

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

January 2013

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLANNING**



 **OPEN**
for Business

 **LOCALISM**

 **QUALITY
ORGANISATION**

STREETS ahead



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Melton

Leader of the Council



Councillor
Christopher
Seaton

**Deputy Leader
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Councillor
Mac
Cotterell
MBE

Cabinet Advisor

Update on Wisbech 2020 Vision

The Wisbech 2020 Vision was launched on 29 January 2013 following 8 months of collaborative working of 3 tiers of Government and several public consultation events in and around Wisbech.

It was back in April 2012 that Councillor Alan Melton and Councillor Nick Clarke, the Leaders of Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, came together with Stephen Barclay, MP for North East Cambridgeshire, and expressed their joint resolve to tackle the challenges in the town. They have committed themselves and their authorities to work together to improve the lives of all who work, visit and live in Wisbech.

The 29-point "Action Plan" for the Vision seeks to make Wisbech "a great place to work, a great place to live and a great place to visit". It is a long-term ambition, encompassing many strands - economic, social, cultural and educational. Its success relies on the joint efforts and insights of the whole community, including individual residents, businesses, voluntary groups and charities.



The Wisbech 2020 Vision has attracted enthusiastic backing from beyond Fenland's borders. Academics from the University of Cambridge have agreed to undertake a detailed analysis of the town's future economic role. Anglia Ruskin University has also expressed its interest and support, as has the Bishop of Ely.

Progress on delivery of the actions will be monitored and fed back to the public.

Additional information can also be found on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website:

<http://www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk/article/5374/Home>

And an article on the Wisbech 2020 Vision was recently published in The Guardian – please see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/public-leaders-network/2013/feb/04/rural-regeneration-local-councils-cambridgeshire>

Neighbourhood Planning

NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

Core Strategy

The Core strategy was due to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in December 2012 but this was postponed until January 2013 to allow details of infrastructure associated with developments to also be considered. The Core Strategy was considered by Cabinet and Council on the 24 January 2013 together with an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which gives a strategic overview of the type, approximate cost and likely provider of infrastructure for the major growth areas.

The Core Strategy was approved by Members for public consultation, and the 6 week period will commence sometime in February. Any representations received will then be submitted directly to the Government for consideration by an independent Inspector at a Public Examination to be held over the summer. If the document is deemed acceptable, a likely date for final adoption is late 2013 or early 2014. The Core Strategy will then guide all developments in the district for the next twenty years or so.

Launch of 'Access to Healthcare' Research

During December 2012, the results and analysis of the 'Access to Healthcare' questionnaire and research were launched. Nearly 1,500 people completed questionnaires in Fenland GP surgeries and the two local hospitals to provide further details on how they access healthcare, after this was raised as an issue. The Council provided a questionnaire and surveyed people attending outpatient clinics at the North Cambs Hospital, with the support of NHS colleagues.

Analysis of the research highlighted specific problems with accessing hospitals and also a lack of knowledge of the public and community transport that is available. An action plan will be taken forward over the next three years to address the issues raised, in order to improve access to healthcare for the Fenland community.

Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR)

The Council's Authority Monitoring Report (previously the Annual Monitoring Report) has been completed and was published on the website in December. It is an important document to establish whether the Council is meeting its Local Plan targets. It provides a wide range of monitoring information including housing completions in the past twelve months, the take-up of employment

land, the number of wind turbines approved and the health of the County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves in the district.

The AMR shows that the number of planning permissions granted against Environment Agency (EA) advice (EA are keen to ensure all developments consider flood risk fully) was nil which is very positive. It also shows that there had been no negative impact on designated environmental (wildlife) sites – again good news. The number of housing completions (209) was disappointing but not surprising given the current economic circumstances.

Refurbished Sewage Treatment Works & Pumping Station Assets

Mechanical and electrical refurbishment works to the Council's sewage treatment works plant at Ponders Bridge have now been completed. This will ensure the improved reliability of the plant to maintain vital sewerage facilities for the residents it serves.

NP2 The Built Environment

Fenland Renaissance

Progress continues as we work with property owners across Fenland to enhance the structural integrity and appearance of their properties via the project grants and Streetpride involvement. This month a grant was agreed towards the re-thatching of 14 Market Place, Whittlesey, as well as the replacement of windows, repairs to the parapet wall and re-pointing of brickwork to 11 Market Place, Wisbech (both shown below).



A high priority remains the dilapidated buildings in Wisbech where the owners are being pro-actively encouraged and supported from a planning, conservation and funding perspective.

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Benefits

We continue to make excellent progress on the Benefits Recovery Plan. During December 2012, we were assessing new claims in an average of just 14 days and changes in just 7 days; both the best performance so far this year. This fantastic team work has seen the cumulative performance for the 2012-13 year so far continue to improve and it now stands at 29 days for new claims and 11 for changes.

Council Tax Support

Our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme was agreed by Council at its meeting on 20 December 2012, for implementing from 1 April 2013 as a result of the localisation of Council Tax and associated reduction in funding from the Government's budget reduction programme.

Our CTS scheme meets the requirements for transitional funding. This, combined with a lower growth in demand now anticipated, means that the reduction in CTS for working age customers will now be 8.5% in 2013-14 and not the 20% that we originally proposed and consulted upon. This in turn will mean bills for the 4,500 affected customers will not be as high as originally predicted for 2013-14.

