

# Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

## Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

October 2013

**NEIGHBOURHOOD  
PLANNING**



**OOO OPEN**  
for Business

 **LOCALISM**

 **QUALITY  
ORGANISATION**

**STREETS ahead**



# Cabinet Members

	<b>Councillor Alan Melton</b>
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	

	<b>Councillor Christopher Seaton</b>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Council</b>	

	<b>Councillor Ralph Butcher</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Steve Garratt</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Michael Humphrey</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Pop Jolley</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Simon King</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Peter Murphy</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor David Oliver</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	

	<b>Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE</b>
<b>Cabinet Advisor</b>	

# Neighbourhood Planning

## NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

### Core Strategy

The proposed Core Strategy was formally submitted to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on 4 September 2013. This document included the changes proposed in the addendum relating to the deletion of the North East March housing allocation which was consulted on between June and August.

PINS has now appointed an Inspector, Claire Sherratt, for the examination of the plan and the public hearings are due to commence on Monday 9 December. They are scheduled to last for five days and are to be held in the Council Chamber in Fenland Hall, March.

The Inspector has decided that a Pre-Hearing meeting is not required in this instance and has now carried out an initial site visit of the district with the Programme Officer, Jo Hart from FDC. We are awaiting further feedback from her about the main issues that she wishes to discuss and who is to be invited to attend the hearings. All of the correspondence with the Inspector is available to view on the Council's website. If all goes well, an adoption date of the Core Strategy in spring 2014 is likely.

### A47 Updates

Following meetings in late 2012 with Government Ministers to raise the profile of A47, there has been a series of announcements and work during September 2013 further confirming Government support to see improvements to the road.

The Transport Minister, Stephen Hammond MP, travelled along the A47 between Great Yarmouth and Peterborough on 16 September 2013, stopping at key junctions along the route to understand the issues. An announcement was made during this visit that the A47 will be the subject of one of six feasibility studies to be carried out between now and 2015. It is expected that the outcomes of these studies will feed into Government funding decisions as part of the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Highways Agency is starting work on a series of Route Based Strategies (including the A47) which were also announced by Government earlier in 2013. The studies will be area based with the A47 being included in an East of England strategy. The announcement that A47 is also to be the subject of one of the six feasibility studies means that the evidence base and technical work needed to

make a case for improving the road will happen more quickly than if the A47 is just being included as part of the Route Based Strategy.

The joint working of the A47 Alliance has been critical to securing the increasingly higher profile of the A47 as Government want to ensure that there is cross border support for road proposals.

Also during September 2013, the A47 Alliance held a workshop for its members to assist all the ongoing study work. Members reviewed the challenges and issues for seeking improvements and each section of the route was assessed in terms of its deliverability and value for money. The group concluded that the A47 section around Wisbech, specifically the roundabouts and junctions should see improvement in the short term. Wisbech to Guyhirn was considered to be longer term to allow complex technical and feasibility work to be undertaken to find the best solution. The recommendations of the group have been provided to the Highways Agency and to Government and they will form part of the ongoing study work.

To further assist all the ongoing work relating to A47, and to align the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Evidence Base with the work undertaken for the A47 in Norfolk, a short study has been commissioned to assess the wider economic benefits of improving the route in Fenland. This work is necessary to ensure that the strongest possible case is made for A47 improvements in Cambridgeshire when compared to other parts of the route.

### **Manea Station Masterplan**

A meeting was held in Manea during September 2013 to assist with delivering commitments that are part of the Fenland Rail Development Strategy and to develop a draft Masterplan for the station. The meeting included representatives from the local authorities and the rail industry who were there to discuss possible key projects that would be needed at the station now and in future years. A draft Masterplan is now being prepared and will be subject to public consultation in 2014.



### **Manea Train Service**

During September 2013, Greater Anglia, the local Train Operating Company, announced that Manea Station have a two hourly train service as part of the Ipswich to Peterborough Service from January 2014. The new service will be Monday to Saturday, including evenings, and is in addition to the Cross Country

Trains services that also stop at Manea. This new service will substantially increase the opportunities for local people to travel by public transport to and from Manea. It will also benefit people living in nearby villages such as Christchurch as local residents will not need to travel so far to catch a regular train.

### **Coalwharf Road, Wisbech – Design Competition**

The Coalwharf Road Design competition was launched at the beginning of August 2013. Those registered competition entrants are now busily developing their Stage 1 Design concepts. The closing date for submission of the Stage 1 concepts was 11 October. The judging panel met on 18 October to assess the Stage 1 designs and the results will be shared with members shortly.

### **Nene Waterfront Regeneration Area**

The Cabinet decision approving the sale of land at the Nene Waterfront Area has been formally ratified by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The disposal now moves forward, with specialist Legal advice being sought to develop the proposed build lease, which will enable the construction of 70 dwellings (46 market dwellings and 24 affordable dwellings).

It is anticipated that construction could begin by as early as the start of 2014, with Phase 1 of the development set to deliver all of the affordable dwellings, which will assist with Circle Anglia's target to construct 500 new affordable dwellings across the District.

