twenty seconds. Only 4% of customers abandoned their calls before we answered them. At the same time, we continue to offer our phone-back service so that during busy times customers can leave their contact details and receive a return call later the same day.

Council tax collection

Council Tax Collection is currently under target by 1.3%, however this does fluctuate throughout the year and should meet the target at the end of the year.

Local Council Tax Benefits

Cabinet approved the Council's approach to public consultation for our draft proposals for a Local scheme from next April, at its meeting on 26 July 2012.

At the start of August, briefing packs were circulated to all Members further explaining the background to Local Council Tax Benefit scheme with copies of the Cabinet report, explanatory leaflet, FAQ document and consultation questionnaire so that all Members are aware of the proposals and the possible issues from residents.

The public consultation for the changes started on 13 August 2012, and included a press release and article in "The Fenlander" on 17 August. Detailed information is also prominently displayed on the front page of our website.

The consultation will last until 20 October, after which we will consider the responses before Council considers and ratifies a final scheme in December.

Business Rates

The collection of Business Rates has fluctuated slightly at the end of July and is now 0.7% down on predicted collection rates for this point in the financial year. Business Rate collection levels do fluctuate during every year and we are confident that we will achieve planned overall collection rates for this financial year as a whole.

Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively

2011/12 Statement of Accounts

The 2011/12 accounts were signed off by the Chief Finance Officer by the statutory deadline of 30 June. The accounts are now being externally audited by Price Waterhouse Cooper and will be presented to the Corporate Governance Committee for approval on 25 September.