New Services at Community House

The Council has added to its list of organisations who are using the Community House as a hub to benefit the Wisbech community. There are now 6 different services offered from the house alongside our team and the Citizens Advice Bureaux interactive advice kiosk. Care Network is now using the house as an outlet for their Community Navigator project, and their role is to sign post older vulnerable people to services. In addition, the Council has run a series of engagement events at Wisbech Market and at the Orchards Primary School, which has enabled us to promote services of the Community House and partner organisations.

Welfare Reform Sessions

The Council has been working in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council to deliver training sessions to partner organisations to explain the changes to the benefits system due to come into effect in 2013 and to enable organisations to support the community with these changes. The sessions were very well attended by over 100 delegates from various agencies.

Court Desk Case Study

The Council referred a family to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), as they had received a Warrant of Eviction having breached a previous Court Order. The CAB helped the clients to make an application to the Court for a further hearing and represented them on the day. The CAB successfully persuaded the Judge to suspend the Warrant on the same terms as the previous Suspended Possession Order. Furthermore, they were able to advise the clients on some budget improvements and stressed the importance of making the monthly Contracted Monthly Instalment plus the additional payment on time.

Private Sector Minor Works Grant and Case Study

The Council operates a grant scheme to assist older and disabled residents to carry out minor repairs to their properties.

A recently completed case for assistance was for a retired couple who had extensive damp and woodworm infestation in their bungalow which was affecting the structural stability of the timber floors. Working with our partners at The Care & Repair Agency, a Minor Works Grant helped to replace the flooring leaving the property safe and free from hazards.

A total of 25 Minor Works Grants have been completed so far this year.

Deposit Scheme to Prevent Homelessness and Case Study

The Council is committed to preventing homelessness where ever possible. This approach is less stressful for our customers as it provides an alternative solution along with saving valuable resource rather than utilising bed and breakfast accommodation.

So far during this financial year, a total of 83 families have been prevented from homelessness through various initiatives funded from a Government Homeless Prevention Grant.

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Making links between the Faith and Business leadership in Wisbech

This year's conference between Faith and Business communities discussed how to combine running a successful business with good citizenship. The event was held in November 2012.

With the assistance of a number of local speakers, including the Leader of Fenland District Council, discussion was held on the challenges of combining the roles of being married, bringing up young and children and running their businesses.

A number of local initiatives were discussed and a commitment was made to increase the role of the faith community in local volunteering.

Credit Union

The Council has made excellent progress in establishing a Credit Union within Wisbech. A steering group comprised of Officers, Members, Roddons Housing Association, the community, voluntary organisations and volunteers have recruited 20 volunteers who will be trained to initially run two collection points for the local community to access savings and low interest loans. 'Wisbech Savers' will be officially launched on 22 January 2013.

Traveller Site Management

Following a review of service delivery for our 5 managed Gypsy and Traveller sites, the Council have introduced and implemented a range of new operational procedures covering allocations, rent income, repairs, recharges and void standards. These policies offer a more robust approach to site management and have been produced to mirror policies common within social housing. New procedures, such as allocations and rent income management, will lay out clear requirements for Officers and rights and responsibilities for residents in securing and maintaining their pitch agreements.

Unauthorised encampments & developments

In 2012 we have had 19 unauthorised encampments and a number of unauthorised developments all of which have been resolved through negotiation in an amicable manner without recourse to the courts and their associated costs.

Fenland Diverse Communities Forum - Travelling towards Employment

One Voice 4 Travellers (OV4T), a Gypsy Traveller Support Group which operates in the district, has just started to run a series of group sessions with Young Gypsy Traveller people living/stopping in the district. The sessions will be used as a platform for young people to build confidence and develop skills via support to enable them to seek employment.

The sessions will consist of activities and discussion using the concept of conversation, skill sharing and personal development. It will allow young people to work in a group based setting to not only access support, but also support others from their community. This will be delivered using an advocacy, community development and support framework.

It is anticipated that this training will enable young people to build the skills and capabilities required to gain mainstream employment, an opportunity which due to lack of knowledge or education has not always been available to them,

and give people the choice of whether they wish to continue traditional work activities associated with Gypsy Travellers or other types of employment.

The Council works with OV4T to encourage the work to benefit Fenland residents and are assisting by helping to identify residents to go through the training.

Landlord Information Pack

Improved advice and guidance to Private Landlords was a matter raised at the Wisbech 2020 Vision workshops. In response to this, the Council has launched a Private Sector Landlord pack. The aim is to provide information for existing and new landlords to help increase the quality of service provided and to help provide support to landlords in everyday tenancy management. The pack can be accessed via this link <http://www.fenland.gov.uk/landlordpack>

L3 Supporting our ageing population

Adaptations to Vulnerable People's Homes

The Council has completed 47 disabled facilities grant aided adaptations in year to date, assisting residents with disabilities to stay put and live more safely and independently in their own homes. A total of 89% of residents having had adaptations carried out report improvement in their wellbeing in a one year on customer survey.

Community Alarms

The Council works in partnership with Cross Keys Homes and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council to provide Community alarms for older vulnerable residents. The alarms are linked to a control centre which is staffed 24/7 and responds to any emergencies raised by residents.

To date, 120 community alarms are in use, enabling older people to remain living independently within their own homes safe in the knowledge that help is available when needed.