### **Treading Wind Farm, Tydd St Giles**

Members will be aware of the recent Public Inquiry held to deal with the refusal of the Treading Wind Farm planning application at Tydd St Giles. Following consideration by the Planning Inspectorate the Secretary of State decided to 'call in' the Appeal and made the decision to dismiss the Appeal. The decision by the Council to refuse the application was therefore upheld.

## **NP2 The built environment**

### **Wisbech Dilapidated Buildings**

Building upon the success of the joint Portfolio Holder and Senior Officer meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund, together with the support offered by English Heritage, FDC officers will be working much more closely with these partners, harnessing their expertise and enabling the Council to work towards the submission of a viable funding bid in 2014. The bid encourages engagement with building owners, the community and those groups with shared ambitions, with the overall goal to see the dilapidated streetscape regenerated and reinvigorated.

Officers continue to work towards the agreed actions of the recent Cabinet Reports to ensure that property owners are encouraged to refurbish and bring back into use those properties that remain in a poor state of repair.

### **Fenland Renaissance Programme**

The Renaissance Programme Group continues to receive a steady number of enquiries, applications and referrals for Grant Funding. So far this year, the Renaissance Programme has part-funded the erection of hanging baskets and planters to the front of Guyhirn Village Hall, the refurbishment of two tired shop fronts in Chatteris and building works to Grove House in Chatteris.

Ongoing initiatives include monitoring shop vacancies within the market towns, developing opportunities to encourage meanwhile uses and pop-shops, together with tracing and making pro-active contact with the owners of vacant or derelict buildings and sites with a view to encouraging improvements.

### **Building Control Team**

The Building Control team continue to meet their Performance Indicator targets. Once again the questionnaire issued to customers with decision notices was returned, with the majority of customers stating they would recommend using Fenland Building Control to a friend or colleague. Also of note was the completion of 67 new dwellings at the Treeways site in Chatteris. This is a Roddons Housing Association scheme and the Building Control team worked hard to maintain an excellent working relationship with this important 'partner'.

# Localism

## L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

### Benefits

New claims processing times have held firm during September and are just below 24 days for the year so far. Change of circumstances processing times are currently at 8.6 days for the year which is the lowest they have been since June 2010. We now have 10,193 live claims compared with 10,236 this time last year.

### Benefits – Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

Approaching half way through 2013-14 we have awarded DHP totalling £51k and have a further £96k to allocate in the next six months. We are awarding DHP to households most severely affected by the Welfare Reforms: Under Occupation (also called "Bedroom Tax") and the Benefit Cap in cases where residents would face severe financial hardship without our help. Typically, DHP helps residents move to smaller and more appropriate properties and it can pay for rent deposits and removal costs, for example.

We award DHP for up to 13 weeks at a time. This not only helps us manage limited funds but also gives residents short-term help to make life changes that can reduce their housing costs.

We have started to target specific households with take-up advice where we know they have a significant shortfall between their Housing Benefit and actual rent. We are also attended the National Landlords Association event at the Boathouse on 2 October to highlight the availability of DHPs. We are contacting our Social Landlord partners (having already worked with Roddons in an earlier campaign) and lettings agents to increase the profile of DHP's. We are also sending DHP information to some of our larger employers, particularly those who are known to employ people on low incomes and who claim Housing Benefit, to place on notice boards. Posters have been placed in public spaces around the district e.g. doctors surgeries, hospital waiting rooms.

The amount we have available in DHP has been a Government grant. The Government has now advised that it will make additional DHP funds available to Councils that are experiencing exceptionally high demand for DHP. We are examining the criteria to understand if we can claim additional funds, though at this stage we are on target to spend no more than our original allocation.

### Private Sector Minor Works Grant and Case Study

The Council operates a grant scheme to assist vulnerable, older and disabled residents to carry out minor repairs to their properties. A total of 12 Minor Works Grants have been completed so far this year.

A recently completed case for assistance was for a retired couple who were struggling with entering and exiting their property as the concrete paths to their entrance doors were broken, uneven and causing a trip hazard. The Council assisted by replacing the concrete with new evenly formed pathways and installed grab rails to either the side of the doors.

### **Privately Rented Housing Sector & Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

Between April and September 2013, the Council has investigated 100 separate HMOs. This has included 40 homes where action was taken to remedy identified health and safety related faults and failings (e.g. lack of smoke alarms, unsafe electrics, gas safety checks). Much of the work carried out in the current year has been carried out in partnership with the Police and other partner agencies under the 'Operation Pheasant' initiative. This has given opportunity for wider partner engagement including United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Gangmaster Licensing Authority (GLA) and Her Majesty's Revenues & Customs (HMRC).

Between April and September 2013, the Council has also investigated 61 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation. Council Officers intervene to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to make them safe for the residents. This typically involves works to fix broken heating systems, removing damp and mould, making safe electrical systems and carrying out gas safety checks.

In addition, there have been other interventions to address adverse neighbour impacts including noise, waste management issues, and anti social behaviour.

