

# Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

## Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

November 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>	

# Neighbourhood Planning

## NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

### Transport

A series of workshops and meetings have been held during October 2013 to discuss the LEP Strategic Economic Plan and the Local Growth Fund. Nationally, Government has set aside £2 billion pounds of funding for 2015/16 for the Local Growth Fund, of which £1.1 billion is for transport. They have also indicated this funding will continue in subsequent years.

Any bids need to be in support of the Strategic Economic Plan. In partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Council has submitted transport bids to the Local Growth Fund for the Fenland Railway Stations, Wisbech major transport projects, March industrial link road phase two and key junctions and Market Town Transport Strategies. The submitted bids include a work programme from 2015 – 2020.

### Core Strategy

Preparations for the Core Strategy Examination continued throughout October. The date for the public hearings has been set for 9 December 2013 and is scheduled to last the full week. The hearings are to be held in the Council Chamber in Fenland Hall and will be open for anyone to attend as an observer.

The Planning Inspector has issued a list of the Matters and Issues to be discussed at the hearings. She has identified 16 Matters and Issues, each with a varying number of sub-questions, for all those, including the Council, who made representations on the proposed submission version of the Core Strategy.

### Supporting Planning Policy Documents

In support of the Core Strategy, 3 draft key documents have been prepared and adopted by Cabinet on 21 November. These refer to the following:

a) **Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland - Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

This document has the overall aim of achieving high quality developments in Fenland and it will also ensure valued environments, both built and natural, are protected.

It will provide understandable policy guidance for developers and the public, and assist the Council (both Officers and Members) in reaching decisions on planning applications.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder have promoted the importance of good design in Fenland and this document recognises that good design can provide a major contribution to creating high quality and sustainable developments.

This draft will be subject to public consultation in January and is likely to come back to Council in the spring 2014.

**b) Resource Use, Renewable Energy and Allowable Solutions: A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in Support of Core Strategy Policy CS14 Part (A)**

Its purpose is to support Policy CS14 Part A of the Core Strategy namely: 'Responding to climate change and managing the risk of flooding in Fenland'.

Again, it will be used to provide understandable policy guidance for developers and the public, and assist the Council in reaching decisions on planning applications.

The SPD considers all forms of renewable energy including wind farms, PV solar farms, Anaerobic Digestion (AD) plants as well as small scale (domestic) renewable energy proposals.

The SPD also highlights the economic, social and environmental benefits that a low carbon / low energy economy can bring.

Once finalised and adopted (after a period of consultation), it will strengthen the Council's ability to consistently and fairly consider all relevant planning applications, such as wind turbines, PV farms or other smaller scale (domestic) renewable energy proposals.

As with the Design SPD it is hoped to adopt this SPD at the same time as the Core Strategy next spring.

**c) Fenland Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) - Update 2013**

This study sets out the current accommodation needs (i.e. pitches or plots) of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showmen in Fenland for the next 20 years (until 2031).

It has been produced jointly with Cambridgeshire County Council and is an update of a report completed with all neighbouring districts in 2011, following recent successful challenges at appeal.

This updated study concludes in effect there is no need to provide any further pitches or plots within Fenland for the foreseeable future.

As explained in the assessment, there will be a need for 139 pitches but that these can all be provided for by natural turnover (121 pitches), and by existing planning permissions or where planning permissions are not be used for their authorised purpose (19) .

The study is an evidence document and **not** policy and will assist the Council in determining planning applications and at appeals.

### **Fenland Building Design Awards**

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Fenland Building design Awards were held on 9 December and hosted an almost full house of applicants, their agents/builders, Members, CMT and others. The Awards were again sponsored by the Cambs Times & Wisbech Standard and recognise not only good design and construction but also the close working relationship with Fenland Building Control as part of the project team.

We had numerous nominations for schemes covering categories for Heritage, New Dwellings, Domestic Extensions and Commercial Buildings. There were also special Community & Planning Committee Chairmans awards and the winner of the Coalwharf Road Competition was also announced.

The overall winner of this years Design Awards was the domestic extension for Mr Sayer of Drake Towage at Crab Marsh Wisbech. The design of the extension reflected the marine based business of the owner.



## Coalwharf Road, Wisbech – Design Competition

The Coalwharf Road 'design, acquire & build' competition was the brainchild of Councillor Alan Melton. Councillor Melton recognised that many design competitions produce an array of fascinating and attractive concepts, but remain just that 'a concept'. Councillor Melton decided to launch a competition that would not only test the design expertise of the competitors, but also challenge them to deliver their vision, with a viable and deliverable development scheme.

Launched back in the summer and inviting entries from across the country, the competition sought to invite design concepts from teams of Architects & Developers, who, by combining their respective skills could actually deliver their vision.

13 expressions of interest were received, and at Stage 1 - 7 design concepts were submitted, after much deliberation, the 7 concepts were shortlisted down to 4. These four were invited to 'work-up' their proposals, to include a development appraisal to demonstrate viability and deliverability.

The shortlisted designs included:

### B M Design Consultancy from Peterborough



### ECD Architects Limited from London



**Paul Bancroft Architects from Oundle, nr Peterborough**



**Studio AVC also from London**



The climax of the competition was the announcement of the winning design on Monday evening at the annual Fenland Building Design Awards. The winning design was produced by **B M Design Consultancy** from Peterborough. Together with their development partner, **Postland Developments Limited**, the winning team intend to construct 11 residential dwellings on the site, providing a combination of 1no. 4 bedroom house; 5no. 3 bedroom houses; 1no. 2 bedroom house and 4no. 1 bed roomed apartments.

Officers from the Assets, Legal, Planning & Building Control Teams will now work alongside the winning design team to assist in bringing forward the delivery of the winning scheme.



