

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

September 2012

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLANNING**



OOO OPEN
for Business

 **LOCALISM**

 **QUALITY
ORGANISATION**

STREETS ahead



Cabinet Members

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| Leader of the Council | |

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|  | Councillor Christopher Seaton |
| Deputy Leader of the Council | |

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|  | Councillor Ralph Butcher |
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|  | Councillor John Clark |
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|  | Councillor Steve Garratt |
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|  | Councillor Pop Jolley |
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|  | Councillor David Oliver |
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|  | Councillor Kit Owen |
| Cabinet Member | |

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|  | Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE |
| Cabinet Advisor | |

Neighbourhood Planning

NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

Core Strategy

Following a 6 week consultation period on the reviewed Core Strategy, the Council has received over 400 individual responses. These are being collated and will be reported to the Community Development Plan Working Group during late October/early November 2012. The Council will use the comments to inform revisions to the Core Strategy to submit to Cabinet/Council for approval in advance of final consultation in early 2013, followed by submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

March Market Town Transport Strategy

Member Steering Group meetings have now been established for September and December 2012 to undertake analysis on the available transport evidence and to agree the issues that need to be addressed.

Community Rail Partnership Steering Group

Representatives from the rail industry and the local authorities have now established this Steering Group, which met for its first meeting in August 2012. The Partnership will now be known as the Hereward CRP. A logo and branding are now in development and a formal launch for the CRP with the trade press and others was held on Friday, 12 October 2012.

Horsefair Bus Station Safety Improvements

The contract for the Horsefair Bus Station Safety Improvements Works has been awarded, with work starting on site on 15 October 2012. Works are scheduled to be completed by the Christmas shopping period.

The taxi drivers and stakeholders have been appraised in advance of the works. A revised code of conduct is being agreed with all Horsefair users.

Old River Nene Boat Pump Out Sanitation Point, March

The contract has been awarded to undertake and complete the proposed facility refurbishment works. Construction works started on 5 September 2012, and the refurbishment works will be complete and the site operational by 31 October 2012.

Nene Waterfront (NWF) Project

Delivery of the Project Plan remains on target, with regular monthly meetings making way for sub-project team meetings. These meetings will be aimed at delivering specific outputs from the project plan.

This month, a delegation from the NWF Project Team met with the Port Operating Company to discuss a number of issues relating to business diversification and operational practices. Engagement with the key stakeholders and riverside businesses continues to help inform the strategy for the Council's quayside landholdings.

FDC has commissioned the tidying up of the Nene Sites with the removal of weeds and securing of fencing as a part of the Cabinet mandate provided in July. Cambridgeshire County Council has advised that carriageway resurfacing of the highways around the NWF will be undertaken between 8-21 October 2012. Improvements to the footways will follow, linked to planned improvements to the development sites to be undertaken by FDC.

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, sustainability and construction methods.

Positive progress is being made with the drafting of a Design Brief document which identifies the required outputs from the Demonstration Project. It is anticipated that the document, in its draft form, will be completed by the end of September.

Community Support – The Croft, Christchurch

Plans to support to completion of roads and drainage on this private development have been put into motion. Following the developer going into administration with infrastructure incomplete, residents have been left with the unwelcome challenge of how they get the development complete and adopted. As a first step, all residents/owners have been contacted and asked if they will support a rescue package. Subject to full support, officers will establish just what is required and how much each property must contribute to undertake the outstanding works. Subject again to full support, the Council will initiate the works on the residents/owners behalf.

Crab Boat Yard / Yacht Harbour

August has proved to be a very busy month for Crab Marsh Boat Yard. Various craft which are involved with the Lincs Offshore Wind Farm development have been serviced in the yard. We have also had a flurry of fishing vessels from Kings Lynn and Grimsby plus our own two Port vessels coming into the Port for routine maintenance and various Yacht Harbour customers being lifted out for the winter.

NP2 The built environment

Fenland Renaissance Programme

Following a recent mail-shot to owners of local derelict and vacant properties, the Renaissance Team's Conservation Officer met with one such owner, to discuss possible refurbishment and potential funding at their 11a Nene Quay premises in Wisbech.

The owner is awaiting the completion of the Nene Quay Flood Improvement works, before submitting an application for funding.