### **Homelessness**

During the month of September 2013, the Council has made 9 decisions on homeless applications. Of these, 6 were accepted and are owed a full housing duty which means they will be offered housing through a registered provider or assisted into the private rented sector through deposit assistance. In September 2012 we only accepted 4 households following investigation

During the month of September 2013, the Council also prevented 14 families from becoming homeless. Two of these people were reconnected to their country of origin as they felt this was the best option for them due to not securing a regular income to pay for their accommodation. If the Council had not reconnected these 2 people, they may have ended up rough sleeping. In September 2012 we prevented 9 households becoming homeless.



### **Service Level Agreements**

A paper was recently taken to Cabinet for Members to consider the future funding arrangements of the community and voluntary organisations on existing Service Level Agreements.

Members deliberated the various future funding proposals for the following groups; The Wisbech and Fenland Museum, the Rural Cambridgeshire Citizen's Advice Bureau, Young People March and the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services.

Members considered the options and put forward their preferred proposal against the impact on the organisation.

This, therefore, opens up a further consultation period whereby Officers from the Council will continue to engage with the groups to determine the impact of the recommended Member option and look at options for alternative funding streams. A paper will be taken to Cabinet in February 2014 for a final decision.

### **Military Covenant Board**

The Cambridgeshire Military Covenant Board consists of serving military personnel, ex-servicemen representing various organisations such as the British Legion and Officers and Members from councils across Cambridgeshire. Councillor Farmer attended on the Council's behalf.

Doddington Computer Club delivered a funding application to the Military Covenant Board for a 2 year project to help develop the community group. The funding request would also pay for new IT equipment and a dedicated training programme.

The members of the group requested that the bid is reworked with the support of a Fenland District Council Officer on the board as well as Cambridgeshire County Council. Once the bid has been reworked it will be passed to the regional funding board for consideration.

## **L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland**

### **FDC Gypsy and Traveller service – annual survey**

In August 2013, and as a forerunner to developing a resident engagement plan, Officers conducted customer surveys in order to ascertain levels of satisfaction amongst our residents.

A response rate of 20% (13 households) was achieved and results have been collated. The survey has shown that 92% (12) of respondents are happy with the

number of visits they receive per week and 77% (10) are happy with the customer service received from members of the team.

The survey has also highlighted areas for improvement that will inform our engagement plan and future delivery of a repairs service.

### **FDC Gypsy and Traveller Service – Cultural Events**

Officers promoted cultural awareness of Travellers in Fenland at the well attended Whittlesey Summer Festival. Officers were joined by a local photographer and a member of the settled Traveller community to demonstrate traditional Traveller arts and crafts such as wood turning and caravan design.

The activities proved a success and at least 50 people found it a positive experience in promoting the rich history of the Travelling community in Fenland.

### **Big Lottery Fund; Making Money Count Project**

The Making Money Count partnership reported back to the Big Lottery Fund on their Quarter 1 progress. The partnership is pleased to advise that between April and July 2013 the project achieved well against its objectives. Highlights included:

- Fenland District Council's 'New Horizons vehicle' carrying out 10 visits
- Fenland District Council's 'New Horizons vehicle' seeing approx 100 people
- New Horizons Officer has made 58 visits to tenants new to social housing
- 6 'Money Mate' volunteers have commenced training
- 45 frontline workers have completed awareness training on the project.

The Project Manager (based at Roddons Housing Association) has received glowing feedback for the project from a tenant whom accessed the service:

*"[this has] changed my life completely, I don't have to ask and pay neighbours to have my clothes washed, and I can cook fresh food every day, before I only had a microwave to use.... It has helped my health too..."*

### **Unauthorised Encampments**

During September 2013, the Council became aware of 5 unauthorised Gypsy Traveller encampments in the district. All of these encampments were located in the Wisbech area.

One of the encampments was on the Wisbech cricket club, and it was urgent that this encampment was moved on as a county cricket match had been organised for the Sunday following their arrival.

At first the unauthorised encampment declined to move, but following ongoing liaison with the Council, it moved in the middle of the week, thus ensuring that preparations' could be made allowing the game to take place.

All other sites have or are being addressed.

### **Unauthorised Development in the Redmore Lane area**

The Council was made aware of a caravan being taken onto land in the Redmore Lane area, late one Friday afternoon in September.

The Council quickly visited the site and spoke to those hoping to station a caravan there. The Council explained that this site was subject to a High Court Injunction, which in practical terms meant that the Council could remove any caravan stationed there.

After a long discussion the caravan was removed and no one to date has attempted to go back onto the land.

## **L4 Promote healthy lifestyles**

### **Partnership working with Living Sport**

Living Sport is Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's County Sport Partnership. LIVING SPORT is part of the County Sports Partnership programme, formed in 2006 to raise the profile, and engagement, of sport with local strategic partnerships, and to increase community participation in sport.

Over the past year, the Council have significantly improved their working partnership with Living Sport and together we have worked on:

- delivering 3 successful Sportivate funding workshops across the district
- supporting the FENDIS committee
- delivering a very successful disability multi-sport event

Through this effective and growing partnership, the Sports Development team have been able to reach a greater audience and deliver more projects in partnership, even with reduced staffing resources.