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles for Fenland Residents

Supported by funding from the British Heart Foundation, the Council is running a project to improve the quality of life of older people in the District. The designated project officer works with older people to identify risks to their health, give them appropriate advice and signpost them to organisations to help them mitigate health risks.

This year has seen more than 850 client interventions and a 12 week community exercise project take place. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends brief interventions to improve health, with this project replicating this advice.

Outcomes of the exercise project demonstrate a health improvement across the cohort, with a reduction in blood pressure and resting heart rate levels, along with the participants reporting a general improvement in how they feel.

Developing Run Leaders

The Council is working with Living Sport to develop a network of run leaders across the district to increase the uptake of running and further strengthen local running clubs. The initial training will take place for run leaders in the March and Chatteris area.

Working with Living Sport on a nationally recognised, established scheme will ensure more chance of success and get more people moving in Fenland. Additionally the development of local runs led by a trained runner will be another service that can be offered by local leisure centres.

Whilst running at night would not be ideal for younger people, should the schemes generate the expected number of runners, adding in younger peoples group during the summer months is planned.

Promoting the Chatteris All Weather Pitch

Cromwell Community College has appointed a part time co-ordinator to help run the business of the All Weather Pitch (AWP). The Council is supporting the pitch by way of advertising the facility within the leisure centre, as well as some planned some joint promotional works.

Talks regarding future collaboration may include the use of the Council's booking and invoicing system to manage bookings on the facility, as well as including the AWP information in general Chatteris Leisure promotional work.

Improved Customer Feedback Scheme

The leisure service has always valued customer feedback highly. A new scheme has been introduced to ensure that customers are better able to give feedback and if that feedback is negative, the leisure team will contact the customer to let them know what we are doing to address their concerns.

The service retention system sends emails to customers to rate the service 1 – 10, and asked for feedback. Since 1 January, 36 replies have been collected with 33 customers scoring the service 7 out of 10 or higher. The three negative comments have all received calls to see how the service can be improved;

feedback included better promotion of refer a friend schemes and the improvement of lockers in the changing rooms at the Hudson Leisure Centre.

Those who have scored the service negatively will be polled again in 8 weeks to see if the actions put in place have shifted their perception of the service to be more positive.

Feedback from the customers who were positive highlights the importance of happy and helpful staff. A positive comment about staff has featured in the majority of feedback comments.

Improved Texting and Emailing Schemes

In late December 2012, the Leisure service started to use an improved customer retention email and text service. The system recognises when customers have not attended and automatically sends them a message of encouragement that is designed to increase their visit frequency. So far 1,300 emails have been sent along with 800 texts.

Customer feedback has been positive with the service receiving phone calls to book sessions as a result of the messages and customers speaking to gym staff about the scheme.

As well as automated messages to encourage attendance, the system can be used with any email or text number list. Other teams within the Council have been trained on the system so that it can be used for other Council Services.

Social Media

The use of social media by companies to promote their product and communicate effectively with customers and potential customers has been growing for the past three years. The Council has a twitter and Facebook account, but the leisure team has used this infrequently to date.

A new social media management system now allows the team to programme messages to a calendar in advance. This means that communication can be planned well in advance and synchronised with the overall marketing plan for the service.

Messages are now being sent weekly and scheduled messages up to July 2013 are set up on the system. This will be a considerable step forward with communication to the public that should generate additional footfall and income in the leisure centres.

Direct Debit Income

At the start of the financial year, both the Manor Leisure Centre and the George Campbell Leisure Centre direct debit income streams were below the previous year's level. Using effective sales techniques over the past 5 months has seen a considerable change in the amount of direct debit income that the service is taking.

All three centres have taken their highest ever level of monthly direct debits and income for the gyms continues to be positive when compared with last year. Around 2,400 people are now paying the Council by monthly direct debit for their leisure membership.

The importance of the direct debit income stream cannot be underestimated. A cash paying gym member is likely to attend 4 – 6 times, whereas a direct debit member will be retained for about three months, often longer.

Following the success of a discounted 6 month direct debit plan, fees and charges for the service are being reviewed to include monthly, a 6 month plan and a 12 month plan. The longer a customer commits for, the better the discount they enjoy on the monthly membership.

L5 Engaging young people

Diversionsary activities for young people at risk of Anti Social Behaviour (Wisbech)

The Council, in partnership with the County Council, have been working with a group of young people who are at risk of causing anti-social behaviour. The diversionsary activities have led to 2 young people from Wisbech achieving their Bronze Arts Award which has earned them a Level 1 national qualification, a welcome addition to their CV. We are continuing this partnership work to support further young people through this positive project.

Diversionsary Activities for young people

The Council and Youth Service Providers have been working in partnership with young people who are at risk of causing anti-social, violent and racist behaviour. A total of 30 young people visited a project in London to look at how they have overcome anti-social behaviour (ASB) and discrimination. The aim of the visit was to enable the young people to change values, attitudes and experiences and explore different cultures and the positive contributions these young people play in their communities. They visited a mosque and a youth centre, looked at issues connected with knife crime and ASB as well as promoting the unity of different cultures.

Youth District Council - Road Safety Week

The Youth District Council in partnership with Officers, Fire Service and local volunteers from the Fenland Rural Road Safety Group, supported a successful project to raise awareness of the risks for young drivers in Fenland. During Road Safety Week (19 – 25 November), presentations, first hand testimonies and a DVD were shown to around 1000 students across Fenland's secondary schools (Cromwell Community College, Neale Wade Community College, County School, Thomas Clarkson Academy and Sir Harry Smith Community College).