Awareness Raising of Shared Ownership Properties in Fenland

Training has been undertaken by Orbit, the Eastern Region Homebuy Agent, which has responsibility for coordinating delivery of this type of housing, often a route for key workers and families to access the housing ladder. There are currently 3 vacancies on the market in Fenland and the training will enable FDC staff to signpost residents to the opportunities with a broader understanding of how the tenure works operationally. Roddons staff also attended the event.

Get Britain Building

To try and "kickstart" new build development in the district, the Council proactively contacted 10 developers with planning permission, but not building the site out to see if they would be interested in accessing a new Government initiative called "Get Britain Building". This scheme facilitates loans to the developer to invest in building out sites in effect underwriting the risk to the development. In response to the Council's prompting 1 developer has formally submitted a bid for consideration and we are awaiting the outcome.

Derelict Properties in Wisbech

24 High Street

An updated valuation report has just been received on 24 High Street, Wisbech. This will be considered by officers and the contents fed back to members to inform options going forward. These will focus on the best means of bringing the property back into use whilst also recovering sums outstanding to FDC. Officers also to continue to engage with potentially interested parties.

11/12 High Street and the Phoenix

Following identification of a suitably skilled commercial property expert, a detailed brief has been assembled by officers and has been lodged for consideration. This has asked for both a valuation and consideration of potential development options to bring the properties back into use. A range of values

attributable to the development options is to be provided to inform further member consideration.

1 Nene Quay

Further contact has been made with the owner (prior to commencement of proceedings) in order to seek to identify his intentions for the property and to provide as much information as possible to inform recovery action. The owner has abandoned an action against his insurers and has acknowledged his obligation to leaseholders to reinstate/restore the property. He has asked to be put into contact with planning and conservation officers at FDC to assist him in with the necessary consents for this work. To cover the expense, the owner is realigning his assets and he has acknowledged the debt owed to FDC. He was happy to agree to a further update in terms of works/repayment of the debt in the coming few weeks.

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Benefits

We continue to improve benefits performance through our Benefits Recovery Plan and the fantastic effort by the team meant September was the best month for performance in the current financial year with regards in-month processing times.

New claims are now being actioned in a cumulative average of 35 days for the current financial year as a whole compared with a target of 17 days. At the same time changes were being actioned in a cumulative average of 13 days compared to our target of 10 days.

These improvements of one day's faster performance than a month ago show that we are beginning to see the start of improved performance levels as the outstanding work further reduces. This is reflected in the oldest unactioned work now being 20 days old, compared to 75 days old just two months ago.

At the same time we are continuing to cope well despite some continued long term sickness.

Homeless prevention

As part of the Council's priority to prevent homelessness, we are working jointly with Roddons to encourage their tenants who are in rent arrears and facing court action and possible eviction to pay their rent. A total of 17 families have been seen at home so far and this joint approach is providing positive results to enable Roddons families to remain in their home. The added value for the Council is that, along with securing a better outcome for residents, this prevents an increase of formal investigations around the circumstances of homelessness arising through Roddons tenancies, saving public money.

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Small grants to assist vulnerable private sector residents to remain safe and warm at home

The Council has assisted 9 cases since April 2012 via a small capital grant, resulting in improved safe conditions for vulnerable residents.

In one such case an elderly lone pensioner was living in an old run down property. The resident was confined to living on the ground floor and sought our assistance with repairs (leaky toilet roof and entrance doors and rear windows in poor condition and insecure). Works were completed via a grant and undertaken by a local contractor resulting in the elimination of the damp and mould problem and improved safety of the occupier.

Timebank Project

The Council is working in partnership with the Volunteers Centre in March on a Timebank project aimed at sharing skills between younger and older people. The scheme works by residents receiving the assistance they need from a volunteer and then returning the favour using a skill that they have to offer. The concept is at the heart of the Localism agenda and the project has recently been promoted on Radio Cambridgeshire. There are now 12 people signed up to the scheme and 26 hours worth of volunteering has taken place.

Credit Union

The Council is working with Rainbow Savers (Rainbow Anglia Savers Credit Union) to promote and establish a Credit Union in Fenland. A steering group (comprised of FDC, Roddons, Volunteer Centre and Oasis Community Centre) has now been formed in Wisbech, with venues selected as collection points. The steering group is now actively recruiting volunteers to train.

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Paralympic Flame Event

FDC supported the Paralympic legacy by organising four Paralympics sport taster sessions on Sunday 26 August 2012 as the Paralympic lantern visited the Hudson Leisure Centre.