### **Get Lean Scheme**

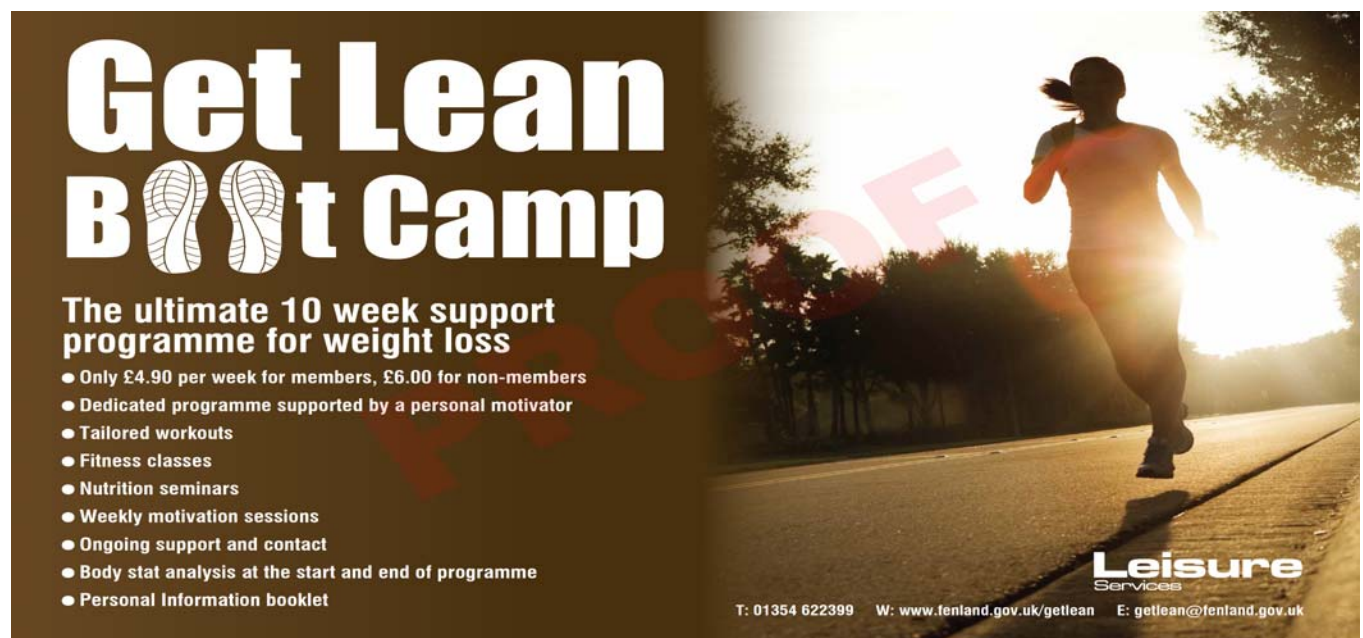
The Get Lean programme is Fenland's new 10 week exercise and nutrition programme.

The programme is 10 weeks long and consists of 4 different exercise programmes. Each weekly exercise plan also includes an exercise class. Further

support is offered with nutritional advice and guidance, an explanation of the exercise programme in a Get Lean for 2013 booklet and sessions with a Get Lean Motivator.

Initial uptake has been positive with most bookings in Chatteris.

This is a new product offering customers extra support to achieve their goals at minimal cost. This adds value to our memberships with existing customers getting a preferential rate to sign up to the scheme, with the overall aim of encouraging customers to exercise smarter for longer.



**Get Lean  
Boot Camp**

**The ultimate 10 week support programme for weight loss**

- Only £4.90 per week for members, £6.00 for non-members
- Dedicated programme supported by a personal motivator
- Tailored workouts
- Fitness classes
- Nutrition seminars
- Weekly motivation sessions
- Ongoing support and contact
- Body stat analysis at the start and end of programme
- Personal Information booklet

**Leisure Services**

T: 01354 622399 W: [www.fenland.gov.uk/getlean](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/getlean) E: [getlean@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:getlean@fenland.gov.uk)

### **Motiv8 Boot Camps**

Throughout the summer, Wisbech Park was the venue for a series of evening Motiv8 Boot Camps.

The sessions were run by a commercial company who hired the venue and reported back on progress.

The sessions were very successful with more than 15 participants at each event. These sessions have now been rolled out as part of the Hudson Leisure centre fitness class programme for the winter period. This has not only provided a new and fresh class to the fitness class programme at the Hudson leisure Centre, it has also provided the opportunity to support a fledgling local business ensuring a close working partnership in the future.

Numbers topped 29 for these sessions and are planned in to make use of the sports hall at a quiet time of low usage.

## The Retention People Net Promoter System

Our member retention software (TRP) has evolved to allow us to send email surveys to members asking them to tell us about their experience of their last visit to the leisure centre. The survey is based on the "Net Promoter" model and asks customers to rate their experience between 0 and 10. It also asks what we can do better to rate their experience closer to a 10.

Between 1 April and 30 September 2013, we received 300 responses, with many providing specific narrative feedback that allows us to respond to ensure continued service improvement and an enhancement of the customer experience.

A total of 71% of members surveyed rated their experience between 7 and 10 with a significant number of narrative comments praising the knowledge and commitment of staff in helping customers achieve their fitness goals.