As well as helping to forge positive working relationships between the Rural Road Safety Group, the Charlotte's Way Campaign and the four main secondary schools within the district, the Road Safety Awareness Week also successfully raised awareness of road safety and the mortality rates for young drivers in the Fens.

Youth District Council (YDC) - YDC Grants

The YDC met in November 2012 and allocated a further grant. This means that in the year to date they have awarded £8591.85 (85%) of their funding to 11 groups including Sports Clubs, Youth Clubs and arts activities. Interest in the funding scheme remains high and it is anticipated that the remaining funding will be distributed at their next meeting.

Although many of the grants are ongoing for 2012/13, one project has provided positive feedback on how the YDC grant scheme has helped them to help others. The Crossroads Young Carers project has worked with 64 young carers during the summer to offer them respite from their caring responsibilities and the chance to meet and work with other young carers. The young carers were also encouraged to plan and deliver a family funday for which they were required to meet with partner agencies and organise stalls and activities. Crossroads Young Carers have reported that the young carers were pleased to be involved and that they felt they had gained self esteem and confidence by taking part in the event.

Children's Trust Update

Councillor Garratt attended the second meeting of the revamped Children's Trust in November 2012. The trust has endorsed the following priorities

- Multi agency approach to support high need families in a more efficient and effective way (called 'Together for Families')
- Building capacity in offering out of school activities and services for young people
- A more comprehensive and multi agency approach to support Eastern European families in a more efficient and effective way.

Through the Council's services and through the Community Safety Partnership there will be an ongoing focus to support this initiative as it will reduce public sector costs and improve outcomes for affected families and the neighbourhoods around them

East Cambs and Fenland Children and Young People Area Partnership

The partnership met in December. Highlights included:

- An update on the development of a County-Wide strategy to encourage opportunities for young people to access apprenticeships. There was strong backing to the concept of all partners of the partnership working to support the increase of apprenticeship opportunities in the county.
- That through a new approach to sharing data between the County Council and the Council, the Council has been able to identify all families in the district who should be benefitting from free school meals and for whatever reason are not doing so. This affects a 419 families and a minimum of 699 children in Fenland. If signed up, the families would have an increase in disposable income and the schools in Fenland would receive an additional inward investment of well over £500,000 through a pupil premium paid by Central Government. The Council is now working with partners to explore how these families can best be contacted to understand why they are not benefiting from the opportunity with the expectation that the majority will then sign up.
- A joint project between the district and county council has led to the development of a school run nursery in the Elm centre. There has been an increase in services provided at the Elm Centre and school by the Wisbech South Children's Centre and other partners. The positive benefits of the partner event earlier in the year have begun to show through with a number of families now accessing services.

Streets Ahead

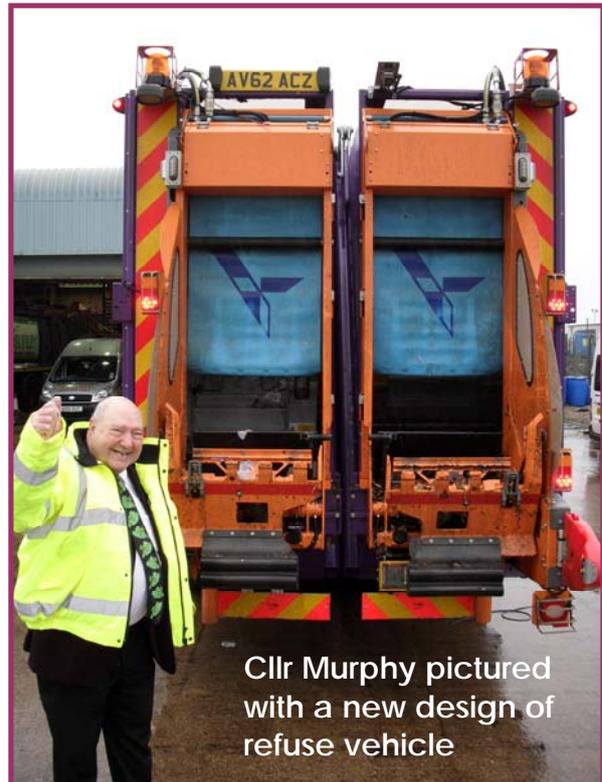
SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

New 'One Pass Solution' Vehicle Collects on Efficiency

A new design of refuse vehicle is being used to support the refuse and recycling teams deliver a cost effective service to rural hamlets and the remoter parts of Fenland.

The vehicle, which started work in November, can collect two materials at the same time. It will be used to collect blue and brown bins from more remote locations and as a result will reduce the amount of miles travelled and time spent servicing these more difficult to reach locations.

This vehicle is an integral part of the Environmental Services efficiency work that has been running within refuse and recycling for a year. The team have adapted well to the changes and to the pressures of the past year. This vehicle continues to demonstrate our one team approach to developing and implementing cost saving ideas to reduce revenue costs and continue to offer quality services.



Cllr Murphy pictured with a new design of refuse vehicle

Local Glass Bank Service

The future of the Council's 24 village and town glass recycling points has been assured for at least a further year.