The day was very successful, with 160 people attending to see the flame and 50 young people participating in the taster sessions.



A total of 5 young people from FENDIS disability multi-sport clubs proudly carried the lantern in a relay and members of the public were then able to have their photo taken with the lantern itself.

Sports Development

The Council is working with March Town Football Club to support a funding bid for a new club house. The current changing facilities are in a poor state and the club has no real club house of their own, meaning they have to hire facilities for meetings and post-game hospitality.

The Council has experience of working with funders and this could mean an increased chance of success for this project.

The vision behind the project is to assure the longer term sustainability of the football club, as well as improving community facilities available for hire in the town.

Summer Activity

The Council works together with local sports clubs to provide sporting activity to young people during the summer school break. The aim is to develop sustainable community club opportunities with young people taking part in healthy sporting activity. This summer's activities included cricket camps at both Wisbech and March, Hockey 'Give it a Go' days and disabled multi sports sessions.

The Council supports local clubs who are providing access to sport on a weekly basis via volunteers and qualified sports coaches based in the community. This provision is both cost effective and high impact, with some sessions supported by the team attracting well over 100 young people and running over several days. The team will advise on session content and be on hand to support and guide community coaches throughout the course of any sessions.

In total, these activities attracted over 250 young people to be active over the summer of 2012, helping to inspire young people to be active on the back of an amazing summer of sport.

L5 Engaging young people

Engagement with Hard to Reach Young People

The Council has continued to work with Cambridgeshire County Council on the 'Jammin' sessions at the Queen Mary Centre in Wisbech. The sessions are based around music to support the development and integration of identified young

people who do not normally participate in positive activity. For some of the attendees this was their first positive engagement activity.

The 'Jammin' sessions have been very popular and the young people are now attending some of the sports sessions at the centre. They are planning to complete their Bronze Arts Awards as a result of this interaction which will help to develop a number of key skills including literacy and numeracy and important interpersonal skills.

Consultation Event - Building the Capacity of Young People

The Council has worked in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council to work with a group of young people who are interested in working to improve the Bath Road Skate Park facility. This has included research visits to various skate parks in and outside the district. The aim of the trips was to involve the young people in helping to design the proposed skate park. The event was very successful and the young people have come up with a number of designs to take forward to the tender process.

Youth District Council (YDC)

The YDC last met in July and will now turn their attention to a busy autumn schedule as they plan Democracy Day 2012 (to be held on 19 October) and an Employability Skills day. This project will see the YDC work with Fenland Enterprise and Education Project and local businesses to offer advice, skills and tips to maximise employment opportunities.

Youth Service Friday Afternoon Drop In at Community House

Of particular success during the holiday period has been the Friday Afternoon Drop in session at Community House led by Youth Service Providers. Over 20 young people have taken part along with some parents. The sessions have also been used as an engagement opportunity for the new head of the Thomas Clarkson Academy to find out more about the area and the students.

L6 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Big Lottery Fund – Improving Financial Confidence

The Council, as part of a partnership with Roddons Housing Association, Cambridge Housing Society Group and Citizens Advice Bureaux, have been successfully awarded £1million to deliver an innovative project over the next 5 years.

The bid will enable the Council to work with our partners in equipping social housing tenants with the skills to become more confident and capable with dealing with their finances. The bid will see new tenants engaged at an early

stage, increased volunteering, a range of ICT courses and a Community Bus to reach our rural communities.

Community House Holiday Activities

During the summer holidays the Council has supported 16 events in addition to the normal service provided to the local community. The team has worked with a wide range of partners including Camplay, the Children's Centre, Roddons, YMCA and Health Trainers.

More than 500 people attended the National Play Day event held at the Spinney Adventure Playground, which encouraged young people and families to engage in learning new skills.

Another event held was entitled Brain Ache Day, and the purpose of the day was to encourage children and families to participate in scientific experiments utilising everyday items. This was also used as a community engagement opportunity and to promote services of the Community House with around 50 people attending this event.

A craft event was held with the Oasis Community Centre and other partners including the Childrens Centre and Adult Learning. A total of 34 people took part in the activity, providing partners with an opportunity to engage with local families. The event also encouraged the community to improve their reading and writing skills.

Of those activities assessed, 100% of the participants were very satisfied by the service they received.

