

# **Cabinet and Corporate Management Team**

## **Portfolio Holder Briefing Report**

**August 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  
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**Councillor  
Will Sutton**  
Cabinet Member



**Councillor  
Michelle Tanfield**  
Cabinet Member



**Councillor  
Fred Yeulett**  
Cabinet Member

# Communities

## C1 Support vulnerable members of our community

### Homeless Applications

The Council has a statutory duty to take a homeless application if it believes a person is eligible, in priority need and threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Since April 2014, the Council has taken 55 applications and accepted a duty to house 20 families, compared to the same time period in 2013 when the figures were 54 applications and 28 accepted as owed a housing duty.

### Rough Sleepers

The Council, along with other partner agencies (Police, Immigration Enforcement and Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI) Outreach workers ), go out early in the morning regularly to see if there are any people sleeping rough. If people are found they are given helpful information on how to find suitable accommodation. If they are from other countries they are given the opportunity to be reconnected to their country of origin. If they wish to stay in Fenland but have no work or are not claiming any form of benefit they are given support to solve these problems.

Since April 2014, 4 multi-agency inspections have taken place in areas where intelligence has said rough sleepers are present. 1 rough sleeper has been found and supported by the Outreach worker to return to his country of origin.

The Eastern European Outreach workers are currently working with 22 cases in Wisbech. They give support to find work, claim benefits, find accommodation and assist with reconnections if people wish to return home. CRI are funded from the Communities and Local Government grant Homeless Transition Fund and their time is spent working in Fenland and Cambridge City.

### Grants to Infrastructure Organisations - Rural Cambridgeshire Citizen's Advice Bureau

The Rural Cambridgeshire Citizen's Advice Bureau recorded 878 unique clients between April and June 2014. Although the figure is lower than at the same time last year this has been due to returning clients.

The three top tier problems in Fenland at present are; benefits, debt and relationships. The organisation has seen 50 outreach clients in the market towns of Fenland. There were 237 people access the CAB specifically with council tax/housing related issues. Out of these 32 people requested food bank vouchers and the demand trend for this service will be monitored moving forward now food banks are available in Fenland.

6 new volunteers have been recruited in roles such as public affairs, health and safety, and as gateway assessors (which is the CAB's assessment process).

### **Development of a new Extra Care scheme in Whittlesey**

Axiom Housing have received notification from Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) that they have been awarded an allocation of £2.4 million from HCA to deliver a 60 unit extra care scheme in Whittlesey.

FDC's role in the feasibility to achieve a successful bid included:

- Worked across the county to deliver an Extra Care County wide strategy which highlighted Whittlesey as a high need area
- Worked as a multi-agency partnership, Axiom, CCC, FDC, Borderline and Peterborough Local Commissioning Group and Developer to develop a feasible scheme including :
  - providing further evidence of need that was used by CCC to get Cabinet approval in April 14 for a Public Works Loan Board allocation from CCC to Axiom, and reduced sale price of the CCC land on an invest to save basis
  - undertaking consultation with Patient Representative Group for Whittlesey ,
  - reports and updates the Borderline and Peterborough LCG,
  - engagement an mediation with the option holder on the land
  - engagement with Peterborough CC (cross district collaboration around the housing market linked to Axiom possibly recycling Peterborough area grant into the scheme)
  - Planning advice relating to the outline permission and section 106
  - Communication and engagement with the HCA to support the Axiom submission

The project team will reconvene in September to commence implementation of the scheme. This includes design, detailed planning process and further engagement relating to the wider community hub and how that will be used including exploration and feasibility of additional health facilities for the town.

### **Benefits**

Since becoming a full member of ARP in April 2014, we have seen benefits performance remain strong. This is a continued testament to the customer focus of the team and commitment to helping Fenland's most vulnerable residents with their rent and Council Tax payments. We are now turning round new benefit claims in an average of 14 days and changes in an average of 6 days; both for the year to date. This has been a great improvement from 25 days and 9 days respectively at this time last year.

A further restructure of the team has taken place to fully integrate Revenues and Benefits at Fenland into the ARP structure, allowing management and resources to be shared amongst the seven authorities that are part of ARP. Of the 200 staff across ARP, 37 were directly affected and of these, 7 were Fenland staff. The final structure has now been implemented, seeing 6 of the Fenland staff placed in revised and the 7<sup>th</sup> taking redundancy.

A woman from Whittlesey has been sentenced to 12 weeks in jail, suspended for two years, after admitting dishonestly claiming more than £9,200 in benefits.