Against a background of reduced values for glass and many authorities reducing or removing this type of service, Fenland has signed up local recycling company, Indigo Waste Services Limited from Thetford, to provide the service.

The new contract allows our customers to continue to choose between the blue bin and local recycling banks for their glass bottles and jars. The nature of the contract will create savings in the region of £15,000 next year. These savings allow us to continue to provide this service.

Commercial Waste Recycling

Fenland District Council's commercial waste recycling service offers a recycling service to 72 small to medium size businesses across Fenland. The current recycling rate for the collection of commercial waste reached 10% in November, exceeding expectations, with almost 60 tonnes recycled since April.

Local businesses have a genuine desire to recycle their waste and they have a duty of care to adhere to the Waste Hierarchy. Choosing to recycle their commercial waste achieves this and saves them money over general waste disposal.

As a result of the growth in recycling we have continued to maintain a healthy customer base, Fenland's Commercial Waste Service reduces the amount of waste sent to landfill and remains profitable.

Waterbeach Refuse Treatment Plant Out of Operation

Cambridgeshire County Council has suffered a major setback with their newly commissioned waste treatment plant at Waterbeach.

The plant, which forms a key part of the county council's long-term PFI agreement with AmeyCepsa, has suffered a major mechanical breakdown which means the plant will be out of operation for some time.

Fenland's recycling and composting will still be sorted and treated as normal and Fenland customers need not be worried about any change to their service as a result. This plant failure only affects the treatment of waste from general waste bins which will be collected as normal and will be landfilled rather than treated in the plant.

Cambridgeshire Waste Partnership Further Work

The Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Partnership (Recap) has agreed the format of the further business case to explore options for improved joint working.

The partnership board has agreed the 7 key work streams and the format of the project management. These include joint work on areas such as procurement, facilities and logistics.

The group will report progress to the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board meeting in early February.

Quality Cleansing Service

The Street Cleansing team delivers an important service in support of the Council's priorities. Since April, the team has adopted modern working practices, reduced costs and maintained the quality of the service that they deliver.

The following highlights demonstrate the quality of work produced by the team from April to November 2012.

- The Rapid Response teams have dealt with 99% of the 665 requests for service by the end of the next working day.
- The team have responded to 9 requests to remove graffiti.
- Of the 482 street cleanliness inspections performed 99% have been found to be of a suitable standard.
- Our community cleansing satisfaction survey earlier in the year found that 86% of the 122 respondents were satisfied with the cleansing service in their area.
- Additionally, inspections demonstrate that public toilets are clean and suitable for use 98% of the time.
- Since April, 11 compliments have been received about staff within the team.
- Finally, whilst we don't always get it right, all of the 7 cleansing complaints that did require investigation, were responded to and resolved within 10 days.

Recycling the New Year

"Great news! It is now possible to recycle plastic pots, tubs and trays in your blue bin."

This is the message that will be launched in the local press. The message this time of year traditionally focuses on raising awareness of recycling opportunities and launches new initiatives for the coming year.

Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Street Scene, said:

"Residents have been asking to recycle more plastics for some time, and we are very pleased that due to new recycling technology, we are now able to include them."

This service improvement will divert up to 600 tonnes a year away from landfill and will be recycled into useful things like mobile phones, car parts and new plastic packaging.

Schools Competition Update

Recycling education work in cooperation with local schools is an important part of the Council's Recycling Improvement Plan this year. An exciting competition

where pupils could create their own unique wheeled bin sticker design, has met with popular support from Fenland schools and 43 final entries were received from participating schools.

Winners and 2 runners up have been selected from Key Stages 1 to 3. The winning entries will have their design made up in to artistic stickers for their wheeled bin at home which will be presented to them during March 2013.

Winners have been selected by Councillor Peter Murphy, the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Street Scene, who said "The standard of the entries was very high and I look forward to seeing these made up for the winners to put on their bins at home."

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene

Street Pride Summary

2012 has been a productive year for the 15 groups of volunteers who have taken pride in Fenland by dedicating their time to improving the street scene and green spaces. With the support of the Council, over 200 local different residents have contributed to 191 separate events since March 2012. Residents and businesses have really gone the extra mile to make where they live even better; from litter picking, removing graffiti, cutting back overgrowth, creating willow dens, to planting 33,000 daffodil bulbs - their dedication has been extraordinary.

An amazing 2,843 hours have been donated in total, which is on track for the end of year target of 3,500. In 2012 we bade farewell to co-ordinator Jeanette Milner and welcomed Rebecca Robinett who has been working with Street Pride groups and others to plan next year's activities.



March Street Pride Winter Planters

March Street Pride Group gained sponsorship from local businesses and residents in order to provide the town with a range of winter bedding and planters.

The group were supported by local nursery, Delfland, which opened its doors to the volunteers to take part in a community planting day.

This event is one of 178 so far this year where local people across the district have given their time and energy to improve their local environment.



Street Pride in Newton and Benwick

Newton and Benwick Parish Council have shown their support for new volunteer groups to be formed in their village to help improve the local street scene. The Council's new Street Pride coordinator has been to the villages to meet the budding volunteers.

