

Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

June 2014

Cabinet Members



**Councillor
John Clark**
Leader of the Council



**Councillor
Ralph Butcher**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Mike Cornwell**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Peter Murphy**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
David Oliver**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Chris Seaton**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Will Sutton**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Michelle Tanfield**
Cabinet Member



**Councillor
Fred Yeulett**
Cabinet Member

Communities

C1 Support vulnerable members of our community

Benefits

New claims for May were processed in less than 13 days. Over the year to date, they have been processed in 13.6 days. In Q1 of 2013/14, the national average was 24 days. Fenland processed them in 27 days and, only 33 Councils out of 382 processed claims quicker than 14 days.

Changes in circumstances for May were processed in just over 6 days. Over the year to date, they have been processed in 6.3 days. In Q1 of 2013/14, the national average was 11 days. Fenland processed them in 9 days, and, only 58 Councils out of 382 processed changes quicker than 7 days.

Healthy Homes Service

The Healthy Homes service is administered through Age UK and funded through the Council (£28,400). During the last year, the service has supported 117 vulnerable households in to make their home environment more comfortable and help prevent slip, trips and falls that lead to hospital admissions. This compares to 116 households supported in 2012/13.

An impressive 100% of the households using the service reported improvement in their daily lives as 'better' or 'much better' as a result of the assistance given.

Community House Service Update

We are continuing to work with Youth Service Providers, Norfolk & Waveney Enterprise Services (NWES) and the Cambridgeshire Human Rights and Equality Support Service, who provide weekly services at the Community House.

In addition to this, we have been providing ongoing drop in support for the local community, assisting 65 different people during April and May 2014.

Examples of issues include supporting a group of young people who have moved into their own property, assisting a house bound resident to claim support through the Community Navigator project and we have supported a resident who had been the victim of an online scam.

We are continuing to support volunteering in the area. Following the tidal surge in December 2013, the Community House team has been assisting the Council's Emergency Planning responsibilities in the recruitment of volunteer Flood Wardens within Wisbech.

The two Community House workers have just completed their 'Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector' qualification which means they can formally deliver adult learning using the Community House as a learning environment.

Making Money Count

Big Lottery Fund; Making Money Count (Year 2, month 1)

The Big Lottery Funded Making Money County project continues to prove popular with social housing tenants in Fenland. The £1 million lottery funded project over 5 years 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).

New Horizon bus visits: 12 visits / 44 people engaged

Frontline workers:

Training planned for July onwards. New Essentials and Advanced budgeting modules are under development

New Horizon visits: total 26

Now offering one to one home visits to all new tenancies. Wisbech drop in providing follow on support to an average of 4 residents per week of which 80% are Eastern European residents

Laptop learners: 15 completed / 18 in training

Increased focus on accessing financial services on line for Year 2. There are some issues re broadband usage levels which need following up.

Money Mates: Total 21 recruited with 5 currently active on a weekly basis

Drop in on Thursday evening has fluctuating numbers ranging up to 8 per sessions. Very good feedback has been received so far and full resourcing costs are being calculated.

Project impact – End of Year 1 – Project 'reach'

In the first year, the project delivered over 1500 direct interventions. It reached at least 300 social housing tenants alongside a further 400 people, frontline workers and members of the public through our outreach activities.

FDC's managed Gypsy and Traveller sites

An ongoing schedule of planned maintenance work is taking place across the five sites managed by the Council. To date, 3 of the 5 sites (30 pitches) have seen improvements made to the pitch amenity blocks. Previously works have been done on an ad hoc basis and it is envisaged that undertaking proactive work will create a consistent offer to tenants and generate savings as responsive

remedial works will reduce. All works have been funded from rental income from the sites.

Housing Options data

The Council made 150 decisions on homeless applications during 2013/14 compared to 129 the previous year. The increase was mainly down to parents or other relatives no longer willing to accommodate and loss of private rented accommodation. The council accepted a duty to house 95 families in 2013/14 compared to the previous year which was 76 families.

Rural Capital Grants

The Emmanuel Church in Parson Drove has now used their rural capital grants funding of £21,250. The funding helped to ensure that the church had a usable community space with the addition of some moveable pews, a new sound and cinema system and a hearing loop.

C2 Support our ageing population and young people

Golden Age

The Golden Age team held an event at Gorefield village hall in May and the highlights were as follows:

- 61 people in total attended the event.
- The Fenland Ferret saw two people equating to a potential entitlement of £3,432.98 being identified.
- The New Vision Fitness stand supported 34 people with blood pressure checks and there were 12 health checks undertaken through MyTime Active.
- There were 5 referrals for energy assessments through Age UK Cambs and the Fire Service exchanged 8 electric blankets.

The Golden Age Fairs continue to provide help and guidance to those aged over 60 in their own towns or villages.