### **Nene Waterfront Regeneration Area**

The disposal and development of the former Gas Works site is progressing. Formal heads of terms have now been agreed and the developer has instructed an architect to develop the scheme in accordance with Planning Policies.

It is anticipated that the 24 affordable properties will be constructed first and, subject to planning approval, development will start on site in early 2014.

### **NP2 The built environment**

#### **Building Control**

The Building Control team have been successful in securing Building Control work for two 50 dwelling sites within Fenland. Fee income for October was the highest this year and equal to the highest monthly fees received last year. In addition, the team received the highest number of Full Plans applications submitted since March 2012. These indicators together are excellent and point to a recovery in the local construction market.

#### **New affordable homes in Chatteris**

A total of 47 new affordable homes have been completed at Treeways in Chatteris by Circle Housing - Roddons. The scheme provided 12 shared ownership properties (6 x 2 bed flats, 4 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses) and 35 social rented properties (28 x 2 bed flats, 5 x 3 bed houses and 2 x 4 bed houses). The Council supported Circle Housing - Roddons through helping to make the case to be awarded a grant allocation from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to deliver the homes as well as assisting through the



planning process. Currently, 29 of the social rented properties are occupied and 9 shared ownership properties are sold or sold subject to contract. In addition, 6 of the social rented flats are designated as supported housing to help to meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities. All of the homes were designed to meet Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

### **Wisbech Dilapidated Buildings**

Further steps have been taken to resolve the dilapidated state of 1 Nene Quay in Wisbech.

A section 215 notice has been served on the property owner. A positive dialogue has commenced with the owner to agree an approach and programme for the required improvements.

A wider approach to premises enforcement has been developed and subsequently approved by Cabinet – please refer to the Streets Ahead section of this report for further details.

### **Corporate enforcement**

A revised Corporate Enforcement Policy was presented and approved at November Cabinet. This policy set out a clear approach the Council will take, across many key service areas and follows a positive Prevention, Intervention and Enforcement pattern to ensure compliance by helping and encouraging Business and the wider community to understand and meet their regulatory duties.

The policy will be subject to public consultation and it is intended a final version will be submitted to full Council in February 2014 for adoption.

# Localism

## L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

### **Operation Endeavour**

The Council played a leading role as part of a multi agency partnership including the Police, Gangmasters Licensing Authority, National Crime Agency, Salvation Army and British Red Cross in the delivery of a reception centre as part of the tackling migrant exploitation operation, known as Operation Endeavour. The Council had a role to ensure our statutory duties regarding tackling rogue landlords, homelessness and emergency planning were fulfilled as part of the operation.

Through early morning activity on the 15 October, 82 migrant workers were brought to the centre to enable them to receive support around finding alternative accommodation and work, and to gather any evidence with regard to arrests undertaken of legal and illegal gangmasters at the same time. The Council helped prevent 37 people from becoming homeless during the operation by finding them alternative places to live.

To date, this is the largest operation of this type in the country, and FDC played a key part in this successful complex operation which has been recognised by the other agencies involved.

### **Disabled Facilities Grants**

Through this scheme, the Council provides adaptation works for elderly and disabled home owners and tenants helping them to remain safe, secure and protected in their own homes. The Council has assisted 31 clients to date, compared to 35 at this time last year. There are currently 56 cases in process and further new referrals via Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) are being received. The customer satisfaction rate remains very high at 100% for the current quarter.

One recently completed case was for a disabled client who was assessed as needing a single storey extension that housed a downstairs bedroom with en suite showering facilities.

The Council ensured that that all planning and building regulations were met along with effectively co-ordinating our partners at The Care & Repair Agency and CCC Occupational Therapy to ensure a swift start to the works was made once all authorisations were given. The work was completed within 3 months of the whole process beginning.

This case was an excellent example of all partners working together to bring about a result for a client whose personal and family circumstances were extremely challenging for them.

### **Outcomes from the Service Level Agreement from the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services**

During the last quarter, 64 (74 in the same corresponding quarter 2012/13) enquiries were received from groups across Fenland and support work was undertaken with 37 different groups (44 different groups in the same corresponding quarter 12/13) that work in Fenland. In addition, Fenland District Council passed through 4 enquiries. The reason for the slight reduction is as a result of the funding fair being slightly later in the year.

The enquiries and 1-2-1 sessions included the following themes;

- 11 Fundraising support sessions
- 3 Grantfinder searches
- 13 Governance, HR and policies issues
- 20 Signposting and networking
- 9 Membership
- 8 Finance management
- 2 Training
- 2 Other enquires

### **Benefits**

We are now helping 10,198 households in Fenland pay their rent and Council Tax compared with 100 more a year ago, which is positive news for the Fenland economy. This indicates that more people are now finding higher paid work and not needing our support with key household bills.

Benefits performance continues to improve. Our service standard for updating records after a customer reports a change is 10 days, but we are turning these round in an average of 9 days. This helps customers with household budgeting as they are advised of new benefits amounts more quickly. New applications are now being processed in 24 days, which is over our target of 20 days but showing steady improvement during the year and we are on course to hit target during this year. Last year, we were taking an average of 34 days to undertake this work.