Over a period of more than two years – from October 2010 until January 2013 – she falsely claimed nearly £5,075 in Income Support. And between May 2011 and May 2012, she also claimed £3,540 in Housing Benefit and almost £600 in Council tax Benefit.

Magistrates sentenced her to 12 weeks' custody, suspended for two years. She was also ordered to undertake 160 hours unpaid work and to pay compensation of £3,540.67 for the overpayment of Housing Benefit. She will have to repay all the money owed.

## **C2 Support our ageing population and young people**

### **Golden Age**

The Chatteris Golden Age Event on Friday 25 July had 57 people attend. 3 people saw the Fenland Ferret but no additional financial benefits were found.

The New Vision Fitness stand engaged with 40 people. Out of these 20 people had their blood pressure checked, 20 people had body fat readings and 10 complimentary one-day gym passes were given out.

Fire safety advice was given to 25 people with 1 referral made for a home fire safety check.

Community Navigators had 1 direct referral from a community group which will help to provide support and guidance to vulnerable people across Fenland and help with volunteering opportunities.

### **Youth District Council**

The Youth District Council met on 16<sup>th</sup> July at Fenland Hall. The meeting was attended by 9 representatives from 4 secondary schools. The YDC agreed that as a project for 14/15 they would like to work with FDC, CCC and road safety groups to raise awareness of cycling safety in Fenland.

The YDC also agreed to fund Young People March to deliver a transitions project working with 11-14 year olds over the summer holidays. The project will allow young people to meet before school starts in September and then will continue after the holidays and work on sessions to build confidence.

The transition would cover issues such as from school to school and home to out of school activities.

YPM will deliver a 6 week workshop including DJ workshops, basic cookery, sports, screen printing and recycling, beauty and personal care, team building, healthy living smoothies and pancakes. The transition would cover issues such as transition from school to school and home to out of school activities.

### **C3 Promote health and wellbeing**

#### **Annual Public Health Report**

Each year the Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire is required to publish an annual report on the health of local people. This requirement was introduced in 2013 when the responsibility for public health moved to local authorities.

Cambridgeshire's report is now available (<http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/health/profilesdata/other> ) and focusses on the new national Public Health Outcomes Framework. The report provides detailed information about how we are doing when compare to other areas for a range of health outcomes as well as lifestyle and environmental factors which affect health.

The report identifies for Fenland we are still below average for health outcomes. In particular areas where Fenland performs particularly badly are; obesity levels for children and adults, physical inactivity in adults and the level of adults smoking.

This new data has been added to the Council's draft health and wellbeing strategy proposal which is currently being circulated to health partners for their comments and will be used to inform discussions about what we can do together and in partnership to target these health inequalities.

#### **New Vision Marketing Plan:**

A formal marketing plan has been produced to promote New Vision Fitness to a wide range of audiences. Thought has been given to the type of marketing specific sections of the community are receptive to and the target market for our facilities. 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.

Examples of the current techniques used last month are:

As a cumulative result of the segmented membership promotional literature and marketing activity, an increase in membership sales for the July period led to an increase in membership base of 87 new members.

Newspaper marketing has again been used in July as part of a programme of adverts to raise awareness of the facilities we offer, this month the summer promotion was published in the local press.

### **Summer Promotion:**

The above summer promotion is branded as 'Get Beach Fit' No joining fee offer.

This generic campaign targets those wishing to shape up for the summer season offering those people who take up a committed membership the chance to join without paying the usual joining fee.

Membership sales for this campaign are currently at 245 new memberships.

### **Gym Challenge:**

The same promotion is also being used for our summer gym attendance challenge. Those existing members who attend over 12 times in one month and complete their attendance cards are entered into a free draw to win a month's free membership.

This is designed to increase attendance and the length of stay for each member.

### **Outreach Sales:**

The outreach sales project has currently run for the months of May, June and July and is targeting local businesses and specific sections of the community as detailed above from the segmented marketing plan.

So far the project has visited 22 employers / events in the district, generating 164 potential new members to visit one of the four New Vision sites.

The project has now moved on to community based sales with follow up visits from our June direct marketing campaign. The outreach sales team have visited addresses in Leverington, Friday Bridge and Wisbech to follow up on the direct mail campaign and to promote our 'Get Beach Fit This Summer' promotion.

The Team have also attended several community events including ManorFest and Circuit of the Fens.

**Memberships:**

Throughout the first 4 months of the financial year 300,300 paid leisure centre visits have been recorded. The table below highlights the split by facility

	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>
Chatteris	4880	4877	4946	4651
March	26526	15247	16331	16068
Wisbech	29738	29765	31023	26647
Whittlesey	14771	26101	22958	25771
<b>Total all centres</b>	75915	75990	75258	73137

Total membership base is currently 2,917 Direct Debit members across the 4 sites; this is showing a growth of 87 memberships over the past month.

