

Overview and Scrutiny Panel

14 October 2013

Progress of Corporate Priorities
April – September 2013

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLANNING**



OOO OPEN
for Business

LOCALISM

**QUALITY
ORGANISATION**

STREETS ahead

Neighbourhood Planning

NP1 Growth and future shape of Fenland

Fenland Core Strategy

Since July 2011 the Council has been preparing a Core Strategy as part of its new Local Plan. This is a pro-growth plan which sees development and new infrastructure as a way to address many of the long standing identified needs in the district over the next twenty years or so.

The Proposed Submission version of the document was subject to public consultation in February and April this year. A further six week period of consultation was also undertaken between June and August on an Addendum to the Core Strategy which removed one of the housing allocations (North East March) from the plan.

The Core Strategy was submitted for examination to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) via the Secretary of State on 4th September. An Inspector, Claire Sherratt, has now been appointed and will conduct the public hearing sessions in early December. The Inspector's report is scheduled to be published in early 2014. All being well the Council is hoping to adopt the new plan in the spring of next year.

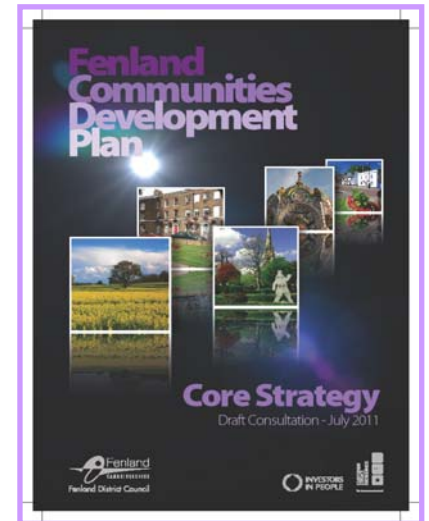
Planning Performance

LPI DS1 - % of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks:

Submission of major applications remains at a low level (21%), predominantly due to the national economy. As a result, a relatively small number of major applications are processed each month and are invariably delayed due to their complexity and associated external Section 106 completion. In the main, they tend to be large scale residential developments. Officers are exploring opportunities to use Planning Performance Agreements and formal extensions of time to combat the negative impact on our target figures. The current performance level is expected to rise as we move towards the end of this year.

LPI DS2 - % of minor applications determined in 8 weeks (small scale residential development):

A key factor is the significant number of applications currently referred to Planning Committee due to the fact that they are departures to current adopted policy, FDC or Councillor linked applications. Officers are continuing to identify all possible opportunities to determine minor applications 'in time' and are confident that as the year progresses, performance will fall back in line with the annual performance target.



Community Transport and Concessionary Fares

The Council supports community transport services, which means that any Fenland resident who has a bus pass and is a member of the local Community Transport organisation, can travel free of charge on the Dial a Ride Service.

Use of Community Transport services for 2013/14 - April – August 2013

| Journey | Total – April to August 2013 |
|--|------------------------------|
| West Route (Whittlesey area) | 1,035 |
| North West Route (Wisbech area) | 1,549 |
| North Route (Wisbech area) | 1,309 |
| Central Route (March & Chatteris area) | 3,470 |
| Total Passenger Journeys | 7,363 |

The total number of passenger journeys for 2012/13 was 19,558. This was an increase of 9.5% on 2011/12 journeys.

Wisbech 2020 Update

The Wisbech 2020 Vision aims to address the current and future challenges facing Wisbech and to maximise the opportunities available to the town. The vision document is the result of a series of workshops and events delivered during 2012 where local councils, residents, businesses, academia and other key organisations came together to talk about Wisbech.

The Wisbech 2020 Vision was launched in January 2013 and some great progress has been made against the short term actions detailed in the vision document, including:

- There have been numerous activities to **keep Wisbech clean**, with schools and other groups getting involved in litter picks and planting activities
- Around 40 more families that are **eligible for free school meals** have now claimed for them, which benefits the children in that family as well as the school they attend
- A multi agency group have been tackling **houses in multiple occupancy** by uncovering exploitation through Operation Pheasant.
- A **Wisbech Loyalty Card** is due to be launched soon, offering discounts for shoppers using local retailers.