## L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

### Big Lottery Fund; Making Money Count project

The Big Lottery Funded Making Money County project continues to prove popular with social housing tenants in Fenland. The £1 million lottery funded project will run over 5 years and was launched in the summer with the Council supporting through the New Horizons bus alongside lead partner Circle Housing – Roddons, CAB, and CHS group (formerly known as Cambridge Housing Society

As of the end of October, the project has seen:

- **New Horizon bus visits:** 20 weekly visits with 363 people engaged. On average, Officers are meeting with up to 18 people per visit. Part of this increase is due to the success of 'Get Online week' which involved working in partnership with the Digital inclusion team as they engaged 153 people in 4 days.
- **A further 41 new tenants** have been visited by the New Horizons officer increasing the total number of visits to new tenants to 113.
- **The Laptop learning scheme** has delivered a total 56 hours of training in the past month. This has proved a very popular engagement tool with a further 26 people on the waiting list.
- **Frontline workers:** Two further frontline worker training sessions have been delivered in Wisbech. The project has now trained 83 workers in 8 sessions.

The project has also recruited 6 volunteer 'Money Mates' to the project. One of the project volunteers recently wrote about her experience of helping on the New Horizons bus:

*"Having seen people arrive with a money problem and leave with a solution, armed with a practical range of options to explore, I'm proud to be a part of the project."*

### Funding success – Migrant outreach workers

The Council, in partnership with an organisation called CRI, have successfully won a bid to deliver an outreach service to migrants in Fenland. The £144k funding will deliver increased capacity and continuation of the advice service which is run from the Ferry Project. The role will assist with advice to rough sleepers and sign posting to accommodation and employment options for migrants.

### Unauthorised Encampment

Travellers recently occupied land, locally known as Potty Plants, along the A47. Continued mediation by the Council was successful and resulted in the family moving on, without resorting to expensive formal action. The site has been

secured and further discussions will now take place with the relevant parties about additional steps to ensure no re-occupation.

### L3 Supporting our ageing population

#### Golden Age

Despite the poor weather 22 people attended the Benwick Golden Age Surgery in November. Key highlights included:

- The Council's "Ferret" helped 5 people to find potential benefit savings. One resident may be entitled to £22 a week Council Tax Benefit, another resident £44 a week pension credit and 3 people were advised to claim attendance allowance which opens the door to other additional income streams. As a result the 3 residents were signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) and Age UK
- A total of 12 health checks were carried out by the Council
- Most of the attendees also took up the opportunity to try New Age Kurling which was promoted as a way of keeping active and enhancing health and wellbeing.
- All those attended were given a Golden Age Bag which included various advice leaflets from the Golden Age advice & information stand.



### L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

#### Healthy Employer project

The Healthy Employer project is run in partnership with health colleagues. The project utilises the workplace as a setting to provide information and advice on



a range of health issues, such as healthy diet, stopping smoking, physical activity and exercise. The project provides many benefits not only to the employee by providing information and an opportunity to talk about health, but also to the employer by way

of practical support for their employees.

Five Healthy Employer events have been held so far this year involving two events at Rustlers produce, Chatteris, two events at Greencore, Wisbech and one event at Gees Fresh Produce, March. The number of staff seen at each event was approximately 150 – 200.

The businesses involved have been pleased with the level of interest from staff and requested further events to accommodate different shift patterns. More events are now being planned for 2014.

### **Exercise Referral Scheme**

The Exercise Referral Scheme was relaunched earlier in the year offering slight changes to a scheme which had been operating for nearly 14 years. The Exercise Referral Scheme is a 12 week programme with referrals being made by a Health Professional, for example a Doctor, Nurse or Physiotherapist.

The scheme aims to:

- Promote the benefits of an active healthy lifestyle
- Decrease sedentary-related illnesses
- Improve the health of the community in Fenland

Since the relaunch, 33 Exercise Referrals been taken up, with 16 customers completing the full scheme. A total of 17 customers are still to complete the scheme and will be encouraged to go on to phase 2 which is the next step to a full gym membership.

Since revising the scheme, a total of £2,238 has been received to offset the costs of providing the service ensuring that the scheme is both sustainable and has the commitment of those referred on to it.

### **Whittlesey Cricket Club Funding**

The Sports Development team offers advice to sports clubs within the district with regards to funding applications. In 2012, the team provided advice and support to enable Whittlesey Cricket Club apply for a Sport England grant.

The cricket club had recently relocated and needed funding to convert 2 mobile classrooms into a pavilion and changing room at their new ground. By supporting the club with this bid, the team have passed on valuable advice and knowledge to help the club become more sustainable and promote participation.

The Club was successful with the bid and was awarded £39,000 from Sport England.

This is a fantastic achievement especially given the current level of competition for funding. The club are now in the process of completing this project and are looking forward to opening their new pavillion and changing rooms.

A Representative of Whittlesey Cricket Club wrote the following after hearing they were successful with their bid:

*"Thanks to your help with re-writing and elaborating on our first funding application from last year we submitted it for the following round of funding and are happy to confirm a grant of £38772 from Sport England to convert 2 mobile classrooms into our pavillion and changing rooms at the school."*

### **Healthy Hearts Classes**

Healthy Heart Classes have been running at Fenland Leisure centres for the past 3 years and were launched following funding received from the British Heart Foundation to train gym staff to deliver classes specifically targeting those recovering from the cardiac event.

These classes have been running successfully and are having a positive effect on those attending. One such attendee is Maurice Newman. Maurice is 67 years old. He had a heart attack in early 2010 and came to join the Healthy Hearts fitness classes in November 2010. He attended the classes until early 2012 and at the same time undertook an exercise programme in the gym to supplement the weekly Healthy Heart class. So far Maurice has achieved amazing results, from being a very inexperienced exerciser, who was very nervous about raising his heart rate and working hard, he has gone from strength to strength now progressing onto some of the most vigorous and high intensity fitness classes FDC have to offer.

Maurice now attends the gym most evenings and takes part in classes ranging from Circuits to Body Attack. Since joining our leisure facilities, he has had no problems with his heart but has instead dramatically lowered the risk for further cardiac events. This is just one example of the benefits of delivering health based fitness classes for members of our community.