A summary of the returned surveys is emailed to the Leisure Management Team each morning in order to give a current picture of what customers are experiencing and what we can do to further improve the service. The table below shows a summary of some NPS returns and the key narrative feedback that allows us to respond positively to customer feedback

Customer	Comments
The George Campbell	We are happy with the Gym so we would tell them so.
The George Campbell	Best gym around. Great classes and great atmosphere. Staff are friendly and the facilities are excellent
The Manor	Good support from staff. Wide range of good gym equipment. Pricing about affordable. Changing facilities basic; something en-suite to the gym would be better.
The Manor	The classes on offer are good but can be difficult to book for popular classes. The opening times are too limited. Most staff are friendly. Parking is a nightmare in the evenings.
The Hudson	It's just a great place to get / stay active and all of the staff know what they're talking about.
The Hudson	Local, easy parking, reasonable prices, great Gym.

## **L5 Engaging young people**

### **Youth District Council (YDC)**

The YDC met on 25 September and were pleased to welcome 19 students from all secondary schools in Fenland.

The YDC agreed a new 'contract' detailing their roles and responsibilities which they expect all current and future members to adhere to. This will be signed by all members of the YDC at their November meeting.

The YDC also agreed to continue to support the Fenland Road Safety Campaign's '2young2die' campaign during road safety week in November.

### **Youth District Council Grants**

The YDC awarded grants to two organisations including the Wisbech Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets who requested funding to enable cadets to complete their 'challenge' award badge, which this year is around 'snow sports'. In order to complete this challenge the cadets will be required to go on a trip to Sno!Zone at Milton Keynes.

To date, the YDC have awarded 6 grants totalling £3463.87, meaning there is £6536.13 remaining for other groups to apply for.

### **Community House – Youth Service Providers (YSP)**

YSP used the Community House as one of the venues to offer activities for children and young people during the six weeks holidays. The House was used on the 26 July, 2 August and 23 August 2013.

A variety of activities were offered, which included:

- BBQs
- Water Fights
- Open Garden
- Snacks and Chats
- Hair and Beauty
- Free Running

The number of children and young people engaged each week were:

- 26 July 2013 – 67
- 2 August 2013 – 57
- 23 August 2013 - 49

The feedback from these sessions has been very positive and future actions are to possibly open the Community House in the evenings during the winter months

with the intention of reducing Anti-Social Behaviour on the Streets and to also promote the importance of personal safety.

Overall, the Community House acted as a base for the development of new relationships being built with local residents and families from the Waterlees area. We had many adults offering to volunteer at our activities and take a genuine interest in the provisions being offered for their children.

The Community House also enabled YSP to have a regular meeting point with young people rather than just being street based during the summer holidays.

### **Children's Trust September Meeting**

Councillor Garratt chaired the September meeting of the County-wide Children's trust in September. Councillor Garratt attends on behalf of the 5 second tier Councils. Highlights included:

- o A presentation on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Physical and Learning disabilities through the life course with agreement that joint work and action planning is needed across Health, Education and Care to ensure better outcomes in this needs area.
- o Agreement to focus on the following priorities 2014-16
  - o Address the impact of poverty and welfare reforms on health outcomes and educational attainment
  - o Improving Children's Mental Health
  - o Addressing drug and alcohol abuse within the family environment
- o Potential actions around these priorities are to be worked up into a focused plan

### **East Cambs and Fenland Children and Young People Area Partnership – September meeting**

Findings were discussed from a Serious Case Review and 2 Multi agency case reviews as to how learning from the cases can be applied to how partners work together and train within organisations. Learning included training and development in approaches in vulnerable family engagement around "respectful uncertainty" and "professional curiosity". In essence the cases showed that issues around parental alcohol misuse, learning disability and incidents of domestic abuse were not effectively challenges. A County wide workforce development action planning is being collated to assist future training to encourage best practice in safeguarding children matters.

A summary of the findings and key themes from the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Sexual Abuse and Domestic Abuse Multi – Agency Audits was also received. The audit looked at 8 different aspects of how effectively partners worked together on such cases. The learning and

recommendations are being collated into a combined action plan for the LSCB to monitor.



## Streets Ahead

### SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

#### Cleansing Customer Feedback Results

A small sample of feedback from customers demonstrates their satisfaction with cleansing services in Fenland. Customer satisfaction responses to surveys sent out for the first 6 months of the year have shown how valued this service is by our customers.

The public expressed a clear opinion when giving their feedback and from 99 of the public questioned throughout this period, 94% (84) were satisfied with the service, from which 62% considered the service either Good or Very Good.

Comments received from our customers about the Cleansing Service included:

- The Council has very dedicated staff for picking all the litter up, especially in West End Park
- Excellent
- The cleansing team do a good job - once notified of any problem they soon clean up any mess
- I think the cleansing workers do a very good job. Without them the streets would be untidy not a good place to live. I'm happy with the service they give - top marks.
- The way that the cleansing staff carry out their duties in all weathers - they deserve a medal.

In this same period, 9 compliments about the service were received along with 19 cleansing complaints. All complaints were investigated and 95% were responded to within 10 days, with none progressed beyond Stage 1.