Streets Ahead

SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

Revised Webpages a Big Hit

Recent improvements to the Environmental Services webpages will make it easier for customers to find the information they need on the internet.

With more customers accessing information electronically, a good quality and easily accessible website is an important asset. Feedback from customers was that the refuse and recycling pages could be improved. As a result, the structure and content has been revised, providing specific pages for schools and businesses to support the work that they do in reducing waste and increasing recycling.

The new pages are monitored and usage has already increased, including the length of time that customers spend on the council's site.

Cleansing Review Update

The modernisation of working practices in the Cleansing Team has reduced costs, maintained quality and improved performance in its first 3 months since June.

Since June:

- The team has responded to 268 rapid response requests, resolving 99% of them the same or next day.
- Community satisfaction with cleansing remains high, at 86%.
- 98% of locations inspected have been found to be of a suitable standard.

The team has settled well to the new shift patterns with minimal disruptions and continue to work hard to ensure that Fenland is clean and safe for residents and visitors.

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene

Public Conveniences

The refurbishment of Station Road toilets in Whittlesey is now finished. This now completes the Council's public convenience refurbishment programme.

Eastwood Cemetery Extension

Tenders for the extension of Eastwood Cemetery in March have been received and the contract awarded to Ringway Infrastructure Services.

Construction works commenced on 28 August and are programmed to last for 7 weeks, with completion scheduled for mid/late October 2012.

Positive Response to Dog Control Order Consultation

In support of providing good quality public open spaces, a consultation was completed in August on plans to implement Clean Neighbourhood Act powers across Fenland in relation to dog behaviour.

The feedback from Town Councils and the 161 responses from the public demonstrated strong community support for the proposed dog control orders, with:

- 98% of respondents agreeing with changes to dog fouling powers,
- 93% agreeing that officers should be able to require a dog to be placed on a lead in a park or green space,
- 94% agreed with the exclusion of dogs from Fenland's gated children's play areas, and
- 55% of respondents felt that dogs should continue to be excluded from open public cemeteries.

As a result of this consultation feedback and comments received, a number of changes were made to the orders and were approved by Cabinet in September.

The decision to implement the powers will be advertised during September and enforcement patrols will begin once the orders come into effect from Monday 15 October.

Section 106 Glassmoor Fund

This month several local community groups in the locality of the Glassmoor Wind turbines received a share of £19,000 worth of funding towards environmental projects that will benefit the community. This Section 106 derived funding from the wind turbine development is being used to;

- Support energy efficient Christmas lights in Whittlesey
- Provide double glazing at Ramsey Village Hall
- Deliver a compost toilet facility at an allotment site in Whittlesey

Through this project, these important improvements to local facilities will be made possible and as a result enhance the quality of life of local people.

Support your local Market

In support of Fenland's important local markets, new traders are being encouraged to try our markets in a local promotion similar to the successful 'love your market' campaign which was launched nationally following the Mary Portas report.

Spaces are being offered for just £10 a day to allow start-up traders a chance to try markets as a way to reach new customers or to promote their business.

Applications are being invited now for September in Chatteris, March and Whittlesey and this promotion will be carefully monitored to evaluate its impact.

Whittlesey Festival

Thousands of visitors attended the fifth annual Whittlesey festival. This year's new attractions included a community walking parade which was acknowledged by the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire. Other events included a classic car show with more than 100 entries, climbing walls and fairground rides for children, a schools art competition and exhibition, and an Arts & Crafts market.

Public feedback relating to this event has been very positive and community involvement has increased each year, with more groups and schools engaging in the activities. Local businesses have taken the opportunity to take space within the event area to raise their profile and increase their business.

SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

Street Drinking in Wisbech

The Council continues to work in partnership with the Police to reduce the impact of street drinkers in the Wisbech area. By using CCTV, Police patrolling and community intelligence, the successful mapping of the street drinkers has been carried out and engagement and enforcement has seen positive results in highly populated public areas.

Street drinking remains a priority for both the Police and the Council. The effectiveness and speed of intervention has improved as a result of the web based data sharing system called E-CINS. This means that Public Sector agencies and key partners like Roddons can coordinate effective action where it is needed more effectively and quickly, as well as being resource efficient.

Acquisitive Crime

The Community Safety Partnership has recorded reductions in acquisitive crime across Fenland for the first quarter in the following areas.