Currently daytime memberships make up 16% of this total representing 459 daytime memberships across the sites.

<b>New Vision Direct Debit Summary</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>
Target no of DD members	2710	2713	2764	2801
Actual no of 12mth DD members	1006	1278	1313	1329
Actual no of 6mth DD members	933	934	920	947
Actual no of non-committed DD members	774	579	597	641
Total Daytime members	306	391	369	459
Total Anytime members	2407	2400	2461	2458
Total Actual DD members	2713	2791	2830	2917



## Environment

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

#### Schools Recycling Competition 2014

Prize giving assemblies took place in July in the four Fenland primary schools that entered Fenland's schools recycling competition.

Fenland schools were invited to take part and pupils completed a 'Recycling Bin-go' card which reminded them of the wide variety of everyday items that

they can recycle in their blue bins at home. Then they were invited to design their own recycling superhero that had to be bright, colourful, and great at recycling.



A total of 176 entries were received from local primary schools with a variety of imaginative entries including: 'Can Man'; 'Binjamin' and 'Spring Recycle Boing!'

Three winning entries were selected from each school.

The winning pupils received their design printed on their very own blue bin, all of which have been delivered to their homes. They also received their design in a frame, and a trendy lunchbox that was made out of recycled plastic bottles.

Prizes were delivered to the winning pupils by Cllr Peter Murphy at a series of school assemblies where the pupils heard more about the importance of recycling, how materials can be made into useful new things, and why it is important to use the right bin. The decorative bins can now be found on Fenland's streets and may remind customers that they too can be 'recycling superheroes'.

#### Customer Satisfaction with Refuse

A recent satisfaction survey sent to 500 customers continued to demonstrate that our customers are satisfied with the services offered by the refuse and recycling team.

From the 155 responses 98% (152) were satisfied with the service and the staff delivering the service.

This was the case recently when the team were working during the recent heavy rains. They continued through the storm and managed to complete all but 800 properties, which were returned to the following day. In some cases the team were walking through knee high water and were unable to make out the road beneath the surface water, even returning bins to doorways to assist customers where water covered driveways.

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

### **Friends of March Railway Station – Room Refurbishment Official Opening**

Friends of March Railway Station have been busy over the last few months concentrating on completing the refurbishment of some redundant buildings at the station.

This project was developed from its initial idea to full completion by the volunteers of Friends of March Railway Station, over a period of 5 years, with funds being provided by a grant from The Railway Heritage Trust. The idea was to refurbish the old redundant refreshment rooms on March Station so that they would be available for use by the community.

Two rooms have been completed one which will be available as a library, so that people can use the extensive collection of reading materials owned by the Friends. The second room is larger and suit to a range of uses including meetings and events. Along the way hidden gems were uncovered such as a Victorian tiled floor.



The rooms were officially launched on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, with around 35 people from the community attending. The group are so pleased with the outcome of this project they are now planning how to refurbish more of the redundant rooms that are still in a state of disrepair. It is hoped that projects such as this increase the public's pride in their community by enhancing the appearance of villages and towns.



### **The Spinney Clean Up**

Working with partners and County Council employees, the StreetScene Team assisted in clearing the Spinney in Wisbech.

This County Council land has recently been targeted by arsonists and the Fire Service were keen that the site was clear of combustible materials and evidence of fire setting.

The team rapidly cleared the area, removing 6 bags of waste and other materials.



**Before**



**After**

### **Anglia In Bloom Awards 2014**

Anglia In Bloom judges came to Fenland during July to see some of the outstanding work that the 'In Bloom' groups have been involved in since last year. This work is supported by the Council's grounds maintenance contractor TLG, as well as the Council's Open Spaces team.

The impact that FDC's work has in supporting the In Bloom groups should be recognised as the majority of work in our open spaces is managed by the Council, with works carried out by TLG.

**March in Bloom** was the first to be judged and the judges were treated to a tour around much of the Town, taking in projects such as The Garden of Rest, West End DIY Project, West End Park & Norwood Nature Area.

**Waterlees in Bloom** created a 200 metre roadside display of poppies, which adorned the entrance verges. The small group have worked hard throughout the year on a number of existing projects to improve and raise standards in the area.

**Parson Drove in Bloom** showed judges the continuing works to restore the pond which had received voluntary support and funding. The judges enjoyed a tour around the village, including a visit to Payne Junior school with their outstanding environmental project.