C3 Promote health and wellbeing

Focus on increasing the number of Leisure memberships

The outreach sales project is running for the months of May, June and July and is targeting local businesses and specific sections of the community. So far the project has visited 9 employers in the district generating 37 potential new members to visit one of the 4 centres. To highlight the value of this work; if 20 people were to take out a 6 month committed Anytime membership, the additional income would be over £4,000.

These visits include Tesco in March, Sainsbury's in March, Frankie and Benny's, B&Q, Morrisons and the Luxe cinema in Wisbech.

Over the next month the project will be targeting those segments from the Wisbech area who will have received our direct mailed marketing, and we will be visiting over 300 homes from the first mail out as a follow up.

They will also be an attendance at several community events ranging from the March Summer Festival to the Chatteris Mid-Summer Festival as well as continuing to target our corporate customer's. In addition, future visits are booked with Greencore and Alderman Jacobs School.



Selling our clubs in G's Factory, Wisbech

Promoting New Vision Fitness effectively

A marketing schedule has been produced to promote New Vision Fitness to a wide range of audiences. Thought has been given to the type of marketing that specific sections of the community are receptive to and the target market for the service. The specific demographics being targeted are:

- Middle aged male and female, middle income professionals, with older children who are health conscious.
- Older, independent minded, better off, early retirees who can access the leisure centres during the day and are health conscious.

Targeted membership promotional literature has been sent out to over 300 addresses in the Wisbech area, with another 1,200 being sent in early June and a

further 1,000 planned for late June. Each tranche of materials are targeting different people.

This specific literature above is aimed at encouraging the early retirees and the professional 55 – 65 year olds market segment to join our Daytime membership scheme. These designs are being sent to where predominant target groups live, as well as emailed to those ex members on the leisure database.

Mailings will be followed up by a sales outreach officer who will be in the community offering advice on healthy lifestyles and promoting the business to generate membership tours at our 4 fitness clubs.

Newspaper marketing was also been used during May as part of a programme of adverts to raise awareness of the facilities we offer, focussing on the Full Club Package which is available.

GET THE FULL CLUB PACKAGE
@ New Vision Fitness

JOIN NOW **4 FREE**
Personal Training Sessions

1 Membership – 4 Clubs
Change the way you workout

- ★ The very latest in cardio and resistance equipment
- ★ Functional training zones
- ★ FREE Full Health MOT
- ★ FREE Personal exercise programmes
- ★ UNLIMITED access to our pools, sports facilities, Health Suites and over 80 fitness classes every week
- ★ Clubs in Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech

www.newvisionfitness.co.uk Tel: 01354 622399

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Keep your health and stay active

NEW Daytime Memberships

9.30am - 4.30pm weekdays & all weekend
Use of Swimming Pool, Gym & Dance Classes*

from just **£23.50** per month

New Vision - Hudson Centre
Harecroft Road,
Wisbech, PE13 1RL
E: info@newvisionfitness.co.uk
T: 01354 622399

follow us @ newfitness like us @ New Vision Fitness

*excludes premium classes

Customer satisfaction summary for Leisure

Customer satisfaction with the service is measured by asking customers to rate their experience between 0 and 10. Those scoring between 7 and 10 are classified as satisfied, while 0 to 6 are dissatisfied with the service and receive a phone call to discuss their concerns, with the service improving where possible to improve this rating when they are asked again.

April and May has seen 183 surveys returned with a satisfaction percentage of 80%. Customer feedback in this period included cool pool water at Hudson Centre (now resolved) and changes to our membership packages that took place in April.

A further feedback channel has been set up through the New Vision Facebook page, with customers that “like” the page invited to follow a link to complete the a feedback survey and leave a narrative comment about their experience. The information will be added to our other survey channels to ensure that we are capturing as much feedback on the service as possible to improve customer experience in the future

Leisure Visits and Memberships

Throughout the first two months of the financial year, 139,254 paid leisure centre visits have been recorded. The visits logged for each centre during April / May are shown below:

	Apr	May
Monthly target	45625	51250
Chatteris	4880	4877
March	14771	15247
Wisbech	29738	29756
Whittlesey	26526	26101
Total all centres	75915	75981

Total membership base is currently 2791 Direct Debit Gym members across the 4 clubs. This is showing a growth of 78 memberships in the year to date.

Currently daytime memberships make up 14% of this total representing 391 daytime memberships across the clubs.

	Apr	May
Target no of DD members	2710	2713
Actual no of 12mth DD members	1006	1278
Actual no of 6mth DD members	933	934
Actual no of non-committed DD members	774	579
Total Daytime members	306	391
Total Anytime members	2407	2400
Total Actual DD members	2713	2791

Whilst a modest growth in the membership base has been seen across the clubs, the service is facing increased competition in Wisbech which has reduced some sales and increased the drop-out rate at the Hudson centre.

Work Healthy Fenland

This project aims to tackle vulnerable and high risk groups in our working communities by taking health checks and health advice directly to the workplace, often at workplaces where staff will not be registered with a doctor's surgery or health clinic.