In addition, following more than 13,500 visits to Fenland's Public Conveniences between April and September 2013.

#### Recap Partnership School's Recycling Performance – "Choose Reuse"

As part of the education work performed each year in partnership with AmeyCespa, the County Council's waste partner, the Recap partnership have visited all 5 high schools in Fenland with their very well received drama production "Choose Reuse".

From these Fenland schools, 850 Year 8 students saw the comic performance where a range of characters discover the impact their way of life has on the

world. As a result students were taught how to get the most out of their unwanted goods and reduce the amount of waste they produce.

They were also be encouraged to take part in the "Big Choose Reuse Day" on November 15, when they will be challenged to put what they've learned to the test, by organising events like a swap shop in their school or arranging a community charity shop collection.

In addition, an evening performance was also offered at the Rosmini Centre in Wisbech. This was designed to capture a different audience in a lower performing recycling area. The 24 customers who attended, many of whom were Eastern European adults, also enjoyed the dynamic performance.



### **Refuse and Recycling Performance Update**

Refuse and Recycling is a key service within the Council's Streets Ahead corporate priority.

The target for 2013/14 was to achieve an overall performance of 51% of household waste being recycled and diverted from landfill. Recycling includes a combination of dry recycling from the blue bin and local bring sites, and compost from the brown bin. The performance peaked in June at 58% and is expected to achieve the required forecast as a result.

In addition:

- 97% (158) of our customers were satisfied with the service from 163 feedback questionnaires returned in June.
- The average number of missed collections has reduced from 292 a month last year to 263 per month for the first 6 months of this financial year. This represents 0.01% of the 280,000 collections routinely made each month.
- The percentage of blue bin recycling collected that it was possible to recycle has been 94% (3842 tonnes recycled from the 4068 tonnes collected) for the first 6 months of the year.
- More than 98% (1,662,718 from 1,689,900) of all refuse and recycling collections performed so far this year were made on the allotted day.
- Recycling collected in the first 6 months of the year has contributed £175,000 towards service provision.

Refuse and Recycling continues to maintain its high level of performance bringing in valuable income for the Council and meeting customer satisfaction.

## **SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the environment and our streetscene**

### **Wood Street Chatteris**

A new system of street lighting has recently been installed in Wood Street, Chatteris replacing the former FDC assets. The works were undertaken to bring the former poor performing lighting units up to a suitable residential design standard.

The works were delivered by FDC as part of the Chatteris Market Town Transportation Strategy and funded by Cambridgeshire County Council.

The new street lights are 50% more efficient offering whole life cost savings in terms of energy and maintenance, whilst helping to reduce carbon emissions without compromising light levels.

### **Joint Working in Crescent Road, Whittlesey**

Officers from different services areas within the Council worked closely together to take swift action and ensure the removal of a dangerous empty mobile home. Monitoring of the area showed that a disused mobile home was attracting levels of anti social behaviour, including arson and drug use.

Local residents were concerned that local young people may be putting themselves in danger by entering the old site and that there was evidence of fire setting.

The Council has worked in partnership with the Fire Service to carry out arson prevention education at the local Sir Harry Smith Community College. This was alongside the serving of a planning notice on the land owner who has cooperated with the notice and made the property safe.



## **Street Pride Refocus**

Following feedback from Street Pride Groups and other Friends and community groups a new Street Pride plan has been launched.

The main change within the plan is a greater focus on wider streetscene issues such as:

- Refreshing small vacant or derelict buildings;
- Enhancing untidy land with planting or landscaping;
- Developing areas with community facilities such as benches or herb gardens

The plan also sets out how the Council will support the groups with small financial incentives for working with other groups or in partnership and hopefully streamlining processes with partners such as Highways or Roddons Housing Association which in turn will make these projects easier to achieve.

By widening the remit of the plan, more volunteers can get involved, increasing opportunities and building greater community capacity.

Projects currently under consideration are the Old Butchers Shop in Benwick and Chapel Road car park in Wisbech.

## **Supporting the National Citizen Scheme**

The Council regularly take part in community events such as School Safety Zone and support Street Pride groups in their activities. During September 2013, a total of 13 local students worked together to tidy up two areas in West End Park. The students, who have all enrolled on the National Citizen Service scheme, used this action as part of their community project. The year 11 and 12 students all reported that they enjoyed making the area nice for everyone to enjoy.

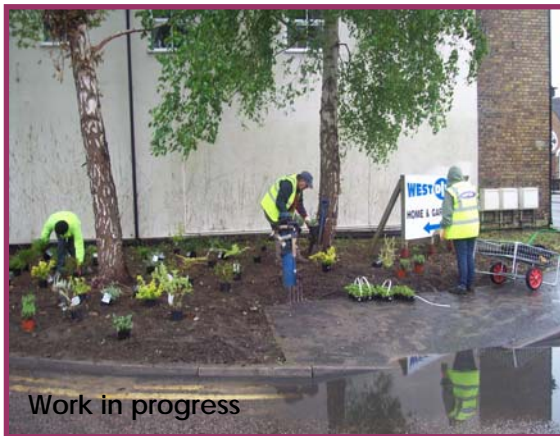




## Friends Groups Summer Activity: March In Bloom and Street Pride

Community groups in March were hard at work this summer with In Bloom and Street Pride transforming the overgrown shrub bed owned by West End DIY at the main entrance to their March Store.