**Whittlesey In Bloom** took judges on a tour around much of the town, taking in projects including the refurbishment of the Garden of Rest, where they unveiled a new interpretation board, Lattersley Nature reserve, the allotments area, many Street Pride projects, the cemetery and two schools. Much of this work is supported by TLG and improvements this year, alongside volunteers, is due to the improvements TLG have made in their practices.

**Benwick in Bloom** – a small group of volunteers have made a big impact in the village over the last two years. The group has continued with much enthusiasm maintaining existing projects and taking on new ones such as the clearance of part of the Old Cemetery and sowing poppies and cornflower seeds. They have also supported school projects and encouraged residents to become involved in the village.

**Chatteris in Bloom** worked hard work to improve and enhance the local area for the benefit of the local community and visitors alike. From picking up litter and weeding pavements to brightening up the streets.

**Wisbech In Bloom** has worked with several partners this year, including Delamores who are promoting a horticultural apprenticeship scheme. Students designed a herb bank last year and this has established into a superb project. Adjacent to the bank poppies and calliopsis were sown back in the spring, with the calliopsis providing a sea of gold complimenting this year's Anglia and Britain in Bloom theme, Growing for Gold.

The judging is the culmination of all the hard work carried out by the volunteer groups with TLG and the Council's support during the year. The improvement projects, flowers displays and hours put in by volunteers help to transform the towns and bring local communities together.

The results will be announced on the 9 September at the Annual Awards Ceremony in Gorleston.



**New Interpretation Board**

**Manor Centre Bloom volunteers**



**WW1 Bloom Project**





**The Herb Bank**



**Growing for Gold**

### **The Poppy Campaign**

This is Fenland's campaign to support the Royal British Legion in remembering all those lost in the first World War.

Many Streetpride, In Bloom & Friends Groups took part along with many other organisations to help prepare and sow the poppy seeds in the towns and villages.



### **Seventh Successive Green Flag Award 2014**

The Green Flag is only awarded to Parks and Green Spaces that achieve a National Standard within England and Wales, and is awarded to Parks, Cemeteries and Green Spaces that achieve consistent marks in the 7 key criteria of:

- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy Safe and Secure

- Clean and Well Maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation & Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing and
- Well Managed

St Peters Church Gardens, Wisbech and Wisbech Park have both achieved the criteria for the seventh consecutive year. This is a true reflection of the work that the Council's partner, TLG, puts into the maintenance of both areas, alongside the work of the local Friend's groups. The standard in both areas is high, encouraging many visitors into the park and church gardens.

### **ManorFest 2**

Saturday 26 July saw the second ManorFest event take place at the Manor Centre in Whittlesey. This is a family orientated music and sports event consisting of Workshops on the skate park, Parkour demonstrations, Graffiti workshops, BMX flatland demonstrations, fun children's activities and a main music stage.

Over the course of the day over 800 people attended the event, with most very happy with this summer event for local people. Income exceeded £6,500, with the event making a small loss £500. This event is growing popularity, with next year expected to break the 1,000 visitor mark and return a profit.



### **Circuit of the Fens**

Sunday 27 July saw the second biggest cycle race in Cambridgeshire this year, (Tour de France being the first) roll into Whittlesey. The race is part of the Grand Prix Series in the British Cycling national calendar. This year's stage was 137 miles long making it the longest race in the national calendar this year.

With the start and finish of the race in Whittlesey town centre crowds lined the streets to see the spectacle of 100's of cyclists riding through the town. It is estimated that some 3,000 people lined the town centre and took part in the entertainment and activities going on at the Market Place.

As well as local people, the event attracted tourists from outside of Fenland. It was reported that all B&Bs in the area were full for the weekend, the economic impact of such events is hard to estimate accurately but this proved very positive for the businesses in the town. In addition local businesses in the town square had a good day's trade, with one pub selling out of bottled beer.

### **The start of the Circuit of the Fens – Whittlesey Town Square**

This event was delivered in partnership with Whittlesey Town Council, community partners and Vericool For Schools. Fenland Staff led on town centre planning and event management with several teams coming together to ensure its success.



### **Promoting Fenland's Markets**

Working in partnership with 20Twenty Productions, 6 themed events have been held on Saturday Markets over the summer period to promote the local markets.

Each event is supported by one of the traders and promotes their stock whilst incentivising local shoppers to get 10% off their goods. Themes included British beef week, British cheese week, Father's day and National Love your market fortnight.

At a recent Market Traders Forum it was reported that the incentives were a welcome lift and that they did see a positive impact.

Supporting our local market is something which will continue and the Council is working with our market traders to identify how we can continue to make improvements to the market offer.