An event was delivered at Prince's Foods in Wisbech in May and involved partners from Camquit, MyTime Active, Work Healthy (NHS Cambridgeshire) and Boots Pharmacy.

The event offered workers at the factory healthy lifestyle advice and information as well as mini health checks including blood pressure, carbon monoxide levels and weight checks. Princes Foods were very pleased with the event and the uptake by its staff.



On the day:

- 41 Health MOTs were carried out - weight & blood pressure monitoring as well as advice and information
- 10 referrals were made to the Health Trainer service for follow on 121 sessions
- Boots Pharmacy did screening questionnaires of those in the 40 -75 year age groups and out of these 16 full health checks were carried out.
- Camquit were present offering CO monitoring and advice on stop smoking services and aids.

The Work Healthy Fenland Partnership is working on further events and is in discussion with Wincanton and Elgoods with a view to holding events with them in July and September.

Environment

ENV1 Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

Refuse and Recycling Vehicle Fleet

In line with the Council's Vehicle Replacement Plan, this month saw the arrival of 2 new refuse collection vehicles. The vehicles are equipped with the most up to date features, including new Euro 6 engines for improved fuel efficiency and cleaner emissions.

A key feature of these vehicles is the inclusion of electric bin lifts. These lifts were chosen following positive results from a trial set introduced to the fleet 6 months ago. Early figures show that anticipated fuel savings are £3,000 per vehicle per year.

Importantly, the electric lifts also have a much quieter operation creating an improved working environment for collection staff and a reduced noise impact on customers.

The vehicles are also fitted with modern compaction systems designed to change the loading characteristics when collecting different types of materials. This system ensures the payload for a given material is maximised and supports the design of efficient collection rounds.

These new vehicles form a key part of the rolling vehicle replacement plan designed to ensure the refuse and recycling service has efficient and effective equipment.



Cleansing Service Update

Results of customer satisfaction responses to surveys sent out for the second 6 months of the last financial year show how valued the Cleansing Service continues to be. Praise for the commitment of the team continues to be high.

The public expressed a clear opinion when giving their feedback and from the 23 people responding, of the 150 asked for feedback, expressed that they were satisfied with the service. Of these 91% (21/23) considered the service to be either good or very good.

Some things that our customers said about the Cleansing Service were:

- The service received is regular, reliable and most satisfactory.
- Excellent operatives, very polite.

The feedback also contained a small number of local issues, relating to litter or dog fouling in specific locations. Such feedback is responded to and used to develop future service design.

In addition, there were 14,005 visits made to Fenland's Public Conveniences between October 2013 and March 2014. During this period 1 complaint was received about the service and this was responded to within 10 days.

Recap Partnership Update

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (Recap) continues to work through the 7 agreed priority work streams as part of the Advanced Partnership Working plan. Some work streams are nearing completion and are ready to deliver results for the authorities involved.

A key work stream is the procurement of a pan-county contract for the bulking, shipping and sorting for blue bin recycling waste, which has recently been agreed by all parties following a large scale tender process.

Amey-Cespa has been identified as the preferred bidder through this process and awarded the new contract which will start in November 2014.

Progress continues on the development of an Optimum Service Design for Cambridgeshire and reports have been received by the Recap Board and Joint Leaders and Chief Executive Officers Group.

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire are developing plans and agreements as part of their work to share a depot and in future share services with regards to waste and recycling.

Finally, a joint approach to vehicle procurement has also been developed and is allowing the authorities involved to purchase vehicles through an agreed framework at competitive rates.

Base Team Health & Wellbeing Sessions

Working in partnership with the local Mytime Active team and Camquit, a series of Staff Wellbeing events have been held at the Base.

The events provided by the local Mytime Active team and 'Camquit' have incorporated successful health awareness, health checks and education for frontline staff on, '**Healthy Living**' in December, '**Smoking Cessation**' in April and '**Alcohol Awareness**' in May.

The events were well received with lots of engagement and participation resulting in some of the team accessing the services offered or requesting follow ups.



This program builds on previous events on Saturdays and is designed to deliver relevant health and wellbeing topics in a relaxed environment. The aim is to provide advice and support in a way that is tailored and creates an atmosphere that encourages attendees to improve their everyday health and wellbeing.

ENV2 Work with partners and the community on projects to improve the environment and our streetscene

Action on Energy – Green Deal work

The first external wall insulation was completed recently in Fenland as part of the county wide Action on Energy scheme.

External wall insulation can help residents save up to a third on heating bills every year. The local authority endorsed scheme, which launched in November, provided a proportion of grant funding to make the insulation affordable.

Action on Energy has secured a further £2 million pounds which will be used to ramp up marketing this summer towards promoting home energy improvement measures to private sector landlords.

Reducing fuel bills for low income households helps the Council to meet its commitment to supporting vulnerable residents in the long term.