### **Red Hot Summer Membership Promotion**

Anyone signing up for membership at any of the council's leisure centres during July and August as part of the Red Hot Summer promotion received the offer of paying no joining fee and being automatically entered into a prize draw to win an Ipad.

This offer is part of the wider marketing plan for the service, offering two main short term offers over the course of a year, all membership offers are subject to taking out a direct debit and minimum length of membership terms.

Debra Watts took out a six-month membership at the George Campbell centre in August as part of the campaign. She said: "I'm delighted to have won the iPad. I use the George Campbell two or three times a week and particularly like the fact that you can either find an exercise class or use the gym to fit in with your day. The staff are very helpful, both at the centre and on the telephone."

The number of new memberships sold at the centres as a result of the promotion was 353, which has increased the overall number of direct debit members committed to exercising in our centres.



Debra Watts receiving her prize from Portfolio Holder, Cllr Pop Jolley

### **New Gym Equipment coming soon**

New equipment has been selected for the gyms at the Hudson, Manor and George Campbell leisure centres and will be installed over the Christmas period. The fitness teams at each centre contributed in choosing the equipment and feedback from the last 18 months was reviewed to ascertain equipment requested by customers.

The new equipment replaces kit that has been in the gyms for five years. The new equipment is similar to that already in the gym in Chatteris and will enhance the membership package, resulting in greater member retention and improved new sales figures, leading to maximised income opportunities.



## **L5 Engaging young people**

### **Youth District Council (YDC) Grant award 2013/14**

At their meeting on 25 September 2013, the YDC agreed to award a grant to 20Twenty Productions to fund the development of the 'CHEESE Club'. The club will be a social club for 6-12 year olds whom have been referred from social care. The club will aim to offer up to 20 children the chance to meet new friends and learn new skills such as crafts, story creation and drama based activities. Funding for the YDC is provided by the Council to enable these grant awards to be made.

# Streets Ahead

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

### Recap Enhanced Partnership Working Update

The work streams that form the core of this important partnership project are progressing well:

- All Partners have now formally resolved through their respective Cabinets or Committees to commit to the Joint Materials Recycling Facility procurement on the basis of combined tonnages.
- Cambridgeshire County Council is in discussion with Peterborough City Council regarding how the processes for the Mechanical and Biological Treatment Plant at Waterbeach and the Energy from Waste plant being built in Peterborough may be utilised together more efficiently.
- The Joint Vehicle Procurement work has created useful knowledge to clarify vehicle specification and purchasing timescales that are helping inform implementation options for other projects.
- Ongoing dialogue continues between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council over options for closer working, including an increasing commitment to work on shared depot arrangements in Waterbeach.
- Regular 3-way dialogue has been established between Cambridgeshire County Council, the RECAP partnership and Amey Cespa as the three strategic elements of waste disposal and collection in Cambridgeshire.

### Abandoned Vehicles Removal Contract

As a result of a tender exercise, Fenland District Council and Charlton's Recycled Autoparts Ltd of Cambridge have a new agreement for 3 years that will cover the prompt collection of abandoned vehicles within Fenland.

The arrangement is based on a "nil-cost" basis where Charlton's will, following a request from the Street Scene Team, collect the abandoned vehicle and securely store it at their premises without charge.

This agreement ensures the Street Scene Team can respond quickly to reports of an abandoned vehicle and arrange for its speedy removal. Not only does this satisfy the Councils legal obligations to remove abandoned vehicles but it also ensures the environment is kept clear of illegal old,

vandalised or dangerous vehicles that can cause concern in Fenland communities.

The picture below shows Councillor Peter Murphy with the proprietor of Charlton Recycled Autoparts Ltd



### Split Vehicle – One Year On

The split vehicle has now reached its first birthday. The vehicle, which carries out daily collections in the villages and to out-reach properties, continues to prove to be a great success.

The vehicle has proven to save time and money by only having to pass these properties once and do work that previously required 2 vehicles.

Customers have commented about both bins being collected at the same time in one vehicle and enquired whether their efforts to recycle were being wasted. In response to these enquiries, a new look logo has been fitted to the side of the vehicle showing the two waste streams being collected at once using two separate compartments.



This simple message has provided reassurance to our customers that both dry recycling and garden waste are collected separately and go on to contribute to the Council's excellent recycling performance.

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

### **Premises related action and enforcement**

November Cabinet considered and approved proposals for a joined up approach, including appropriate enforcement to improve the appearance of premises and land around the district.

Significant liaison with other local authorities, English Heritage and local interest groups has resulted in lessons being learnt to build into best practice within Fenland.

From member led walkabouts of our market towns, an initial list of properties have been identified which will be addressed in a prioritised approach based on condition and location of the property and its overall impact on the local environment. Guidance notes for property owners will also be developed to help identify common issues and officers will provide the relevant support to enable improvements.

In certain circumstances, it will be necessary to instigate formal enforcement action under our variety of powers including Section 215 Notice under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Supported by the necessary training, a cross team officer group will lead on the management and implementation of this approach with property owners to help improve the appearance and utilisation of properties within Fenland.

### **Streets Scene Team Update**

The Street Scene Team is the face of Fenland District Council working out and about in the Fenland community assisting with a variety of enquires. Since April 2013, the team have performed a total of 2220 hours of patrol within the community:

Chatteris & surrounding villages	390 hours
March & surrounding villages	576 hours
Whittlesey & surrounding villages	637 hours
Wisbech & surrounding villages	617 hours

The number of Street Scene public concerns or local issues actioned were:

Chatteris	234
March	677
Whittlesey	390
Wisbech	917
Villages	164

Inspections performed as part of routine work have ensured that cemeteries, public toilets and public spaces are clean, safe or tidy. The team have carried out 3,228 memorial safety inspections, 303 toilet inspections and 460 cleansing inspections.