**Your Local Fenland Market**

Date	Time	Location	Activity
Saturday 26th April	11am - 1pm	March	<b>British Beef Week</b> Supported by Russell's of Upwell
Saturday 17th May	11am - 1pm	March	<b>National Love Your Market Fortnight</b> Supported by South of Wisbech, Colham Trail and AK Catering
Wednesday 28th May	11am - 1pm	March	<b>National Love Your Market Fortnight</b> Supported by Goldham Fruit, Wessons Bakery and JAC Catering
Saturday 31st May	11am - 1pm	March	<b>British Cheese Week</b> Supported by Cheesy Bob
Saturday 14th June	11am - 1pm	March	<b>Fathers Day</b> Supported by Goldings Nursery of Outwell
Saturday 26th July	11am - 1pm	March	<b>BBQ</b> Supported by Russell's of Upwell

**Think Local, Buy Local, Eat Local**

10% off when you spend £5



**Your Local Fenland Market**

Love Your Local Fenland Market is Fenland's part of a nationwide promotion to re-focus attention on the value of markets within town centres. Markets are the heart of retail trading and a valuable attraction that adds vitality to your local community.

Our markets support and add value to the town centre and are an essential amenity that offers a level of traditional service that is not found in supermarkets. The majority of traders are locally based and increase community benefit by employing local people and reducing food miles.

Please see the calendar overhead for details of the range of activities that are planned across the district to build up interest in local markets over the summer. We will also be carrying out customer surveys to ensure we understand what customers would like to see on our community markets.

**Watch out for our special 'Four Seasons' events across the district**

- Chatteris Midsummer Festival: 28 - 29 June 2014
- Whittlesey Festival: 7 September 2014
- March Christmas Market: 7 December 2014
- Wisbech Christmas Market: 14 December 2014

For more information on Love Your Local Fenland Market or any of the 'Four Seasons' events please contact:  
Markets and Events Team at Fenland District Council  
Tel: 01354 654321  
Email: [events@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:events@fenland.gov.uk)

**Your Local Fenland Market**

10% off when you spend £5

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

### Council CCTV continues to make a positive difference!

During July 2014, the Council responded to 218 incidents, compared to 305 incidents in July 2013, highlighting the downward trend and reductions in crime and other related incidents in Fenland. This continues to promote the success of partnership working by Community Safety partners.

The Council assisted Cambridgeshire Police and other enforcement partners in achieving 29 positive (enforcement) outcomes, including 11 CCTV led arrests and a further 11 assisted arrests for offences including theft, criminal damage and violent offences.

## **Environmental Health**

### **Pest Control and Stray Dog Service Contracts**

In July 2012 the pest control, kennelling and stray dog services were brought together into a single 3 year contract which was awarded to a local consortium of a kennel, an animal rescue charity and a pest control contractor.

The contractors have delivered a good service to date and in 2013/14 they dealt with:

- 184 pest treatments, and
- 138 stray dogs, all within the contract response time.

As a result 94% of customers rated the service as Good or Very Good.

There is close a working relationship between the contractors and council staff and quarterly meetings are held to monitor performance, ensure that the contract is delivered and any issues are dealt with.

## **Economy**

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

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

During July there has been further letting activity. At The Boathouse we have welcomed 3 new tenants into 5 office suites (1 suite to be used temporarily). There have been no relocations, and one vacancy which resulted from the temporary use of an office suite at South Fens coming to an end. The net effect of the letting activity results in overall estate occupancy increasing to 78.3% against an end of year target of 80%. This is very encouraging news, with further lettings expected in the coming months.

Conference income at both business centres remains strong with a combined income in July of £9,200, which reflects the quieter period at the beginning of the Summer Holiday period.

Conference business continues to be extremely strong at both business centres with 100% positive customer feedback. Office enquiries are steady with occupancy continuing to increase at The Boathouse while recovery at South Fens is slightly slower.

#### **Destination Digital Workshop**

FDC has proactively promoted a local Destination Digital workshop, for local businesses to get free support and guidance on social networking and to find out how they can access funding and support to get fibre-optic broadband. A total of 14 businesses attended the workshop and DD is currently following up further work with some of these. FDC promoted the workshop through the growing FenlandForBusiness networks on Twitter and LinkedIn, and has also received two direct enquiries from businesses who have been put in contact with Destination Digital.

#### **Anglia Ruskin University**

FDC has supported Anglia Ruskin University to maximise take-up of their grants and business support offer in the Fenland area by producing a joint-branded marketing flyer. Hard and electronic copies of the flyer have begun to be distributed and in the space of two weeks FDC has already heard of three businesses that have taken up conversations with Anglia Ruskin as a result. FDC will continue to promote these opportunities and maintain dialogue with ARU to monitor uptake.