Car Park Refurbishment Works -Woolpack Lane, Whittlesey

Refurbishment works to Woolpack Lane Car Park have recently been completed. The car park was in very poor condition, poorly lit and suffered with poor drainage, often flooding. The contract works commenced on 24 March and were completed on 15 May 2014.

The refurbished facility now boasts new LED energy efficient street lights, motorcycling parking, improved drainage and a designated recycling area along with disabled parking provision.





Parkinson's Lane Car Park

In conjunction with the Woolpack Lane works, improvements have also been undertaken in the adjacent Parkinson's Lane Car Park in Whittlesey. This car park was in urgent need of repairs and combining with the Woolpack Lane scheme allowed these works to be completed taking advantage of the cost benefits this opportunity offered. The car park was closed for a few days whilst the car park was resurfaced and white lined formalising the parking bays the car park now provides.



Bus shelter refresh in Chatteris

The FDC owned Bus Shelter on East Park Street in Chatteris has recently been refreshed with a World War One theme in advance of this year's Chatteris In Bloom judging.

The former Sunflower theme that was painted in 2011 by the Chatteris In Bloom and Street Pride groups had suffered some graffiti defacing and had some areas of paint flaking off.

The new WW1 theme was designed and undertaken by the Royal British Legion Youth Group with support from the Chatteris in Bloom and Street Pride Groups. The various permissions and material costs were provided by the FDC Assets and Projects Team.



Renaissance

The Renaissance Team considered and approved 7 grant applications within the last month. A shopfront grant was approved for a replacement shopfront to the former 'Fashion Wheel' premises 31 High Street March.

Grants were awarded to Elm Church Hall and Elm Engine House, both buildings at risk, towards the cost of completing much needed external repairs to

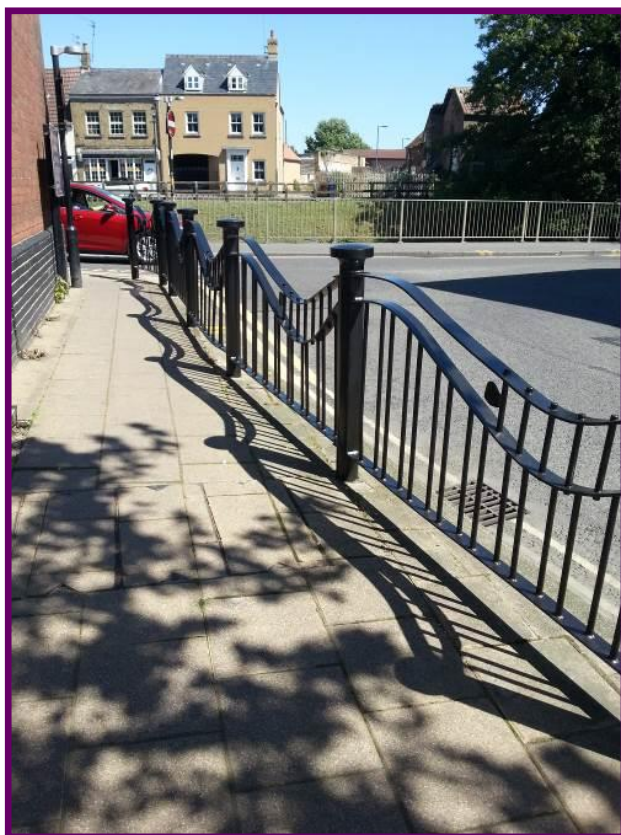
brickwork, the roof and windows. A grant offer was approved for comprehensive window and facade refurbishment to 9 South Brink, Wisbech.

Grants were also approved for the external refurbishment of No's 21-25 Hill Street, Wisbech. In this case, the grants will assist the owner in upgrading the condition of the buildings ready for new tenants.

Grant aided repair works to the former Minstrelz Nightclub, High Street March and Bank House, West End March are scheduled to commence in early July.

Street Furniture Maintenance

Routine repairs and maintenance works, including the painting of various FDC owned street furniture, has recently been undertaken within the town centre of March, including the Market Place, Broad Street and High Street.



The repairs and maintenance works on the Market Place were undertaken by one of FDC's term maintenance contractors, whilst the street furniture painting on Broad Street and High Street was undertaken in partnership with the Community Payback and Street Pride Groups.

Having successfully co-ordinated and utilised the available Community Payback resources it is hoped that further works of a similar nature can be undertaken to FDC owned highway assets at various sites within the remaining district town centres.

Crab Marsh Boat Yard – Concrete Slab Replacement 2014

In 2007, the Crab Marsh Boat Yard Design and Build project was undertaken. by BAM Nuttal (BM). Unfortunately the concrete slab serving the travel hoist, which lifts craft from the river for maintenance, demonstrated signs of significant failure. To this effect and with much negotiation, BM returned to site and replaced the concrete slab in April /May 2014; at no additional expense to the Council.