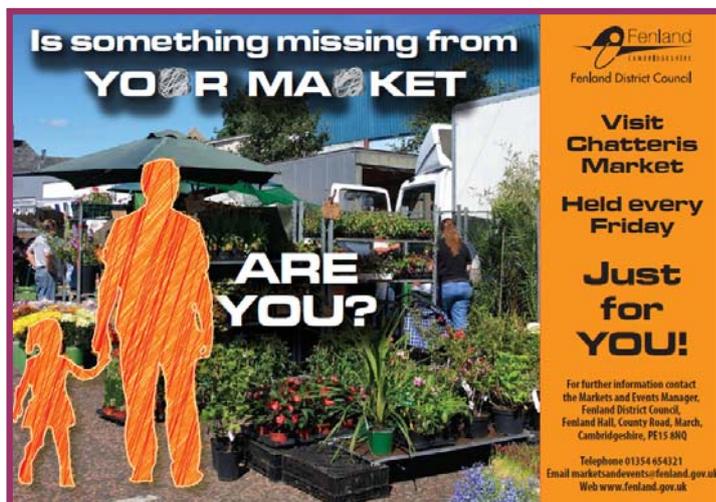


The volunteers have been keen to take on projects that go beyond litter picking. The War Memorial in Benwick now has a fresh coat of paint thanks to the efforts of the group; and new finials, which were donated free of charge by a company within the village.

The Council will be listening to community groups by hosting a community forum in January 2013 to hear how they wish to improve the environment and street scene in their area, which will help the Council to continue to support community projects.

Promoting Fenland's Markets

Improving our markets by attract additional traders and improving footfall is essential to ensure that the markets remain a successful asset to the Fenland towns in the future.



A new promotion that will be used across three market towns will be rolled out in January. The bright, clear promotional materials are eye catching and the question challenges people to think about their support for their town market. Feedback from customers and traders on the success of this campaign is part of the promotion during early 2013.

Wisbech Christmas Market

Wisbech Christmas market was a resounding success again this year, with good weather bringing as many as 12,000 people to visit the event. This year's event featured old favourites including children's choirs, a Jazz Band and a new attraction of reindeer. The event was formally opened by the Mayor of Wisbech.

More than 80 customer feedback forms have been completed, the majority of which included positive comments, and customer tips to further improve the event in 2013 have also been received.



Victorian strollers adding character to the Christmas Market

SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

FenBAC (Fenland Business Against Crime) training workshops delivered district wide

During November 2012, the Council worked in partnership with our local partners, agencies and businesses, to deliver the FenBAC welcome workshops across the district. Topics covered included licensing advice (challenge 25 and counterfeit goods), crime prevention and reporting techniques, conflict management, food safety, fire safety and prevention, and counter terrorism advice.

The aim of these workshops was to help support the local business community in improving their businesses to achieve higher standards, and to help reduce crime and anti social behaviour within their local communities.

The workshops were perceived as a real success and positive feedback has been received regarding the events.

This marks the launch of the FenBAC initiative which aims at ensuring each local crime reduction scheme (ShopWatch, PubWatch, BAC and TaxiWatch) engage and share information with each other and continue to tackle and reduce business crime and anti social behaviour within Fenland.

'Thumbs Up' Project – Accreditation for Licensed Premises

The project was launched at the FenBAC workshops during November 2012 with over 50 premises showing an interest in taking part in the assessment process.

The 'Thumbs Up' Award is supported by the Fenland Community Safety Partnership and is aimed at promoting responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises.

The scheme aims to reduce harmful effects of binge drinking whilst also highlighting how operating more responsibly can improve profitability of an individual business and attractiveness of a general area.

Reduction in Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) continues across the district

Close partnership working through the Fenland Community Safety Partnership continues to celebrate excellent reductions in Anti Social Behaviour (ASB).

Through proactive and reactive work to tackle community concerns using the councils Community Action Area (CAA) model, structured partnership activity in hotspots have seen high levels of incidents almost disappear from Tillery Field in Wisbech. It is hoped that a final community survey will confirm this and a media release will also promote this excellent partnership response.

The Fenland figure currently stands at 2170 ASB incidents in the year to date compared to 2916 ASB incidents for the same period last year.

Volunteer's stand against rural road safety incidents

The Youth District Council & Fenland Community Safety Partnership (FCSP) has supported Graham Chappell, campaign organiser of the Fenland Road Safety Campaign in the delivery of key messages to Young People for the National Road Safety Week 2012 campaign.

Graham has been delivering the '2Young2Die/Young Drivers' presentations to years 11&12 in local schools.

Sessions were held in the following locations:

- Neale-Wade Community School presentations to around 290 pupils in March
- Sir Harry Smith presentations to around 330 pupils in Whittlesey
- Thomas Clarkson Academy presentations to 42 Year 11 students in Wisbech joined by Ryan Berridge who sadly lost his best friend in a tragic incident in St Neots
- Cromwell Community College joined in presenting to 160 pupils by fellow Trustee, Michelle Lynch. Having lost her first husband, and son, Jordan, then aged 7, in a river immersion accident on the Forty Foot Bank, Michelle has demonstrated immense courage and generosity in her support.

The work by these volunteers is being promoted by wider partners as much of the success of this year's campaign has attributed to their input and the emotional impact on the young people was plain to see.

The FCSP will continue to promote and support further work by these excellent volunteers.

Council continues to effectively respond to local Community Safety need

During 2012 the Council has helped to respond to over 3,845 incidents, including theft shoplifting, burglary, criminal damage, and alcohol related anti social behaviour and violence, through the effective use of CCTV within our town centres, parks and open spaces, industrial, commercial and housing estates and port and marina areas.