In support of the Council's Streets Ahead Enforcement work, the team have spent 645 hours out on advertised enforcement patrols within community priority areas in Fenland's 4 towns.

As a result, the team have issued 31 fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for parking offences, 15 FPNs for litter offences and 1 FPN for a Dog Control Order offence.

In addition, there has also been a successful prosecution for littering through the magistrates' court, enforcing the message that FDC will look to prosecute where possible, those who fail to pay.

### **Street Pride and Renaissance**

The Fenland Renaissance project assists local communities who wish to improve dilapidated buildings and the visual amenity of towns and villages. There are three grants that make up the scheme; Changing Views grants, Shop Front grants and Buildings Grants.

Changing views grants are particularly aimed at providing community groups with a small amount of money for materials that will help them to restore or create a better street scene.

Following feedback from local groups and local Councillors, two significant projects are planned for this quarter. Firstly, volunteers will work with local shop owners of vacant properties in the four market towns to erect images in shop windows to enhance the appearance of the streetscene. In stage one, 15 large scale images will be installed.

Work will continue in the New Year with a second project initiated by Wisbech Street Pride group and In Bloom to enhance the entrance to Chapel Road Car Park (shown in the photograph right). The National Trust has offered to design the look of the garden based on the group's ideas of landscaping the area and creating a drought garden. The group are very passionate about improving this area, as it will help to improve the appearance of this part of Wisbech.



It is envisaged that continuing to support improvements to the street scene in this way will lead to increased pride in the local area as a whole and consequently a reduction in anti-social behaviour, which is a key priority for the Council.

### **Benwick Churchyard improvements**

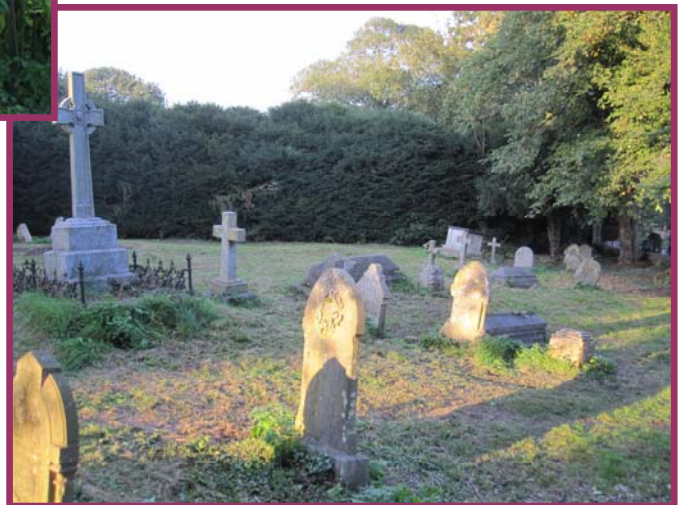
Within the community management action plan, the Benwick In Bloom team highlighted this area as one they wanted to see maintained in a sensitive manner, to improve the conservation and biodiversity of the area.

The In Bloom team are working with the Council to agree what work can be undertaken and then, using the assistance of Community Payback, to carry out the works where possible. This work will add extra green space for Benwick residents to enjoy. As a small village, there are few areas to utilise so those that are available are being put to best use. This site, although small, has lots of potential, and is located in a beautiful setting with environmental potential.

The Notable George Hughes, who was Chief Mechanical Engineer for various railway companies during the early 20th century is interred in the graveyard and Benwick In Bloom are hoping to promote his life and achievements through an information board.



**Benwick Churchyard before and after the vegetation was cleared**



## **Cemeteries Improvement Plans**

The Council is working to improve local cemeteries to make them places that are respectful to those buried there and relaxing for those visiting. To help achieve this, we are working with Community Payback to continue the good work previously completed to clear areas of woody overgrowth. Chatteris' New Road Cemetery is the most recent area that we have been working in and have been clearing sensitively along the eastern boundary in the old section.

In addition to improving the look and feel of the areas, the Council has an action plan in place to promote the number of burials taking place in our cemeteries by working closer with undertakers and diversifying what we can offer local people. It is important that the Council maximises income to help ensure that the continued upkeep and development of the cemeteries is carried out in an efficient manner.

## **New Friends Group**

To further engage and work with the community in our cemeteries and churchyards, a Friends group is being formed for Whittlesey Cemetery. Through closer communication with the community we hope to enhance and add to the community action plans and cemetery improvement plans.

Fenland's cemeteries and churchyards are historical sites of interest for residents, school children and visitors alike. The cemeteries offer great potential, including notable people from Fenland that are of historical interest. There is considerable scope to improve biodiversity and the aesthetic appeal.



## **Large Town representative in "Britain In Bloom" – Wisbech**

Wisbech in Bloom, winners of successive Gold's in Anglia In Bloom were chosen to represent the Anglia region in the Large Town Category in Britain in Bloom 2013.

FDC, Wisbech Town Council, several Friends groups and many organisations across Wisbech have supported Wisbech in Bloom in their entry into this competition in 2013. The National judges came to Wisbech at the end of July and were impressed with all the community projects that they learned about, that help make Wisbech a vibrant floral town.

At the awards held in Cleethorpes in October, Wisbech was one of five from over 90 entrants nominated for the "Best Heritage" and also "Best Commercial category."