It was agreed that the slab would now be reinforced, increased in size to better accommodate the Travel Hoist turning movements and also re-profiles along with the site gradients to improve the drainage from the original 2007 design.

The Slab was commissioned and Boat Yard re-opened for use on 12 May 2014.



Fenland Dilapidated Buildings

Three key dilapidated properties are concentrated in Wisbech. Constantine House has had an enforcement notice served by the Council to refurbish. Regular contact with the owner has resulted in an indication of a start date on site of early August 2014, aligned with a local road closure that is being coordinated with other utility works in the area.

Nos 11/12 and 24 High Street in Wisbech are included in the bid proposals for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) which are under development. Successful consultation events have recently been held to engage with the community, which attracted 400 local people who were very supportive of the proposal. The deadline for the application is 31 August 2014.

Letters, along with pledges of support, are being prepared. Currently, FDC is committing a total of £230,000 and Wisbech Society has kindly pledged £25,000. CCC, Wisbech Town Council, the local MP along with several local groups have also been approached for support.

Green Flag judging

Green Flag judging is carried out annually. Last year's mystery visit for Wisbech Park was judged during February this year, and the judges commented that the park was clean and well used, but was starting to require plans to improve some assets in the medium term.

This year's judging for Wisbech Park took place the first week in June and two judges from Kings Lynn and West Norfolk visited the park. The report will be received in August.

St. Peters Church Gardens will be mystery judged later this year and the results will be notified to us during July.



Beautiful blooms in St. Peters Church Gardens, Spring 2014

An improved standard to grass cutting in key locations

To improve the aesthetics and usability of high profile sites within Fenland, the Council has arranged additional cuts in June, July and August of a number of key sites in the Towns.

One of these areas is The Garden of Rest in Whittlesey. Within the high walls the warm micro-climate encourages the grass to grow longer than elsewhere. To combat this and to reduce the amount of cut grass sitting on top of the turf TLG (the Council's grounds maintenance contractors) will carry out an additional three cuts.



Straw Bear and St. Peter's Church Whittlesey

The Whittlesey In Bloom Group has recently approved the final design for the interpretation board in The Garden of Rest (Straw Bear Garden). The interpretation board gives details of the history of the garden and its former life as part of the church's burial area. Additionally, there is information on the Straw Bear Festival held in Whittlesey each year.

The Garden of Rest



The Garden of Rest was once an extension of St. Mary's Churchyard, which was separated from the church by a road that once ran between the George Hotel and the former Post Office. It was proposed to straighten this road in 1849. This resulted in the purchase of the Eastern end of the George Hotel from Mr. Whyte for £50 and was subsequently demolished. The Churchwardens of St. Mary's Church also agreed to sell for £3 a portion of the new cemetery for the same purpose.

Additionally, some of the Lord of the Manor's land was also required, which Mr. Childers provided on condition they built a brick wall on his new boundary. Mr. Sharman erected this wall at a cost of £32. This is the rear wall to the Garden that we see today. The new road became Station Road due to the construction of the railway further down the road, three years earlier. This new churchyard, along with the other churchyards, closed in 1877.



In Whittlesea, from when no one quite knows, it was the custom on the Tuesday following Plough Monday (the 1st Monday after Twelfth Night) to dress one of the confraternity of the plough in straw and call him a 'Straw Bear'.

A newspaper of 1882 reports that "... he was then taken around the town to entertain by his frantic and clumsy gestures the good folk who had on the previous day subscribed to the rustics, a spread of beer, tobacco and beef".

The bear was described as having great lengths of tightly twisted straw bands prepared and wound up the arms, legs and body of the man or boy. Two sticks fastened to his shoulders met a point over his head and the straw wound round upon them to form a cone above the "Bear's" head. The face was quite covered and he could hardly see. A tail was provided and a strong chain fastened around the armpits.

The tradition fell into decline at the end of the 19th century, the last sighting being in 1909 as it appears that an over-zealous police inspector had forbidden 'Straw Bears' as a form of cadging.

The custom was revived in 1980 by the Whittlesea Society, and for the first time in seventy years a 'Straw Bear' was seen on the streets accompanied by his attendant keeper, musicians and dancers, about 30 in all. Various public houses are visited around the town as convenient places for the 'Bear' and dancers to perform in front of an audience - with much needed refreshment available! The tradition continues.



© Whittlesey Museum

During the 1960's the now redundant burial ground was designated into a Garden of Rest and the remaining gravestones moved to the perimeter walls. The centre piece of the garden was a brick built shelter with thatched roof and seating on all four sides. This was surrounded by paths and flower beds. Vandals set alight the thatched roof and the remains of the shelter were reduced to the brick walls supporting the seating. When these walls were also vandalised the decision was made to remove the remains of the structure altogether and to brick up the opening into Scaldgate, restricting access only from Station Road.

More recently a larger than life sculpture in metal was installed of the Straw Bear and erected as a focal point. The sculpture you now see is the second one after the first was stolen whilst being treated before erection.