### **Funding Workshop**

FDC attended a funding workshop, run at University Centre Peterborough, to find out about the latest funding and support available to businesses and network with representatives from organisations that can support businesses. This knowledge is being shared through social networks, Fenland contacts and individual meetings where appropriate.

## **EC2 Raise aspirations and improve learning opportunities**

### **Princes Trust**

FDC has worked closely with the Princes Trust to provide support to a group of young adults who are not in education, training or employment. During July, FDC has supported two members of the group on two-week work placements and run various sessions during the 'employability skills week' for the group to put together a CV, learn how job applications are assessed, search for jobs, undertake mock interviews and a range of other subjects relevant to their pathways back into work. The 14 young people are continuing their studies with the Princes Trust until the course ends in August, however some have already been offered interviews for jobs and apprenticeships and nationally, the Princes Trust has a 75% success rate of individuals moving into work/training within three months of completing this course.

### **BoomBizz**

FDC supported the delivery of the BoomBizz enterprise simulation game for year 9 students at Sir Harry Smith Community college, as part of the Council's continuing commitment to raising skills and aspirations through the FEE project.

BoomBizz is a popular programme among schools nationally to introduce students to enterprise in a stimulating and competitive environment. Feedback from BoomBizz events in Fenland is consistently positive, with students reporting that they enjoy the competition and it helps them learn about managing people, stock and money. It has also received positive feedback from education staff as it supports a number of curriculum areas.

### **Fenland Skills Service**

The Fenland Skills Service has now started to deliver services in Fenland, and a way forward which will merge the work of FEE into this broader service, which will offer more resource for linking business activity with schools as well as a skills brokerage service for local businesses, has been agreed. FDC will continue to maintain strong links with the Skills Service to support work to improve skills levels and aspirations in the district. As part of this commitment, FDC supported the Skills Service to deliver a careers fair in Peterborough, with the event being widely promoted to Fenland businesses and schools (Whittlesey in particular due

to its proximity to Peterborough). This event has the benefit of being on a very large scale, showcasing a huge range of opportunities from employers and education providers, with competitions and other attractions throughout the day. FDC also supported event staff on the day and has begun to build relationships with contacts in a wider area as a result. A total of 2,500 students attended the event and around 400 stallholders had displays and information.

### **EC3 Promote Fenland as a tourism and visitor destination**

#### **Wisbech 2020 Vision**

The Fenland Tourism Board and FDC are supporting Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to deliver action 27 of the Wisbech 2020 Vision, which also forms part of the FTB action plan. 'To improve brown signs in and around the town, including key routes wherever possible, to highlight existing attractions and advertise forthcoming events'

CCC and the Highways agency engineer have completed a basic assessment of Wisbech, To assist in the assessment CCC used the Countywide tourism sign policy, to ensure that all venues were assessed on an equal basis; there is a need for signs, that the brown tourism signs remain reputable and they can be trusted by the public.

The next phase of this project is to review the assessment in August and move the project forward.

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

#### **Nene Waterfront Regeneration Area**

The purchasers of the former Gas Works site (Lot 3) are evaluating their ground investigation works and are in liaison with Officers and the Council's Remediation Specialist to develop plans for foundations and sub-surface construction which will aid the delivery of the proposed 70 new dwellings on site.

It is expected that the terms of the transfer will be concluded during August, with elevations and exterior designs to be finalised and a formal Planning Application likely to be submitted thereafter.

#### **Planning Delivery**

Six major planning applications were determined in July and all were within target timescales. As this was a relatively high number in time, there has been a very positive impact on the cumulative figure for the year to date.

The improved performance is a reflection of a determined effort by the whole of the Planning Delivery team and new performance measures introduced since the PAS review are also having an impact. It is anticipated that the service plan target for the year end (60%) will either be achieved or exceeded.

In relation to Minor applications despite a high number of decisions issued in July, 38 decisions compared with an average of 31 for April-June, 89% were within target timescale. This reflects a significant improvement in the previous quarter performance of 57%.

It is anticipated that this improved performance will be sustained and that the service plan target of 70% will be achieved by the end of the year.

With regard to Other applications the team also achieved excellent performance of 89% within 8 weeks.

Clearly it is essential that this good performance is maintained and further improvements to processes under the PAS improvement plan will ensure this happens.