- An interim report has been produced on the economic and spatial analysis of the **future economic role of Wisbech**.
- Work continues on addressing some of the more prominent **derelict buildings** in the town. FDC and CCC are considering the next steps in finding solutions to these complex situations, including securing external funding where possible.
- The former gas works site which forms part of the **Nene Waterfront Development** has been acquired by a local developer to deliver 70 new homes (including affordable homes). Work is anticipated to start in Spring 2014.
- Various arts festivals have already been successfully delivered, and partners continue to work together to improve the **arts and culture** offer in the town.

It was also fantastic to see Wisbech featured in the '30 Best Towns in Britain' guide published in The Times in March 2013, where it was described as an 'impressive Georgian town' with affordable family homes.

O&S are reviewing the Wisbech 2020 Vision at their November meeting.

Further information can be found at: www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk

NP2 The built environment

Nene Waterfront Project (NWP)

The Council has engaged with Cambridgeshire County Council to deliver visual and physical improvements to the sites and infrastructure surrounding the NWF sites, which has included:

- Replacement and refurbishment of the existing hoardings,
- Resurfacing of the highways and footpaths, and
- Weed and overgrowth clearance
- Herb Bank in partnership with R.Delamore Ltd, Wisbech in Bloom and Street Pride

Cabinet considered the disposal of part (former gas works site) of the Nene Waterfront site at the end of August. The decision was confirmed following an Overview and Scrutiny call in, with the scheme now set to see the construction of 70 dwellings, with 46 market dwellings and 24 affordable dwellings built over a 4 acre (1.61 Ha) site. It is anticipated that construction could begin by as early as the start of 2014.

It is anticipated that the scheme will boost the local area and create confidence among developers regarding the development of the remaining NWF sites. The scheme will also make a significant contribution towards meeting the need for more affordable housing in Fenland.

Coalwharf Road Demonstration Project

Following a land swap agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Coalwharf Road site was identified by the Leader, Councillor Alan Melton, as a perfect opportunity to create a Demonstration Project to promote exemplar development within Fenland.



The Design competition was launched at the beginning of August 2013 and architectural and development teams were invited to submit their registration forms. The response has been positive and a significant number of registration forms have been received from across the country. Those successful entrants have now been invited to submit their Stage 1 Design proposals.

It is anticipated that the winning design will deliver a viable residential, commercial or mixed-use development, complimenting the character of the Conservation Area and the widely-renown 'Brinks' as well as providing a new landmark for Wisbech. The winning design will be announced at the Building Design Awards later in the year.

Centenary Gardens

Following a contribution from the Council to this important project, the Octavia Hill Trust have successfully procured additional financial support to enable it to refurbish this key site.

The completed scheme has been finished to a high standard and designed in keeping with the historic area.



A bench on the site has been sponsored by the Council in memory of Cllr Roger Green.

This is a fine example of joint regeneration in Fenland.

Wisbech Dilapidated Buildings

A further Confidential Update Report was considered by Cabinet in August, highlighting the £383,000 the Council has spent making the buildings safe and identifying options going forward. Members were also updated on the meeting held between the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) at the beginning of August.

In addition, close liaison has taken place with both Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Councils over their approach to dilapidated buildings.

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

If successful, the grant would fund a conservation refurbishment and regeneration scheme within Wisbech. The scheme would focus primarily upon the dilapidated buildings within the High Street and Market Place areas. Support has been pledged from the likes of the Wisbech Society and English Heritage, both of whom welcome the proactive approach adopted by FDC in pursuing such funding.