Bob Flowerdew, guest presenter, awarded Wisbech with a Silver Gilt Medal for the Large Town Category, the award made is for:

*" A high standard entry that meets the judging criteria and objectives of Britain in Bloom, including sections of exceptionally high standard, sustainable and quality thresholds and offers potential to be a Gold Medal winner in the future".*

## Love your local Fenland Markets – events summary



### Activities

Over the summer, the Council has delivered several activity sessions at each town market to improve footfall in the area and increase the 'dwell' time of those attending the activity sessions. Activities have been primarily aimed at younger people, encouraging families to attend the market place.

The events have been promoted by way of leaflets in the towns by market traders, other shops, the library and leisure centres.

Around 300 people have attended the events, with the majority being children. Interestingly though, when food tasting is on offer, the majority of customers are adults.

### Impact on local markets

Market traders have told us that they need more footfall in the market place to ensure additional sales and to raise the profile of the market. The activities that have taken place have increased footfall and increased customer 'dwell time'. This means that adults have spent some time in the market, instead of moving through the area with another purpose. Families have often made a positive decision to visit the market to take part in the craft activities on offer.

As a first attempt to improve the number of people visiting the market this has worked. However, the number of additional people visiting each activity must improve to ensure that the Council gets value for money for these activities.

**Children enjoying a 'Guy making' activity session in March Market:**





## Woolpack Lane Car Park

Essential drainage works to alleviate surface water flooding within Woolpack Lane Car Park has just been completed. The works were required following the collapse of the existing Council surface water sewer in Woolpack Lane which had in part been breached by adjacent tree roots. Works to replace 24 metres of surface water sewer involving the temporary closure of Woolpack Lane commenced on 15 October and was completed in 9 days.

Surface water can now flow freely away from the car park reducing the risk of localised flooding and potential damage to adjacent properties, whilst ensuring that the existing allocated parking spaces remain accessible to all car park users. Having resolved the off site drainage issues, proposals are now being developed to undertake refurbishment of the car park itself.



## March Market Place

In order to promote the number of customers visiting the community market in March, the Council has erected a sign detailing when the markets take place. It is anticipated that more people will attend as a result, ensuring that the markets continue to be vibrant places that support the economy of the town centre.

The new market place sign also has a section available for local community groups to promote upcoming activities. This makes the sign flexible, able to promote more than just the market place and it is expected that this will be used throughout the year.



## SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

### Neale Wade Academy Collapsed Day

The Council delivered a collapsed day for approximately 280 Year 10 (age 14/15 years) students at Neale Wade Academy.

The timetable was suspended for the day, to enable the students to participate in five different interactive sessions intended to raise awareness about the consequences of specific types of behaviour, and take responsibility for their actions.

The sessions were delivered by partners, with the council designing and delivering the e-safety package. Other sessions included teenage parenting, drugs and alcohol, abusive relationships and Sexually Transmitted Infections and contraception.

The students were asked to rate their level of knowledge about the topic prior to the delivery of the session, and then re-visited their answers at the end of the session. All students recorded an improvement in their overall knowledge and awareness.

The Council and partners have been asked to return again in April 2014 to deliver a similar package.

### **'Get Closer' campaign receives national award**

The Council helped design and promote the Police's 'Get Closer' shoplifting campaign to business premises in Wisbech.

This campaign received a national award beating both "Channel 4" and "Southern Comfort" in the "data & planning" category of the Brand Republic Future 5 awards.

The Fenland Community Safety Partnership funded the project with support from various council services to print and promote the product. The campaign helped break down the barriers with the premises which were been targeted by persistent shoplifters to enable this project to be a success.

### **Fenland Community Safety Partnership update 01 Apr 2013 – 30 Sept 2013**

Councillor Oliver chaired the October meeting of the Fenland Community Safety Partnership. Highlights included:

All crime currently down 9.9%	2472 incidents in Fenland against 2743 from Apr - Sept 2012/13
Reduction in violent against a person by 11.4%	429 incidents in Fenland against 484 from Apr - Sept 2012/13
Reduction of shoplifting offences by 8.1%	239 incidents in Fenland against 260 from Apr - Sept 2012/13
Reduction in theft from vehicles 20.6%	135 incidents in Fenland against 170 from Apr - Sept 2012/13
Reduction in ASB against 2012/13 figures	2068 incidents in Fenland against total incidents 4976 2012/13
Public perception of ASB being a problem	2.1% against the 1.5% target set

There has been an increase in the reporting of serious sexual offences across the district. After investigation, it has been found that this is in line with the national trend and is as a direct result of the media coverage towards celebrity trials linked to Operation Yew Tree. This has increased the number of historical reports coming through the system.

There has also been an increase across Fenland in Vehicle taking incidents with an increase of 35% year to date (14 incidents) across the district. This was the result of two known offenders targeting a Fenland town. The two people in question have since been caught and charged. The number of offences has reduced since this spike.

## SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

### Pathway Improvement - West End Park, March

The main path and cycle route running from the George Campbell Leisure Centre to Marylebone Bridge was too narrow, causing cyclists to run off the path onto the grass verge which in winter deteriorated into a muddy mess. The path was also in a poor state of repair with cracks and potholes and needed to be resurfaced along with a number of other paths in the park.

FDC and Cambs County Highways funded a £55,000 project to widen the main path, and improve and resurface other paths in the park.

The works are now complete and have resulted a safer cycle and pedestrian route up to Marylebone Bridge, benefiting the park users and cyclists who use this route between the two sides of March town.



## Open for Business

### OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

#### Fenland Enterprise & Business Awards

This month saw the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Fenland District Council sponsored Fenland Enterprise & Business Awards (FEBA). Two hundred guests attended the evening event held at the Braza Club, March. FDC sponsored two awards. The **Apprentice of the Year Award** was won by Helen Wright from Delamore Ltd and the **Tourism Award** was won by Tydd St Giles Golf Club.