- Theft from a vehicle – reduction of 19 incident (-17%)
- Theft of a vehicle - reduction of 9 incident (-30%)

Dwelling burglary increased by 18 incidents (27%) over this quarter and was realigned as a priority.

The Partnership has responded quickly to this change and the Police have conducted targeted work against possible offenders. In addition, the Council has supported hard targeting campaigns through the Community Safety Team. Along with successful detection of three persons for burglary by the Council's CCTV service, these offences have reduced considerably.

Recent Police/partnership meetings show there are now no major concerns within this crime type currently as a result of successful partnership working.

Sharing Information to Target Anti-social Behaviour

The use of a multi-agency information sharing system is helping to target resources and improving support for customers when dealing with noise and anti-social behaviour issues.

The E-CINS system is now in use by Fenland's Environmental Health Team for neighbourhood issues involving domestic and business premises. E-CINS is a multi-agency information sharing database, used by the Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Environmental Health, Licensing and Social Neighbourhood Management teams to share information and assign resources from a number of agencies to assist customers in a coordinated manner.

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Parks & Open Space Tree Works

A key role of the Council is to ensure that Fenland's green spaces are safe for residents to enjoy. If not properly managed, trees can be a public hazard and their effective management is very important.

Despite the wet seasonal weather this year, tree work requests received and identified have been considerable compared to the same period last year. A number of dead trees have been reported and one project at Wenny Recreation Ground in Chatteris will see 12 dead elm trees being felled and cleared, all within one area of the landscape boundary.

The Council has inspected numerous trees within parks, open spaces and cemeteries which have a degree of dead wood evident within the crowns of the trees. This may be a factor of the mixed weather conditions we have had

with the recent dry winters and wet summers. To ensure tree safety, more tree inspections and an increase in works orders to carry out dead wood removal from our trees has taken place.

Keeping Fenlands Green Spaces in Shape

This year has seen very high levels of rainfall, linked to warm weather, which has caused problems with cutting grass, followed by very high vegetation growth rates. This has been exceptionally unusual and has proved a considerable challenge for the Council and its grounds maintenance contractor, TLG.

As soon as the land was more suitable for mowing, TLG have been working to catch up with grass cutting rounds. Following discussions between TLG and the Council, additional teams have been drafted into the District to improve the green spaces. These have proved invaluable and in the past month the district has begun to look much improved and is now at a level that our customers expect. This is reflected in the recent In Bloom success, with Fenland towns and villages featured across the categories.

It is fair to say that this exceptional season of weather and growth have proved difficult for all concerned. Both TLG and the Council have learned lessons and both parties will now be better prepared should this type of situation occur again.

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Business Centres

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre is currently 83%, whilst occupancy at the Boathouse now at 62%. Conference facilities at both business centres remain popular and are generating a healthy income for the Council.

Occupancy at the South Fens Enterprise Park remains at 29% whereas occupancy at the Light Industrial Units has increased slightly to 86%.

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.

An integrated business support service to encourage new and inward investment business development

The Council, in partnership with NWES and Barclays Bank PLC, will be running a series of introductory seminars called 'Ready For Business'. These sessions will explore the concepts of self-employment or starting your own business. The seminars are also an opportunity for potential start-ups to find out more on what self-employment really means and how to avoid the pitfalls when running a business. These initial seminars will also be supported by a further intensive support programme which will include guidance, advice and peer learning, leading to the development of a robust business plan. Also included in the programme will be dedicated support from NWES to help develop businesses with an application for bank funding.

Increased growth and retention in both commercial and tourism business communities

The Council met with representatives from Jobcentre Plus External Relations Management team to discuss issues around unemployment in Fenland and developing new ways of working in partnership to improve outcomes for Fenland residents. Management responsibilities for the Wisbech Jobcentre Plus have now been transferred to Kings Lynn and so a cross-district partnership with the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk will be developed to promote initiatives that support both our council's priorities.

Economic Development Strategy

The consultation process and programme for the new Fenland Economic Development Strategy was approved by Cabinet at the meeting on 26 July. Consultation started on Monday 6 August and ran to 14 September when comments were invited via the Councils website, One Stop Shops and the Business Centres.

OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

Support the development of a sustainable district wide broadband infrastructure

After the announcement from BT regarding their rollout plans to deliver superfast in March, Whittlesey and Wisbech, Virgin Media has also decided to double its cable broadband speeds in Wisbech. Virgin Media has chosen Wisbech to become one of the first places in Eastern England to benefit from its double speeds broadband upgrade giving customers automatic access to faster download rates at no extra cost. The project will see Virgin's 10, 20, 30 and 50Mbps download packages at least double in speed, while the top-tier 100Mbps package will rise to 120Mbps.

Virgin Media began carrying out the upgrades earlier in the year and plans to double the speeds of more than four million cable broadband customers.

By this time next year, Virgin Media is aiming to roll out the faster services across its footprint of almost 13 million households.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Fenland Enterprise & Business Awards

Judging for the awards has been taking place during August. A short list of 35 businesses competed at the awards on 5 October, in 12 categories including Business of the Year, Business Person of the Year, Apprentice of the Year and a new award for the tourism industry. The awards are a major showcase of the business talent in Fenland and the results of the awards can be found at <http://services.herts24.co.uk/herts/businessawards/fenland/winners12.aspx>

OB4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and visitor destination

Support the Fenland Tourism Board

The Fenland Tourism Board (FTB) have developed a logo and branding for "Tourism in Fenland" that can be used to deliver a consistent message for visitors to Fenland. The FTB have proactively formed two working groups to support activities that will further help raise the profile of Fenland including website developments and enhancements, and the new Welcome to Cambridgeshire Fens, Visitor and Accommodation Guide 2013 (Visitor Guide 2013).



Development of a more integrated Tourism focused marketing and promotional approach to raise national awareness

All accommodation, attractions and eateries in Fenland have received a letter/application form inviting them to purchase advertising space in the annual visitor guide.

Support local groups with opportunity for tourism and culture activities

The Council, in partnership with the representation from the market towns, have produced a brochure for the Heritage Open weekend. The brochure has been distributed to periphery borders of Fenland and locally for the Heritage Open Days and the National Bandstand Marathon happening over 6-9 September.

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Customer Access

August saw further improvements in the speed at which we are helping customers who contact us.

We answered 80% of calls within 20 seconds, meeting our service standard, as well as continuing to reduce the abandoned call rate to just 3% of calls, even better than our target of 5% abandonment.

At the same time we are still offering a call-back service to customers unable to get through to us at busy times, so that we can phone them back later in the day to help with their enquiries.

Council Tax

Council Tax collection is currently 1.1% ahead of profile at this point of the year which is very encouraging and again shows that customers continue to give Council Tax a priority as well as reflecting that those having difficulty paying are contacting us early so that we can help them.

Local Council Tax Benefit

The ten week public consultation for our Local Council Tax benefit scheme (as discussed at Cabinet on 26 July 2012) started on 13 August 2012 and runs until 20 October 2012.

Full information about the proposals has been published on our website, accompanied with hard copy leaflets containing the same information which are available at all four 'Fenland @ your service' Shops.

Customers have started leaving feedback on the proposals using the on-line survey form on our website as well as the hard-copy questionnaire.

At the start of September, we wrote to all 4,500 working age customers currently receiving Council Tax Benefit. They were given further information about the proposals and how to comment on them, as well as advising them of the possible reduction in benefit for them personally in order for them to start looking at options available before they may be asked to pay more Council Tax from next April.

In mid-September we are holding surgeries at all of our 'Fenland @ your service' Shops to give customers the opportunity to meet us face to face to discuss both

the likely effects of the changes on them personally, but also in order to seek further feedback on the proposals.

Once the consultation ends in October, we will be analysing the responses and incorporating them into the proposed final Local Council Tax Benefit scheme for formal decision by Council in December.

Business Rates

Collection of Business Rates has improved slightly at the end of July and is now 0.67% 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.

Fenland Business Against Crime (FENBAC) Update

Fenland Business Against Crime (FenBAC) and the new licensed premises accreditation 'Thumbs Up' project briefing sessions took place at Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey in August with the March session taking place in September.

Wisbech 2020 Vision Update & Public Engagement

The Wisbech 2020 Vision project continues to gather momentum. All 8 of the theme workshops have now taken place with the outcomes posted on ShapeYourPlace, which has generated comments as well as prioritisation of the emerging ideas. <http://wisbech.shapeyourplace.org/wisbech-2020/>.