Community payback partners were drafted in to clear the old bed, which was overgrown and unsightly. The In Bloom volunteers were then able to landscape the bed with the plants supplied by the DIY group. The bed is now maintained by the volunteers and is a welcome addition to the streetscape of March.



## Wisbech In Bloom

The Wisbech In Bloom group saw a busy season with not only preparations for the Anglia competition but the prestigious Britain In Bloom where it will be representing the Anglia Region in the Large Town category. The main project undertaken this year was the development of a bee friendly garden.

The original shrub bed was cleared by Community Payback partners and the site prepared for planting by The Landscape Group. The planting of the garden was then carried out following a scheme supplied by the Peckover House head gardener.



### **Benwick In Bloom Celebration Event**

Benwick In Bloom wanted to celebrate their recent success in the Anglia In Bloom competition with all those who contributed. In their first year of competing they achieved a magnificent Silver Award. A high accolade for a first attempt!

Over 20 people were able to attend the event held in the local pub. For a small village this was a marvellous turn out. They were greeted with the 'Anglia In Bloom' award and the group's portfolio that highlighted just how much they have managed to achieve in just a few months.

It was excellent to see the community getting together, talking about their

involvement and how they can contribute in the future. Overall, closer ties were made that will benefit Benwick now and for years to come.



### **SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland**

#### **CCTV continues to actively support crime reduction.**

During September 2013, the Council were able to provide support and detection to 175 incidents across Fenland, compared to 299 incidents September 2012, clearly showing that crime and incidents in Fenland are continuing to reduce.

However, the Council still focuses on areas of need which include retail and business crime, alcohol related anti social behaviour and violence and illegal drug use.

#### **SIRCS (Secure Incident Reporting and Community Engagement System) continues to support local business crime reduction schemes**

The SIRCS cloud based information sharing system allows members of the business community, including retail and licensed premises, to effectively and securely share information on offenders and incidents within their local business areas with other members.

The system continues to be well received and to date the system currently has 161 active members across the district from all four market towns.

This is allowing for the Council and its statutory partners to effectively work together with local business to support the detection and reduction of business related crime. This is leading to both alcohol related violence reducing within our night time economy areas and theft detections remaining one of the highest in the County which is clear examples of information sharing successes.

### **Acquisitive Crime in Fenland**

The Community Safety Partnership has highlighted an increase in robbery in Wisbech and some lower level incidents in the other market towns. CCTV and crime prevention initiatives have been put in place to safeguard the community including techniques to keep themselves and their property safe when out and about in the district.

An example of this is the New Horizons Bus in its new form carrying out purse dipping events in the 4 market towns alongside completing 19 visits to the Fenland villages to raise awareness regarding this issue.

The police continue to enforce against known perpetrators and investigate any new incidents across the district.

## Open for Business

### OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

#### **Economic and Business Estate**

Conference income remains strong in September, with both business centres reporting good returns and advance bookings in the coming months. At the half way point in the financial year, both centres are on track to exceed their annual targets.

Occupancy of the business premises estate has decreased slightly on last month as an occupier at South Fens Business Centre has relocated closer to the proprietor's home. Overall net occupancy is 75.3% against a target of 78%.

To promote new tenancy interest, Tinfish Creative have produced draft promotional brochures and have been working closely with the web-developer to polish the Fenland Property Website. The next stage of their involvement is to generate customer surveys to build a picture of who and why customers use The Boathouse and to gain an insight into how similar customers can be attracted and retained.

#### **New Engines commissioned in Nene Pilot.**

The capital project to replace the two engines on Nene Pilot has been successfully completed. Lesson learned from the last engine transition helped the process to run smoothly.

This engine replacement will minimise the risk of the statutory pilotage service being affected by a mechanical breakdown.

#### **Wisbech Town Flood defence works 2013**

The next stage of the flood defence improvements is well under way and the Yacht harbour has proven to be very useful, allowing marine contractors to access the works site. This stage of works are anticipated to last until December 2013

### OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

#### **Group Leisure Travel & Trade Show**

The Council attended a two day Group Leisure Travel and Trade Show promoting The Cambridgeshire Fens at Birmingham during September. This year's event successfully brought together hundreds of group organisers, travel buyers and exhibitors ranging from attractions, tourists boards and



accommodation providers to ticketing agencies, coach companies and tour operators.

The show offered opportunities to share ideas, deals and advice for people who organise group trips and holidays. The Cambridgeshire Fens stand spoke to and provided information to around 122 organisers ranging from Coach Companies to smaller groups like Women's Institute Groups. The organisers were looking mainly for 1-3 night trips and day trips.

A number of coach companies asked for advice on places to stop off instead of driving through or around Fenland. All organisers were given a copy of the Welcome to Cambridgeshire Fens Visitor Guide 2013.