Performance

| LPI | Description | Frequency | Baseline | Target 13/14 | Year to date | Variance |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Neighbourhood planning | | | | | | |
| DS 1 | % of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks | Monthly | 81% | 60% | 21% | -39% |
| DS 2 | % of minor applications determined in 8 weeks | Monthly | 65% | 70% | 50% | -20% |
| DS 3 | % of other applications determined in 8 weeks | Monthly | 85% | 85% | 86% | 1% |
| GI 1 | Core Strategy - approval by Cabinet and Council | Annual | New | 100% | 100% | 0% |
| HCS1 | Number of new affordable homes | Annual | 15 | 75 | N/A | N/A |

Localism

L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

Good progress continues to be made towards our benefit processing targets, with a fifth consecutive month of improvement from our starting position back in April. After six months of the current year, we have significantly improved performance and are on track to achieve our targets for the year as a whole (which are processing new claims in an average of 20 days and processing changes in an average of 10 days).

New claims processing is now under 24 days, whilst at the same time last year it was at 36. Changes of circumstances processing times are also significantly better than this time last year. We are currently assessing these in an average of just 9 days for the year so far, compared with 13 days at the same point last year. This improved processing time means that residents are getting their benefits quicker.

At the same time, new applications for benefit are being received at a comparable level to last year (an average of 76 each week). We are currently helping 10,200 households in Fenland with Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

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

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

In October we will be targeting specific households with take-up advice where we know they have a significant shortfall between their Housing Benefit and actual rent. We are also attending the National Landlords Association event at the Boathouse on 2nd October to highlight the availability of DHPs. We are contacting our Social Landlord partners (having already worked with Roddons in an earlier campaign) and lettings agents to increase the profile of DHPs.

We are also sending DHP information to some of our larger employers, particularly those who are known to employ people on low incomes and who

claim Housing Benefit, to place on notice boards. Posters have been placed in public spaces around the District e.g. doctors surgeries, hospital waiting rooms etc.

Private Rented Sector Housing Interventions (Operation Pheasant)

Operation Pheasant is a multi agency task force group aimed at tackling migrant exploitation. Initially formed by the Police & FDC, membership of the task force also includes Gangmaster Licensing Authority, HM Revenues & Customs, Cambs Fire & Rescue, Home Office Immigration & Enforcement, & UK Human Trafficking Centre.

Home visits have been undertaken to private rented properties in Wisbech, often in multiple occupancy and the following outcomes have been achieved:

From November 2012 to the end of June 2013:

- **122 multi agency inspected properties**
- **961 voluntary questionnaires** have been completed. This has included details of pay and conditions, alternative lifestyle information (alternative private rented accommodation available locally where they will not be subjected to exploitation) inspections of the property to ensure condition compliance and action taken where it is not.
- **33 voluntary repatriations** – Most of these cases have been as a result of individuals either being trafficked into Fenland or have come to Wisbech on the false promise of work which has led to exploitation and illegal eviction.
- **6 cases of human trafficking** where arrests have been made and prosecutions progressing.
- **139 issues addressed** to correct numerous faults and failings in property safety standards.
- **15 closures** and enforcement action taken.
- **57 gangmaster vehicle offences** identified and prosecuted.
- **Information packs** circulated to tenants – detailing where to get help, trafficking, fire safety in the home, advice available locally and pay and conditions all translated in to a range of community languages.

Free School Meals

Following discussions with the Information Commissioner and partner agencies, the Council has developed an innovative methodology which now allows the Council to provide details to Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) of residents who should be benefitting from Free School Meals but are not doing so. The data analysis shows that in Fenland 774 children are currently not benefitting from this opportunity when they have the entitlement to do so. For each child

who receives Free School Meals the School also receives a Free School Meal premium of £900. This more efficient and effective approach to Free School Meals communication therefore has the potential of securing an additional inward investment of £696,600 per annum into Fenland Schools.

Rural Capital Grants Scheme - Increased funding opportunities for the Community and Voluntary Sector

So far this year, 5 applicants have been successful in their bids and completed works, totalling £184,135:

- Newton Parish Council Phase 2 of their play area. £11,985 was awarded
- Parson Drove foot path project- £10,000
- Eastrea Village hall project for a new village hall- £50,000
- Gorefield Village Hall. They were awarded £100,000
- Thorney Toll village hall was awarded £12,150 for a new disabled toilet area, new baby changing area and a new flat roof.