### **Technical Team**

The Technical Support and Planning team have helped to successfully implement the new document management system for the service. This is being used to electronically store documents relating to planning applications, and is our first big step towards 'paper-light' working. The team have also been working with technical officers from Peterborough to analyse our existing processes, identifying more efficient ways of working and undertaking procedures. Changes made to date are already having a positive outcome in relation to validation times.

### **Increased use of Fenland Train Stations**

A comparison of passenger numbers between April and June 2013 and April and June 2014 shows that many more people are now using our train services.

Manea Train Service – The new two hour train service which commenced on 28 December 2013 has seen another significant rise in use by local people. There has been an increase in use of 356%. In 2013 there were 301 journeys made and in 2014 1,370 journeys for the same time period. This is an additional increase of about 9% based on the number of journeys made between December 2013 and March 2014.

March Train Service - These figures also relate to people whose journey started at March Station. There is an increase in use of 5% which equates to an additional 2,854 journeys in the time period. 56,319 journeys in 2013 and 59,173 in 2014.

Whittlesea Train Service - The level of use in terms of people starting their journey at Whittlesey has remained static between 2013 and 2014. The figure for people whose destination is Whittlesea, however, has increased by 25%, from 1,654 to 2,062 making an additional 408 journeys.

### **Seek Improvements to the A47 in Cambridgeshire**

FDC works in partnership with others to seek improvements to A47 through A47 Alliance. During the last 12 months the Alliance has had a high profile amongst MPs and Government. This has led to numerous visits by the Transport Minister, who has travelled along the road to understand the issues. More importantly it has also led to Government announcements about new studies and technical work. The outcome of this work is expected to be Government announcements to fund projects along the A47 in the autumn statement 2014.

An A47 Alliance member workshop led to the development of a business case for A47. FDC and CCC were able to ensure that junction improvements along the road in and around Wisbech were listed in phase 1 of the business case. This work has since been used to lobby Government and support the ongoing study work.

Substantial traffic modelling work has been completed locally in recent years for Wisbech and A47. This information has been provided to Highways Agency and their consultants to assist with their ongoing technical work. This latest work is looking in more detail at what will be required to deliver projects along A47. By sharing information and working in partnership to assist the study work, it is hoped that there will be a positive announcement about the funding of projects later in 2014.

Working with CCC, FDC commissioned a new report focusing on the wider economic benefits of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough elements of A47. This work focused on the updating of the case for improvements and the wider economic benefits. The key findings showed that there will be considerable pressure on the network in future, especially the junctions around Wisbech if improvements are not made. The report also shows £51m in additional benefits for Fenland that are directly attributed to making those improvements on the A47.

### **Rail Strategy and Hereward CRP Improvements**

The following items were delivered that are part of the Fenland Rail Development Strategy and the Hereward CRP:

- A new two hourly train service for Manea. The level of use of the service is 212% increase on the same time period 12 months earlier
- The Hereward CRP website
- A new leaflet aimed at signposting people to where they can find out more about train services and tickets
- A new Getting from A to B Case Study leaflet to promote family railcards
- Cycle parking was installed at Manea and Whittlesea Stations
- There are four new Station Adopters at Manea Station
- A Master plan setting out improvements for Whittlesey Station was completed
- £10,000 S106 development funding has been secured for a new waiting shelter on Manea Station

### **Cambridgeshire Future Transport (CfT Area H)**

CfT is a partnership project led by Cambridgeshire County Council. The project aims to address local solutions to transport issues whilst also reviewing subsidised transport services in Cambridgeshire. The CfT programme commenced in Fenland in the Whittlesey Area at the start of 2014. This involves bus service 31 between Ramsey and Peterborough which includes Whittlesey. A public consultation was undertaken during February and March 2014 for people to provide their views about how they use public transport. A recent meeting was held to discuss the results of the community engagement work. The next meeting will be in September 2014 when CCC Officers will present possible solutions to the issues raised.

The results and feedback from the questionnaire show that the service is mostly used on Saturdays but is also well used in the week especially for people shopping. There may be some potential for the service to be commercially viable but probably not for all journeys. The whole route is however very long between Ramsey and Peterborough at 56 minutes, approaching double the time by car. People also suggested that the lack of bus services in the evenings and on weekends is a problem. There are also issues with shop workers having difficulties getting home on Thursdays where there is late night shopping. There were 41 responses from people living in Whittlesey, Coates and Eastrea and 567 responses to the consultation in total. Further updates will be provided as the project continues.



## Quality Organisation

### Council Tax

Council tax collection rates are at 44.8% (0.3% more than target for this point in the year). We continue to take recovery action where customers are not paying their instalments on time. Action in July was as below:

	Numbers		Total arrears	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
<b>Reminders</b>	1,695	1,531	£284k	£275k
<b>Summonses</b>	584	525	£307k	£330k

### Business Rates

We have now collected 38.61% of the NNDR due for this year, 0.61% more than our target for this point last year.