The Rose Garden that now surrounds the sculpture was designed in 2012 with a Royal theme to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee.



© Chris Brudenell Photography

The garden's centre piece is a metal sculpture of the Straw Bear and this history will give greater clarity to the sculpture's presence. The board has been funded from a third party member of the Bloom Committee. Installation will be taking place before judging of this year's In Bloom competition on 23 July.

Open Spaces customer feedback

The community has been asked how they rate our parks, play areas and green spaces. The public were asked to rate out of 10 the following question.

'Overall, how satisfied are you with your local parks, play parks and green spaces?'

A rating of 7 or higher is classified as being satisfied and the results received gave us the following figures, exceeding our target.

	Apr	May	Jun
Target score	80%		
Actual score	88%		
No. of people asked	25		
No. returns	25		
No. satisfied customers	22		

Prosecutions littering offences

During May 2014, two prosecution cases were taken to Kings Lynn Magistrates Court for non-payment of fixed penalty notices. The notices had been served in the town centre of Wisbech for dropped cigarette ends.

Following reminder letters for non-payment of the fine, these cases were referred as routine for prosecution by legal services.

Both cases were successfully prosecuted and fined £75 plus £100 in costs. Enforcement patrols continue each month on a programmed basis.

March Market

During May 2014, two 'love your market' events took place to raise awareness of local produce and encourage more footfall within our town markets.

On 26 May, local produce was used to make 140 cookies which were distributed to shoppers bringing in more people to the market who stayed for longer engaging in the activities.

On Saturday 28 May, the focus was on cheese and chutney, again locally purchased, which attracted many interested shoppers.



March Town Summer Planting – local business partnership

Last month saw volunteers from March Street Pride put their in bloom hats on again and plant up troughs, hanging baskets and 3 tier planters with summer bedding.



On the planting day, the group were joined by Council officers and business energy consultancy, CUB (UK) Ltd, at Delfland Nursery to plant a variety of flowers such as petunias and lobelias. The troughs, 3 tier planters and hanging baskets were then put back out into the town centre on 23 May, after a few weeks of being left to establish.

CUB were keen to get involved and work alongside March Street Pride to develop links with the local community and help the group with their Anglia in Bloom entry.

The Council is committed to enabling communities to increase pride in their community by enhancing the appearance of villages and towns.

ENV3 Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion

Fenland Business Against Crime schemes

The Council has continued to support and assist the Fenland Business Against Crime schemes, which includes local ShopWatch, PubWatch and the newly established TaxiWatch schemes which run across all the four market towns. By working in partnership, those involved can help to reduce crime and promote local business areas as a safe and enjoyable area to visit.

The Council continues to provide crime prevention advice at the local scheme meetings and manages SIRCS (Secure Incident Reporting and Community engagement) information sharing system. They support local partners and help businesses to work closer together to improve communication and to ensure information and intelligence remains protected and secure.

The membership for SIRCS continues to grow and the system has over 190 business members and partners on the system to date, who support information sharing on offenders, incidents and other relevant matters. This has assisted the Fenland Community Safety Partnership in helping to reduce crime, such as shoplifting, which saw a 19.7 % reduction (106 incidents in 2013/14) clearly highlighting that closer working between businesses and partners with the use of information sharing systems is effective at reducing crime.

Another successful year by CCTV services

The Council's CCTV service responded to 2,684 incidents during 2013/14, which led to 604 positive outcomes. This includes arrests, fixed penalty notices, formal cannabis warnings and notices to leave an area or warnings for anti social vehicle use. This has helped support the local constabulary and the Fenland Community Safety partnership in reducing crime and responding to local need.

The local constabulary continues to make full use of the system on a daily basis and has looked to recorded CCTV data to investigate and review 585 offences. This has led to 303 evidential exhibits being provided to support criminal prosecutions.

The Council continues to adopt a pro-active approach to CCTV monitoring which is why the above high levels of achievements has been maintained and continued forward. The Council continue to ensure all camera zones are regularly monitored and this is clearly evident through the 6,328 patrols that were completed during 2013/14. This approach helps to ensure early detection and intervention is made on community concerns and crime related incidents.

Economy

EC1 Attract new businesses and jobs and support existing businesses in Fenland

Economic and Business Premises Estate

The overall estate occupancy is 76.4%, compared with the target of 80%, although letting activity for the Light Industrial Units remains buoyant.

Conference income at both business centres remains strong with a combined income in June of £18,000, which is £8,000 more than at the same time last year. Indeed at South Fens Business Centre the conference income was £9,500 and is the highest May income since the centre opened.

In The Boathouse, Wisbech the Mac Cotterell Gallery housed a display arranged for the Wisbech Arts Festival.

Letting enquiries for the Business Centre Office suites remain constant with 3 new lettings having been agreed at The Boathouse. Occupation of those suites is expected within the next month.