As a result the Council has helped support the successful arrest and/or persons being fined or prosecuted on 594 occasions, helping to assist with the continual crime reduction in the Fenland district.

The incidents also include non-crime related occurrences such as truancy and concern for vulnerable persons and as a result have helped locate 22 missing persons thereby helping to promote a Safer Fenland.

Crime reduction schemes, including ShopWatch and PubWatch

The Council continues to help support our local PubWatch and ShopWatch schemes across the district with the use of CCTV, radio and incident reporting and implementing the new web based cloud system known as SIRCS (Secure Incident Reporting and Community Engagement System).

SIRCS allows all crime reduction schemes, including PubWatch, to share information with each other and with local authorities, including Cambridgeshire Police, quickly and securely to help support further crime prevention and reduction within our town centres.

The new system is being rolled out across the district schemes as part of the new FenBAC initiative.

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Wet Weather Action Plan

Following the difficult summer season of rain and high levels of grass growth in 2012, the Council is working with contractors TLG to ensure that they develop a wet weather action plan in case of poor weather in the future. This plan will ensure that should long periods of wet weather occur again during the warmer months, the contractor is prepared and tackles the areas of higher importance initially and deploys additional resources to address issues faster, if required.

Manor Moorings

The moorings at the Manor in Whittlesey were improved in 2012. Additional improvements have recently been added by way of a path and two handrails. This will ensure that the area is accessible to all and that those who may have difficulty walking can enjoy the river.

In addition to this work, the Council will be working with the National Probation Service Community Payback Group to trim shrubs on the Manor field that have been getting bigger over the past five years. This collaboration with the Community Payback Team is beneficial for both the Council and the National Probation Service, with real improvements to the local streetscene being made as a result.

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Marine Services

Further business from wind farm related craft at our boatyard facility continue providing income to the Council and supporting local contractors and suppliers.

Economic Estate

Occupancy at South Fens Business Centre has increased to 87%, whilst occupancy at the Boathouse is now 50%. The lower occupancy rate for the Boathouse is in part due to the vacant café premises, although discussions are currently taking place with a potential operator. Conference facilities at both business centres remain popular and are generating a healthy income for the Council.

The occupancy levels are slightly behind target. However, due to the 'incubator' nature of the centres, some tenants have moved on in Fenland to larger premises, employing more local people. To address the Boathouse performance, a more targeted marketing regime is being developed in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder. Officers are also in discussion with a number of existing Boathouse Tenants who are interested in occupying larger or additional suites. Many of these existing tenants are keen to remain within The Boathouse because it represents excellent value for money and provides high quality facilities.

Occupancy at the South Fens Enterprise Park remains at 41% and has now exceeded the end of year target of 40%. Occupancy at the Light Industrial Units has now increased to 89%, with an additional unit now being let.

OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

Increased growth and retention in both commercial and tourism business communities

The Council is now working with the University of Cambridge on a joint business support programme PrISMS (Practical & Innovative Solutions for Manufacturing Sustainability) which aims to support and grow businesses in the Manufacturing and Engineering sectors. The programme aims to:

- Grow revenues and profitability
- Make their products and operations more sustainable, and
- Create new jobs and safeguard existing ones in the businesses taking part across their supply chains.

PrISMS support is open to businesses who are in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk as well as Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire and who have less than 250 employees. Participating authorities include; Bedford Borough Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Essex County Council Hertfordshire County Council Suffolk County Council and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. The programme aims to stimulate and transform the growth prospects of up to 50 start-ups and up to 70 smaller manufacturing businesses across those counties whilst creating more than 140 new jobs and safeguarding many more. Fenland District Council will participate in the project to support engineering and manufacturing businesses in the district. Suitable companies for this level of business support will be identified through visits and by publicising the programme at exhibitions and conferences.

Work in partnership to develop district-wide funding opportunities

The Council attend a meeting with Cambridgeshire County Council and Fens Adventurer to progress forward the Green Access Initiative (improving walks in Cambridgeshire including Fenland, with new way makers and maps), ensuring Fenland's section of the project is being delivered. All drafts were completed by December 2012, and improvements to the walk (including signage) are due to be implemented in the early part of 2013.

A meeting was also held with the Frederick Foundation to discuss business funding to support start-ups that have found it difficult to secure funding from other means. Events and workshops are now planned for end of February and March 2013.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Development of the Horticulture and Botany Skills Centre

A 'Growing Places' Agreement of Funding notification has now been sent to Delamore Ltd from the Local Enterprise Partnership which will support the development of a fully functional and self-contained technical environment in which student learns can develop or obtain the necessary skills and qualifications including apprenticeships in the Horticulture or Land-based sectors. The skills centre will have Training Glasshouses to support growing and cross pollinating techniques and sciences, a Learning Centre which will support a scientific laboratory and a learning environment. The development of the centre will also support job growth within these sectors.

OB4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and visitor destination

Promoting Tourism in Fenland

The final draft of next years 'Welcome to the Cambridgeshire Fens, Visitor and Accommodation Guide 2013' is now in circulation, with a launch date set for January 2013. The brochure is distributed nationally through the national Tourist Information Centre network and is used as a tool to promote Fenland as a place to visit, also signposting readers to the new website where more information can be found.