L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland

Direct Action – Redmoor Lane

On 24 April 2013, officers from the Council worked together with bailiffs to quietly and systematically remove the unauthorised Gypsy Site Development at Redmoor Lane (see photograph below). This action was supported by the Police who were on hand to ensure that there were no breaches of the peace.



Direct action was taken against the Travellers, who had been living on the site illegally, in accordance with an enforcement notice that had been previously served. This followed a series of challenges over the years that agreed with the Council's decisions relating to the site. The site is in a

location which is highly vulnerable to flood risk area and was a key consideration through the planning process.

The site in Redmoor Lane Elm has now been cleared of all the caravans and sheds, together with fencing, septic and sewage tanks and other services sited there and returned to agricultural land as pictured left.

FDC Managed Gypsy and Traveller Sites

FDC manage 5 Gypsy and Traveller sites across the district, comprising of 64 pitches. Following feedback from tenants, a pitch conditions stock survey has been conducted. The feedback has informed the development of a planned scheduled of programmed maintenance that will present FDC with an opportunity to increase efficiency in dealing with repairs, alongside improved customer service for the residents. All the funding for work on the sites comes from the income generated from the sites.

Big Lottery Fund, 'Making Money Count'

On 31 July, the new Making Money Count project received its initial launch and was attended by Cabinet Members, Councillor David Oliver and Councillor Ralph Butcher. The project has been funded through £1m of the Big Lottery Fund's 'Improving Financial Confidence' fund. The project will be delivered by a partnership consisting of FDC, Roddons, CAB and CHS Group (formerly known as Cambridge Housing Society).

Funding will be used to work with Social Housing tenants living in Fenland. They will be able to access a number of different services that seek to improve financial capability across Fenland.

L3 Supporting our ageing population

Golden Age

Golden Age supports our older residents across Fenland through a number of initiatives such as drop-in sessions at our One Stop Shops and Golden Age Fairs.

Between April and August this year, the team has met 165 older people, carried out 56 blood pressure checks, 38 benefits health checks and found £18,341 in potential benefits entitlement.

Comparing this to the same period during 2012, the team met 299 older people, carried out 65 blood pressure checks, 29 benefits health checks and found £8,700 in potential benefits entitlement.

L4 Promote healthy lifestyles

Leisure Strategy 2013 - 2018

During the first part of the year the revised leisure strategy has been adopted. The strategy focuses on four key strands of work;

- Continue to provide an efficient service
- More people, more active, more often
- Supporting community sport
- Linking with partners to encourage tourism and economic activity

Chatteris Leisure Centre

Late 2012 saw the completion and official opening of Chatteris Leisure Centre. The £1.3million gym and dance studio were completed on schedule and on budget.

Membership uptake and customer feedback regarding the new facility has been positive. Many school children are using the facility after school and as part of curriculum work. Whilst vending sales have been slow, the overall income levels for the centre are expected to reach the full year projection of £164,000 from the original business plan.

Leisure Service Finance

Currently income is being maintained at projected levels. Since April the service has realised £950,000 with a full year projected target of £2,190,000.

Expenditure levels are slightly above projections, due in particular to higher energy costs. Efforts are being made to reduce energy consumption and increase the efficiency of the leisure building stock. Leisure centres are large spaces that use considerable amounts of energy to light and heat – especially the swimming pools. A focus on integration of several heating systems at the Hudson is expected to reduce costs in the longer term.

- **Overall Attendance**
Customer visits are within 1% of target, with 253,925 paid visits this to 31 August 2013.
- **Swimming Pool Admissions**
Swimming pool admissions and income are on track, with an income of £371,000 to 31 August this year. Swimming lessons are performing 5.5% above target with total income so far of £175,500.
- **Exercise Class Admissions**
Admissions are 6% below the 5 month target of 30,200. A fresh fitness class programme is being launched in October, with some new classes being

added to the programme. Classes that are underperforming are being removed.