Anaerobic Digester Plant, Chatteris

Planning Committee resolved to grant planning permission for a large scale anaerobic digester plant on 28 May 2014 (subject to the completion of a legal agreement relating to landscaping).

Considerable negotiations took place to address concerns raised by local communities about potential harmful impacts and to address the Planning Committee's previous refusal relating to landscape, scale and visual impacts.

The flag ship plant represents a £25 million investment in Fenland and will be one of the biggest anaerobic digester plants in the country. The plant will produce gas by means of anaerobic digestion and will have significant benefits for renewable energy producing 4Mw of gas energy per hour.

EC2 Raise aspirations and improve learning opportunities

'Team' Programme

FDC has worked closely with the Princes Trust to support their first ever 'Team' programme to be run in Fenland. This initiative is for young people (under 30) who are not in education, employment or training and who face various barriers to moving into work. Members of the team have supported the Princes Trust to

identify young people to be involved in this course (15 in total) and have supported various sessions so far. The course started on 19 May and involves a range of activities to help young people develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, including a community project, work placements and sessions on personal skills and employability skills. FDC has arranged to be involved in supporting the community project (identifying a project/sourcing funding), supporting the group in finding work placements and running employability skills sessions.

Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) Project

The FEE project hosted the Employability Skills event for the second year running, with the event doubling in size from last year and receiving very positive feedback. A total of 110 students from each of the Fenland secondary schools (years 9 and 10) were involved in the event, held over 2 days at the Boathouse. The event supported the students in learning how to present themselves and demonstrate their skills to employers, as well as put together a CV and personal statement.

A total of 15 business representatives from eight companies supported this event, working with groups of students to facilitate the activities. A total of 75% of the students went away from the event with their first CV and 85% said they were now more confident about applying for jobs in the future. Over 90% said they felt they learned things which would be useful for their future. Satisfaction among the business representatives and teaching staff was also very high, with all saying the day was enjoyable, useful and they would attend again. A headmaster from one of the schools involved wrote to FDC after the event to express his gratitude and note that it was an excellent day for all the pupils. He noted that one student with particular special needs had felt confident enough to stand up and present his CV to all the attendees, which was hugely surprising and positive for his teachers to see.

Stainless Metalcraft

Cllr Clarke and Cllr Yeulett attended the announcement of Stainless Metalcraft (Chatteris) £1 million nuclear supply chain programme which will see development of high end engineering products delivered to the nuclear industry. The funding, from the Civil Nuclear Sharing in Growth Programme (CNSIG), will also help it improve its training programme for its current 170 employees and support future employment opportunities to a possible 400. The Council will be supporting this growth through various programmes including Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) and working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership. This builds on the Council's support for the Engineering Skills Centre which is also based at the Stainless Metalcraft site.

Apprenticeship Schemes

FDC has brokered a relationship between Delamore and EDGE apprenticeships. EDGE (educate, develop, grow, employ) works with employers to source and support agricultural apprentices, and they are now working with Delamore to produce a range of materials (brochures, promotional videos and other marketing material) to provide information and advice on horticultural careers and apprenticeships. Delamore will use this at a FEE careers event in June and at various other events across the region. Delamore also plan to work with EDGE to train some of their staff to become 'ambassadors', which will see them going to schools and other events, working with children to inspire and educate them about agricultural careers. This work compliments the FDC and LEP backed skills centre based at the Delamore site.

EC3 Promote Fenland as a tourism and visitor destination

Fenland Tourism Board (FTB) Update

The Council produces an Annual Visitor and Accommodation Guide to encourage visitors into the District. The Distribution figures for 2014 from the distribution agency show that 8297 copies have been distributed up to the end of May 2014 compared to 6022 at the same time in 2013.

The FTB worked with the Middle Level Waterways Commissioners to distribute copies of the Annual visitor guide to all holiday makers entering the middle level waterways system via boat. Initially 400 copies have been provided to Middle Level Waterways Commissioners.

EC4 Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland

Nene Waterfront Regeneration

The purchasers of the former Gas Works site (Lot 3) have undertaken further ground investigation works in connection with their proposed development of 70 new homes. Officers have been engaged in providing site investigation reports and information to the purchaser and their contractors to support this work, which will enable the purchaser to better plan the development and delivery of the site.

It is expected that the terms of the transfer will be concluded by the end of July, with designs to be finalised and a formal Planning Application likely to be submitted thereafter. Interest continues in relation to the other key vacant sites.

Community Rail Partnership

The Hereward Community Rail Partnership (CRP) is now being recognised nationally by other Community Rail Partnerships across England, Scotland and Wales. This recognition relates to the work for the new Manea Train Service and the increase in passenger numbers of 212% in fewer than 3 months. Discussion at a recent CRP training event in London, demonstrated that many long term established CRPs were very impressed with our work. This recognition is important locally and nationally to demonstrate the value of CRPs and to secure future funding for such projects from Government and the Rail Industry.