Other winners included:

- **Business Person of the Year** - David Hayes from Fosters Property Maintenance
- **Employer of the Year** - Delamore Ltd
- **Green Award** – CCORN
- **Judges Award** – ALS Ltd

The awards are a showcase for the business community and offer an opportunity for networking.

## **Wisbech Loyalty Card**

The end of October saw the successful launch of the Wisbech Loyalty Card, a partnership delivered scheme from Fenland District Council, Wisbech Town Council and Wisbech Chamber of Commerce. The Loyalty Card scheme entitles shoppers to discounts at the point of purchase from participating store. To date, nearly 30 retailers are on board delivering discounts



including; Bon Marche - 10% discount, Digital Phone Company – 20% of accessories, Fotogenic – Free CD of all photo sessions, Robert Goddard – 10% Of every £50 spend, Trespass – 10% of own branded goods. Over 300 people have now signed up for cards, which can be obtained from the Fenland Citizen office, the Kodak Shop, the Library and Tourist information in Post office Lane.

## **Supporting Local Employees**

The Council has been in dialog with HR Directors from both Del Monte and Greencore over potential redundancies in the companies. Meetings have been held to discuss the offer of our Employee Support Programme, similar to the support offered to Moy Park, which would deliver on-site help from partners such as Jobcentre Plus, The Consultancy Home Counties (TCHC) and the College of West Anglia. Greencore are still in consultation with approximately 30 employees that are potentially at risk.

## **Anglian Water/Business in the Community (BITC) Business Connector project**

The Council are actively supporting the Anglian Water/BITC Business Connector project through input and attendance at their volunteering days to refurbish the Queen Mary Centre. A presentation was given to 80 senior managers to update them on project progress and highlight the issues in Fenland that the project aims to address through linking businesses to community initiatives. The aim of project is to bring back into use the Queen Mary Centre for all community use and activities and will be facilitated and managed by the Ferry Project.

This project is being led by Business in the Community - a senior manager from Anglian Water has been seconded as a 'Business Connector' to the Fenland area for 12 months - to get businesses involved in community projects/initiatives in whatever ways are possible/appropriate.

## **SmartLIFE**

The Council has delivered two events to support the SmartLIFE Retro-fit for Business European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded project. The project aims to support growth in the construction industry by developing new ways to construct and refurbish. Ten businesses engaged in the events to provide knowledge of retrofit options, funding opportunities and information on cost-benefit analysis. This will be followed up later in the month with case studies of retro-fit projects from Fenland businesses.

The project is being led by CCC with two key aims - supporting Small/Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to take advantage of opportunities to expand into the retrofit market, and research into energy-use behaviour of social housing tenants. FDC's key role is to support SME engagement aspect - through Economic Development and Green Business Club functions.

## **Economic and Business Estate**

To promote new tenancy interest, Tinfish Creative has produced a first draft of a new promotional brochure and they have agreed the final amendments to the Fenland Property Website. Their attention now turns towards gathering further information to understand where prospective customers originate from and what would make them choose The Boathouse to base their office. Such information will be gathered via tailored surveys and electronic mail shots and will be used to inform targets marketing of the facilities.

## **Wisbech Yacht Harbour Dredging**

Essential dredging works covering the full extent of the yacht harbour have recently been completed. The works were necessary to ensure the safe passage and mooring of yacht harbour vessels especially during low water periods.

## **OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland**

### **'Discover March' Magazine**

Organisers of 'Discover Whittlesey', a community magazine, have approached the Council with an idea to create a second magazine 'Discover March'. Following a number of supportive meetings with the Council, the first edition of the magazine was printed and distributed to all homes in March and held in a number of prominent places around the town centre.

The magazine is a free monthly publication informing people of local events and local interest news, paid for by advertising space from local businesses. In all editions, the Council's monthly 'What's On' guide (March area only) will be included along with information directing people to visit our website.

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

### **Careers Events**

The Cromwell Community College Careers Event, organised and run by the Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) project, was a great success. Around 1000 students (from Cromwell, surrounding feeder primaries and other secondary schools) visited employers from across the district to learn more about their future options. The event received positive feedback from both employers and students.

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

### **Cambridgeshire Fens Facebook page**

As part of the promotional work for tourism in Fenland, the Council has created a visit Cambridgeshire Fens Facebook page, to help extended and enhanced promotion through other avenues, the most popular being social media. The Visit Cambridgeshire Fens Facebook page is engaging with its visitors to promote Fenlands events and activities, linking back to the Visit Cambridgeshire Fens website.

### **Fenland Tourism Board**

As part of the ongoing work by the Fenland Tourism Board (FTB) to strengthen dialogue with all stakeholders and partner agencies, October saw the publication of the first Bi-monthly News letter. The newsletter will help to better inform intelligence as well as enabling support and guidance to be delivered in a coordinated way. It is also provides an avenue to provide updates on work being delivered, or any news or opportunities that arise.

### **'What's On' in Fenland**

Every month the Council produces a guide to 'What's On' in Fenland. This publication is emailed out to a growing database of contacts, both internal and external to Fenland. It is also now included on [www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org](http://www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org) website, sent out via the new Facebook page, linked to Cambridgeshire.net and included in the new Discover March publication.

The publication is growing over time and more community groups are becoming involved in advertising their events, building a wider scope of events for visitors.

# Quality Organisation

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

### Contact Centre

We are continuing to see increased volumes of phone calls compared to last year. In October, we received 8,223 calls compared to 7,662 last October, an increase of 3%. If this trend continues for the remainder of the year, this will represent an annual 5% increase.