### Contact Centre

Performance in the Contact Centre is good, with 65.6% of calls answered in 20 seconds against a target of 55% and 87.6% of all calls answered against a target of 75%. Numbers of calls into the contact continues of a downward trend with 9550 calls offered in July 13/14 and 8489 offered in July 14/15

### Individual Electoral Registration – Go live!

On the 10 June 2014 the way people need to register to vote changed. Under the previous electoral registration system the head of the household completed the electoral registration for all household members. Individual electoral registration (IER) makes this the responsibility of every individual

New elector registrations now require the electors date of birth and national insurance number to be verified with data held by the Department of Work and Pensions before they can be added to the register of electors.

The main drivers for this change are better protection from electoral fraud and greater engagement with and promotion of the democratic process. The biggest benefit of the change is that it opens up the opportunity for people to now register to vote online.

Fenland District Council has developed a public engagement strategy and will be working on many projects over the coming 12/18 months to help target both the general public and our hard to reach groups which include:

- Young people
- Nursing homes
- Migrant Population
- Private renters and Houses of Multiple Occupation

There is a transition period for IER which involves FDC sharing our existing data for matching with DWP. Those who do not match have been locally data matched with Fenlands Council tax and Housing Benefit records wherever possible. The Council achieved a 82.83% match rate with DWP data which was further increased to 90.66% when matched with our local data.

We will now be hand delivering letters to electors and properties from the 20<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> August. This is made up of:

- 67,794 matched electors to confirm that they will not need to take any further action unless they move home.
- 6,528 electors that do not match will be invited to re-register their details using the new registration system.

Less than a 700 of the electors that could not be matched were postal or proxy voters these people will receive additional information that they will lose their absent vote for the 2015 elections if they do not re-register.

In addition to letters to these existing electors we will also make visits to obtain / deliver Household Enquiry Forms to 3,500 properties where no one is currently registered to vote.

We are now required to proactively invite people to register throughout the year and then follow up non responders with reminders and a personal visit. We are working with customer access to enable us to capture new registrations and change in circumstances at the same time as people contact us regarding their council tax. This encourages online registration at the first point of contact therefore ensuring the electoral register is as accurate and up to date as possible, ensuring people who want to vote in elections and referendums will be able to do so.

### **Member Services and Governance**

The Council holds a Civic Reception in honour of each currently elected Chairman. The Chairman is elected each year at its Council Meeting in May. The Civic Reception is an Annual event which gives the Chairman a chance to showcase Fenland, to network with other Chairman and Mayor's and for the Council to show its appreciation for its elected dignitary and elected representative for Fenland.

The event has been held at a number of Fenlands established and some of the newest purpose built buildings across the area:

- 2004 – Ivy Leaf Club, Whittlesey, 130 in attendance
- 2005 – Ivy Leaf Club, Whittlesey, 180 in attendance
- 2006 – Village Hall, Doddington, 140 in attendance
- 2007 – GER Club, March, 135 in attendance
- 2008 – GER Club, March, 150 in attendance
- 2009 – GER Club, March, 176 in attendance
- 2010 – Community Centre, Wisbech St Mary, 146 in attendance
- 2011 – The Boathouse, Wisbech, 184 in attendance
- 2012 – Thomas Clarkson Academy, Wisbech, 163 in attendance
- 2013 – Function Suite at The Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey 148 in attendance
- 2014 – Sir Harry Smith Community College, Whittlesey, 160 in attendance

The feedback received from a number of the guests, Civic Dignitaries, Business Community, Armed Forces and personal guests has always been very complimentary and allows the Council to show its competence at arranging events that are very successful, also providing good networking opportunities and a chance to share good practice between Councils.

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman work closely together to welcome guests and are involved in arrangements prior to the event to ensure that it runs smoothly. The event has the expertise of a Toastmaster who is on hand to announce guests, announce speeches and to make sure that the event runs smoothly. It has become quite usual for the Chairman of the Council to write his speech based either on the history of the building the Civic Reception is held in or a local person of historical importance which has been complimented in feedback letters.

As a result of the events requests have been received from a number of attendees to see how Guest Lists are compiled, how events are managed, this provides a model of good practice for Civic events and management. The success of Civic Receptions ensures that future events are successful and well attended.

The feedback and success of previous events ensures that the Council can build on its support for the Civic representative providing a sound working basis with other Councils and businesses in the area.