Two public engagement sessions in Wisbech were held on 22 and 29 September (Saturdays). These were held in Wisbech Market Place, from 10am-3pm and gave the public an opportunity to talk about the project and comment on emerging ideas. Alongside the face-to-face sessions, an online and paper-based survey was active until 30 September and asked residents what they want Wisbech to look like in 2020.

The outcomes of the stakeholder workshops, and the community engagement outlined above, were considered by theme leads at an early October meeting, and they will present their findings at the Wisbech 2020 Summit on 26 October.

Following the 26 October summit, the vision will be further refined before being launched in January 2013.

For further information visit <http://wisbech.shapeyourplace.org/wisbech-2020/> or www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk

Boundary Commission Fenland Electoral Review Update

Over the past 12 months, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has been conducting an Electoral Review in Fenland. Elements of the process have now been completed and FDC have submitted, following extensive Member consultation, recommendations in relation to Council size in terms of the future number of District Councillors and future District warding arrangements.

The LGBCE is currently considering what their draft scheme should consist of in terms of the future warding arrangements for the District Council. Following these considerations, the next stage of the process is for the LGBCE to conduct a 12 week public consultation on their draft scheme.

The LGBCE have confirmed the public consultation will take place from 23 October 2012 - 7 January 2013 with a final scheme published on 25 March 2013. The Member Working Group will reconvene following this date to consider the draft scheme for Fenland and a process for providing a consultation response from the Council.

Town and Parish Councils have also been informed of the timescales involved in the process.

Chairman's Annual Coffee Morning raising money for Macmillan Cancer Relief

The Chairman's Annual Coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support was held on 28 September. The event was extremely successful with a raffle and numerous cakes and savouries for all to enjoy. Overall, the event raised £721.11 for this excellent cause.

Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively

Cambridgeshire Information Sharing Framework

The Cambridgeshire Information Sharing Framework sets out a positive approach to sharing information between partners across the county to create service efficiencies and improved customer outcomes. The ethos of the Framework is for partners to share information in all situations to improve service delivery or resident outcomes, except where it would be illegal to do so. Supporting guidance, training materials and a public Charter has also been developed as a part of the project. The Framework has received broad support from the County Council, 5 District Councils, Police, Fire, NHS Cambs, NHS Peterborough and Hinchingbrooke hospital with other partners looking to adopt the Framework shortly. FDC have played a leading role in bringing this work forward on a collaborative basis.

Statement of Accounts 2011/12

The Council has received its External Audit Report from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) on the 2011/12 accounts. PWC have been very happy with the accounts and have praised the Accountancy team for their work and giving an unqualified opinion. The Corporate Governance Committee will consider the accounts for approval on 25 September.

Fenland Strategic Partnership Stakeholder Event

A Fenland Strategic Partnership (FSP) Stakeholder event was held on 26 September 2012 to review the progress achieved against the following partnership priorities set earlier in the year:

- Apprenticeships
- Migrant Population/Cohesion
- Local Health Partnership refresh
- Integrated Offender Management
- Recruitment & Retention/Promoting Fenland
- Wisbech 2020 Vision

The event was a great success, attended by a wide range of representatives from across the partnership and enabled the Fenland Public Service Board officer group to showcase progress against the FSP priority areas for action.

The FSP moved to a new efficient model of working last year which streamlined the partnership, reduced bureaucracy and embraced a task and finish based approach with the wider stakeholder group meeting twice a year, once to set priorities for the year and a further meeting to review progress against the delivery of those priorities.

The event demonstrated that good progress has been made within each project including:

- More young people are starting apprenticeships in Fenland than anywhere else in the county.
- A multi agency recruitment pack is in development to promote Fenland as a great place to live and work.
- The Local Health Partnership has agreed a series of priorities in response to the changes to the health system nationally and locally.
- A 17.6% reduction in crime has been achieved partly as a result of the integrated offender management approach.
- Refreshed New Arrivals Welcome Pack
- Wisbech 2020 Vision project launched with theme workshops and public engagement completed leading up to the 2020 Summit on 26 October.

Cross partner discussion groups reviewed progress and identified key actions for further exploration to ensure that project delivery was focussed and remains outcome driven. FSP stakeholders will reconvene in early 2013 to agree a new set of priorities for next year.

Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way

Customer Satisfaction Rates

100% of local businesses say that they feel supported and treated fairly by our regulatory service.