Performance continues to improve as our recovery plan starts to show results. In October, we answered 74% of calls within our service standard of 20 seconds. This was up from 68% in the previous month. For 2013/14 our cumulative performance is now 64%, up from 62% at the end of September. This improvement was a result of:

- Continued use of additional temporary staff,
- Helping long-term sick staff return to work,
- Close monitoring of capacity,
- Colleagues in other teams helping with some overflow calls at peak times.

We aim to ensure that no more than 5% of customers abandon their call to us before it is answered. In October this was down to 6% of calls, a fantastic improvement on September when this figure was 10%.

The great improvement in our performance is expected to continue for the remainder of 2013-14, albeit that we now expect to fall slightly short of the very high performance standards that we have set ourselves and that our customers deserve from us. For 2013-14 as a whole, we now expect performance at the end of March 2014 to be 75% for answering calls within our standard and 7.5% for abandoned calls.

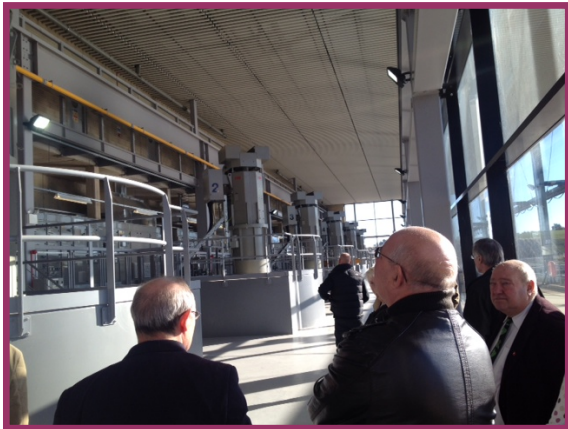
### Chatteris Community Hub

Our Community Hub continues to be well received by our customers since it opened to customers for the first time on 9 August this year. Customers are becoming more familiar with the first self-service payment machine for our 'Fenland @ your service' delivery model in Fenland. By the end of October 1,800 customers had used this facility, paying a total of £166k for services ranging from Council Tax to Caddy Sacks, and Rates to Roddons Rents.



## Overview and Scrutiny

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel visited the St Germans pumping station at Wiggshall on 04 November as a key part of scrutinising Middle Level Commissioners. Fenland District Council pays a financial levy to the Commissioners, both directly for services they provide themselves and indirectly for the services they provide on behalf of other Internal Drainage Boards. As such members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel were keen to establish how the financial levy is spent to ensure transparency, efficiency and value for money. The St Germans pumping station took 4 years and £38 million to construct and prevents flooding of agricultural land and over 22,000 local homes. The new facility opened in 2011 and replaced its 70 year old predecessor as there had been concerns over its reliability. The visit to St Germans was well attended and extremely informative, providing clarity to members about land drainage and greater transparency about financial expenditure



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

### **Council Tax**

Collection rates continue to remain stable. We have now collected 73.5% of the debt due this year.

We continue to robustly cover overdue debts and the trend this year continues to be one of similar or higher numbers of recovery notices being issued compared with a year ago, yet for smaller overdue amounts. This October, we sent out 1,142 reminders for arrears totalling £142k, compared with 1,109 reminders for arrears totalling £189k last October.

For the October Court hearing, we issued 414 summonses for debts totalling £197k compared with 340 summonses for debts totalling £194k at the same point last year.

### **Business Rates**

Collection performance is strong halfway through the financial year. We have now collected 71% of the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) due for this year, just 0.1% less than our target for this point.

### **Streamlining planning processes**

The support team continue to identify new more efficient ways of working. Under the Council's paperless project initiative, any withdrawn invalid planning applications that were previously made into a file are now scanned and saved electronically. A small project team have also successfully implemented statutory consultation responses to be on-line as from 1 December 2013.

### **Paperless Office Project**

A multi-disciplinary project team has been brought together to support the delivery of the project which is intended to manage data more efficiently. This month, 17 champions from each service area have been assisting in an Autumn Clean Week. Their role is to embed behavioural change within their services, cascade messages from the project board and lead on the implementation of campaigns.

This month they have focused on organising the more challenging communal storage areas, which were not addressed in the Spring Clean over the course of a week. Many of these documents were in remote locations with materials owned by a number of teams. Documents in storage are now labelled more clearly, with an owner and date of destruction which improves the data management process.

The next stage of the project will involve Champions helping to develop and shape electronic storage of information to improve the ease of collaboration as access to documents.

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

#### **'Thumbs Up' Ceremony**

Councillor Oliver and Councillor Mrs Mayor were amongst representatives of 41 licensed businesses from across the district who were presented with special certificates demonstrating that they operate to an exceptionally high standard. It was their reward for meeting all the requirements of 'Thumbs Up!', a multi-agency scheme launched last year to promote the responsible management and operation of all businesses licensed to sell alcohol. The scheme is part of a wider strategy to reduce crime and anti social behaviour by setting standards and encouraging best practice. All the relevant authorities are involved including Fenland District Council's licensing and environmental health teams, Trading Standards, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service



#### **Environmental Health visits to Town Councils**

The new Senior Environmental Health Officers have confirmed dates for their round of visits to the Town Councils throughout November and December.

The Officers will be giving a short presentation about their role and asking Town Councillors if they would like to receive information on a monthly basis about their work in the towns.

This new way of working was introduced back in August this year and following recent recruitments, the officers are settling in well to their new work areas.

The dates for attendance at the Town Councils are:

5 November 2013 - Chatteris

11 November 2013 – Wisbech

2 December 2013 - March

11 December 2013 - Whittlesey