The link to Cambridge was very evident, with people said that they had been to Cambridge but had not considered travelling into the Cambridgeshire Fens. Our conversations with them sparked some interest and, following the show, contact has been made with all visitors to help them plan future visits and keep the interest flowing. To date, 3 confirmed bookings have been made for coach companies coming into the district.

### **OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities**

#### **Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) Project Update**

Two new businesses were visited and signed up to support the FEE project. Both these businesses have signed up to attend careers fairs in October and November, supporting year 9 pupils to make options choices and sixth form students to find out more about their training and employment opportunities. This now brings the total of business connection with the project to 125.

### **OB4 Promote Fenland as a tourism and visitor destination**

#### **National Heritage Open Days**

Fenland district was part of the national Heritage Open Days event which celebrates England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to places that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. Every year for four days in September, Fenland buildings such as museums,

Peckover House, Octavia Hill Birthplace, the Wisbech Masonic Hall, Wisbech Castle open their doors to the fenland community. It is a once-a-year chance to discover architectural treasures and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities that bring local history and culture to life.

At a local level, Fenland Heritage Open Days were organised in partnership with local town councils and community groups, led by the Fenland Tourism Board.

# Quality Organisation

## Q1 Providing good quality customer services that are accessible to the community

### Contact Centre and 'Fenland @ your service' shops

The Contact Centre continues to see an increase in the volume of calls; a 6% increase in the year to date (52,292 calls offered compared to 49,348 for last year). In September 2013, the number of calls increased by 9% (8,481 compared to 7,683). This increase is, in part, due to increased levels of Council Tax recovery notices sent out this summer.

Long term sickness continues to pose a challenge for the team although some members of staff have returned to work on a phased working programme. All efforts are continuing to support those who are still off sick to return as soon as possible and to implement the new sickness policy

We are continuing to improve performance each month, despite the problems described above. Our recovery plan has included helping staff return to work after sickness, using short term temporary staff and also using spare capacity in between customer visits to our shops to help handle the additional workload.

### Council Tax

Collection rates continue to hold steady and at the end of September they were just 0.1% below target for this time in the year. A number of actions are in place to increase recovery levels in the next few months.

The number of reminders sent out since April is 13,530 compared to 7707 for the same period last year (a 57% increase) and the number of summons being sent out since April is 3,746 compared to last years figure of 2,209 (a 42% increase).

### Macmillan Coffee Morning

The Council took part in the Annual 'Worlds Biggest Coffee Morning' to support Macmillan Cancer Support, hosted by the Chairman of the Council.

It gives the Chairman a chance to meet with staff and enjoy a 'cuppa', cake and sausage rolls. There was also a raffle, where prizes are donated and raffle tickets sold. Invitations are sent out to local Councils and other Chairmen and Mayors attend which also gives the Council the opportunity to showcase the good things happening in Fenland.

This year we raised an amazing £536.72 and 95 guests attended

## **Correspondence, Compliments and Complaints**

Please see appendix A attached for the statistics for months July to October 2013.

## **Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively**

### **National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) Collection**

We are currently 0.8% below our target collection rate for this point in the year, however collection rates vary against target throughout the year in line with historic trends.

### **Accountancy**

The Final Statement of Accounts 2012/13 and External Auditors (PwC) report on the accounts was presented to Corporate Governance Committee on 27 September.

The purpose of the auditors' report is to highlight any issues or matters that it wishes to raise with members regarding the accounts. The auditors had no significant issues to raise with members at all and in fact the auditors praised the cooperation they received from officers, the quality of the working papers supplied to them and the timeliness of provision of information.

Both the accounts and auditors report are available on the FDC website

### **Paperless Project Update**

The first phase of this project is well under way and FDC staff have delved into their cabinets and cupboards and removed a huge ten tonnes of unwanted paper, which was shredded and recycled where possible. This is the first step towards streamlining what we store and freeing up storage areas, and staff time for more efficient working in the long term. Further work to tackle shared areas has continued this month with 12 service champions taking a leading role and focusing on a service basis in shared areas.

Moving forward the project will focus on electronic storage and data retention where applicable making our storage areas, both physical and electronic, more efficient and our policy approach to storage clearer and more in keeping with the paperless era.

The continuing deletion of already deleted emails is proving successful. This exercise initially reclaimed approximately 242GB in disk space and has now grown to 390GB. This has helped us avoid an estimated hardware cost of £3,000. Also, the email data base has, for now, stopping increasing in size.

In addition, the Technical support team have successfully devised another paperless process. This involves keeping electronic copies only of withdrawn invalid applications, rather than keeping a paper copy, achieving time saving costs.

### **Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way**

#### **Elections**

In September we successfully delivered the March North Town Council by election. The election was as a result of the resignation of Cllr Mike Shermer.

The March North Ward of the town council had an eligible electorate of 5,422 of which 844 were issued with postal votes. The overall voter turnout was 19.1% and Stephen Court (Liberal Democrat) was elected.

This is the 5th election the service has successfully delivered this calendar year. These electoral events range from local town and parish by elections to the major County Council elections held in May. The service has a great track record in ensuring electors are able to take part in the democratic process whilst also ensuring local people have confidence in the electoral process and declared results.