Key Growth Sites

An initial meeting has been held between the local authorities, land owners and agents to discuss the Local Plan broad location for growth in South Wisbech. This meeting established a commitment from everyone involved to work together to develop the site. There are a number of technical issues relating to transport, access and drainage that will need to be addressed. The delivery of a large site in the Local Plan being taking forward in this manner is consistent with the new policy LP7 – Urban Extensions. A meeting took place in June 2014 to review all the technical evidence available to date and to establish the additional information that will be needed.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Work has commenced on the possibility of CIL in Fenland with initial viability work progressing. The Developer Forum is currently being consulted on its member views. This will result in a preliminary draft charging schedule being considered by members in the autumn, followed by formal consultation and examination in public. The anticipated timing for adoption (if appropriate) is summer 2015. A detailed briefing note has been recently sent to all members.

Building Control

During the first 2 months of this new financial year, Building Control received 152 applications which is a 56% increase on the same period last year. This has resulted in Plan & Inspection fees of approximately £54,000 which is an increase of 21% over fees for the same 2 months last year. Despite this large increase in applications, the team still maintained their 'share' of work against Approved Inspectors at over 91%.

Quality Organisation

Customer Services Contact Centre

The Contact Centre performance targets have been re-profiled to take into account peak times and to allow for the fact that the first 6 months of the year are generally busier than the final 6 months of the year. In May, our performance improved and the percentage of calls answered in 20 seconds finished above our target at 58.15%. The percentage of calls answered target was also met finishing at 82.6%.

Business Rates

We have now collected 21.67% (which equates to £5,236,732) of the NNDR due for this year, 0.67% more than our target for this point.

Council Tax

Council tax collection rates are at 27.40%, down by 0.60%. In May we issued 1680 Summonses to the value of £1,075,645.91, slightly less than this time last year (1726, £1,105,516.54) and so far we have issued 6154 reminders. For April and May, 6154 (£515,833) reminders were issued as opposed to 6759 (£521,960) for the same period in April/May last year.

The slight fall is as a result of the increased number of customers who have been given weekly, fortnightly and 12 monthly payment options as this spreads the amount collected over the whole year. The size of the fall in collection is an encouraging start to the year following the further change in Council Tax Support (CTS) that took effect from 1 April 2014. Last year, we reduced CTS by 8.5% and increased the percentage cut this financial year to 14%.

Health and Safety

The Annual Health and Safety Report for 2013/14 has been produced which contains detailed information on the Council's performance, including accident stats, training, progress against each target in the action plan. This enables us to monitor our performance against previous year's reports.

The Wisbech Tidal Surge Report has also been completed, and reviews the surge of December 2013. It contains various recommendations across a number of agencies. The project is being highlighted as a 'best practice' multi-agency approach to working together to address a known hazard or risk within the district.

Roman Bank Ward of Fenland District Council – By Election

On the 8 May 2014, the Council successfully delivered the Roman Bank Ward of Fenland District Council by election. The election was called following the resignation of Cllr Philip Hatton.

The Roman Bank Ward of Fenland had an eligible electorate of 5,344 of which 906 were issued with postal votes. The overall voter turnout was 29.7% and Samantha Clark of the Conservative Party was elected.

Fenland Local Counting area of the Eastern Region of the European Parliamentary Election

On the 22 May 2014 the Council successfully delivered the European Parliamentary election in the Fenland counting area. The election was for 7 Members to represent the Eastern Region in the European Parliament. Fenland were one of 40 Councils in this region with Chelmsford acting as the Regional Returning Officer.

Nearly 5000 European electors opted in to vote in this area when provided with the forms to enable them to do so. European electors have to opt in as they may also be eligible to vote in their home country. The total eligible electorate for our local counting area was 69,659 of which 10,904 were issued with postal votes. The turnout was 33.3% locally with UKIP receiving the largest number of votes, followed by the Conservative Party and then the Labour Party.

The turnout across the whole of the Eastern Region was 35.3%. UKIP received the largest number of votes overall resulting in them winning 3 seats in the European Parliament, followed by the Conservative Party also winning 3 seats and the Labour Party winning 1 seat.

Licensing update

An internal audit of the administration of the new Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, confirmed that the Council's systems and processes set up to adhere to this act was in accordance with good governance.

In May, a review of the Chilli Hut takeaway premises licence was undertaken. The licensing panel heard evidence of drug supply and misuse at the premises, corroborated by the Police and by admission of both the licence holder and written statement by his solicitor. Licensing panel determined that the licensing objectives had been contravened, namely the prevention of crime and disorder and public safety. The licence was suspended for 14 days starting after the 21 day appeal process.

Outturn

Cabinet approved and noted the Council's end of year position for 2013/14 with a small underspend of £93k. This is on the back of delivering the savings required

in 2013/14 and is credit to officer's financial management approach with direction from Cabinet.