The Council engaged with tourism providers across the district to encourage advertising within the 'Welcome to the Cambridgeshire Fens, Visitor and Accommodation Guide 2013'. This equated to around £3500 of income towards the cost of the publication.

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Customer Access

We continue to improve month on month with regard to our call answer level. December saw us answering 87.8% of calls within 20 seconds with a 2.5% abandon call rate, which is well above the industry standard. 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

At the end of December we had collected 94% of the £41 million Council Tax due this year, exactly on target. We continue to take robust recovery action against those deliberately avoiding payment whilst at the same time helping those who are struggling and need help in paying the bills they want to pay.

Business Rates

We have made excellent progress in collecting Business Rates and at Christmas were on target at 86%. We are now turning our attention to smaller balances and revised accounts, by targeting non-payers by both recovery action and telephone calls to ensure that all monies are paid.

Assurance Team

Since April 2012, the Council has so far identified well in excess of £200,000 worth of welfare benefit overpayments. A total of 37% of the fraud cases we have investigated have resulted in a reduction or complete stoppage of benefit which protects the taxpayers of Fenland from benefit fraud.

External Audit Feedback – Grant Certification

The benefits subsidy claim for 2011/12 has been certified by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) with a small number of minor issues. PWC have recognised the excellent work carried out by the team in processing claims more accurately and the issues identified are common in many councils across the country. This positive statement again shows the excellent financial management and control of the Council which ultimately protects tax payers.

Reducing Energy Consumption



The Council's campaign to reduce energy use and save money continued this winter with the phased introduction of remote PC turn off. PC monitors will automatically switch off after 10 minutes of inactivity and PCs will go into hibernation if they are accidentally left on. This is great news for energy saving with up to £5,000 expected to be saved over a year on electricity bills.

The project follows the launch of the Council's three year Energy Management Plan in August, which is supported by Councillor Clark. The plan sets out the Council's vision to save resources, which has already included the removal of 70 desktop printers. The good work will continue in the New Year with further measures to reduce energy use in the Council's server room and planned staff training in the Leisure Centres.

Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way

NVQ's & Apprenticeships at FDC

Since the Council started working in partnership with F1 Training Services, and begun offering NVQ's, as a development tool, we have seen the following impact:

- 500 staff enroll onto a qualification programme.
- 165 members of staff brush up their Maths and English skills by attaining adult qualifications in both these areas.

We began delivering the apprenticeship programme with the Refuse and Cleansing team, and we celebrated their success last February with 23 of them achieving an apprenticeship in cleaning support services.

Since Jan 2011, the focus has moved from stand alone NVO's to apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes. Programmes have included Customer Service, Business Administration, Team Leading, and Management. The number of staff embarking on one of these programmes is 100 to date.

We recently had an event in the autumn where the leader of the Council presented approx 40 staff members with their certificates, which amounted to over 150 qualifications

The impact of this approach has been recognised as the Council has been shortlisted for Apprenticeship programme of the Year at the Learning Awards

2012 year in Licensing

During 2012, the Licensing Team issued a total of **1233** licences which included:-

- **39** New premises licence applications leading to;
 - **23** Hearings/Reviews of which;
 - **3** Applications not granted by Licensing Committee and;
 - **1** Revocation of a premises licence by Licensing Committee.
- **138** applications were made to change aspects of an existing premises licence
- **101** Personal Licence applications were received, processed and issued.
- **239** Hackney Carriage Vehicle checks (for 126 licensed vehicles) resulting in;
 - **33** Stop Notices for issues with tyres and signage on vehicles.

The impact of this work is twofold. Firstly it evidences the proactive work undertaken with partners to address concerns relating to the night time economy and other licensed trade, and it also reduces the risk of residents using a taxi that is not safe for them to do so. December 2012 also saw the highest number of service requests for a month registering 105 requests for information.

Joint Working recognised as a model of best practice

The Council continues to work in partnership with other local agencies to implement the ECINS system which enables key partners to record and share information on one system relating to enforcement issues, therefore enabling a coordinated approach to service delivery.

This method of working has recently proved extremely successful when tackling a resident that had persistently caused a nuisance to neighbours with excessive loud music and anti-social behaviour. Due to ongoing complaints it became necessary for the Council to enforce the Noise Abatement Notice served on the

resident. This action included undertaking a seizure of any music equipment from the property for a period of 28 days. This has resulted in the neighbouring residents having an instant remedy to the loud music, whilst further legal measures are being considered.

Use of the ECINS system facilitated joint working with the Police ensuring the effective resolution of all the nuisance and anti-social behaviour issues affecting neighbouring residents. As a result this case is being used as a model of best practice to guide and advocate further joint working.

National Food Hygiene Rating System

A year on from joining the Food Standards Agency's national Food Hygiene



Rating Scheme (FHRS), 97% of Fenland's food businesses achieved a score of 3 or above. Achieving scores of this standard requires the food business to reach levels of compliance in structure and hygiene and a level of confidence in management, although minor technical contraventions may still remain. This is a significant achievement and is representative of the greatest

level of compliance ever achieved by food businesses within Fenland.

The national scheme is a more effective way of raising standards because of uniform branding, increasing consumer awareness and therefore consumer expectations. A total of 93% of councils have joined FHRS and the branded green and black FSA stickers are becoming a familiar sight displayed externally at food businesses.

In recognition of the response by local food businesses, a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Celebration event is planned to be held in the Spring to which our top performing food businesses will be invited.