- **Manor Leisure Centre Events and Function Business**

The events and function side of the business at the Manor Leisure Centre was a new enterprise in the past year – set up as a result of the investment in the kitchen and sports hall of the building during the recent renovation.

In the first years trading the service exceed income targets, and is set to do the same in the current year. Events that have taken place this year include anniversaries, birthday parties, weddings and the Chairman's reception.

Sports Development Team

- **Sportivate Workshops**

The Council continues to work with Living Sport to provide Sportivate funding workshops across Fenland. This activity is aimed at supporting local sports clubs and community groups regarding available external funding.

- **Exercise Referral Scheme**

The revised exercise referral scheme is in place, with over 20 participants to date. The new scheme focuses on clients completing the 12 week scheme and encouraging them to become longer term members following their referral.

- **Summer Holiday Sports Camps**

The sports development team supported local sports clubs with summer holiday sport camps in March and Wisbech. More than 200 children attended the camps and the Sports Development Team's facilitating and supporting role ensured that the camps ran smoothly and were widely promoted.

- **Parkour at Wenny Rec, Chatteris**

An innovative new play area was opened this year at Wenny Recreation Ground. Instead of settling for a traditional play area, the Town Council and local users asked for a climbing frame to replace the previous unit that had worn out. The Parkour or free running equipment that has been fitted is both a climbing frame, as well as an exciting unit suitable for the sport of 'free running' or Parkour. Free running is seen as perfect exercise for those who may not be interested in conventional competitive sports. Its aim is to travel from one point to another, negotiating obstacles along the route as efficiently and nimbly as possible.

Customer feedback, following an opening day demonstration, has proved very positive. Recently young people have demonstrated the equipment

and uploaded their video footage onto YouTube – highlighting the quality of the equipment and its versatility. The video may be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm6UYXevexl>

Health & Wellbeing Board

The Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board brings together representatives from local organisations who have a strong influence on health and wellbeing, including the commissioning of health, social care and public health services.

The work of the Board is guided by the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-17. The Strategy sets out the priorities the Health and Wellbeing Board and Network feel are the most important for local people.

Recent changes to the constitution of the Board have widened its membership and now each District Council is able to nominate a member representative. Councillor Ralph Butcher has been appointed to represent Fenland District Council on the Board, supported by Councillor Steve Garratt.

A development day for new Board members was held on 30 August, and will be followed by the next Board meeting on 17 October.

Clinical Commissioning Group and the Older People Programme

From 1 April 2013, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) took over responsibility from NHS Cambridgeshire and NHS Peterborough (the Primary Care Trusts) for buying health services; serving a population of over 860,000 and with a budget of £854 million.

The CCG is made up of eight local commissioning groups (LCGs), which are groups of GP practices that have come together to commission/buy the day to day health services for their local populations. The role of the CCG is to support the LCGs in doing this.

The CCG is currently in the process of letting a large 5 year contract for services for older people across the area. The CCG's intention is to commission an improved and integrated system of health and social care services for older people at the local level.

As part of this process, the CCG has recognised the role of district councils in terms of supporting the health and wellbeing of older people and inputting into helping to maintain their independence in their own homes and communities.

In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing, FDC has provided headline information regarding our area and Council services to prospective bidders, along with identifying a number of key issues that they should address as part of the outline submission process.

FDC will continue to support the development of the older people programme, with the successful bidder being appointed by the CCG early in the New Year.

British Heart Foundation (BHF); Hearty Lives Project

The Council has been working together with the BHF who have funded a lifestyle coach to engage older people in healthy activities. A focus on the health of older people is one of the local Health Partnership's work streams.

The project has now come to an end following a successful programme that has had a positive impact on the health of the elderly people who have come into contact with the lifestyle coach. The scheme has:

- Carried out 5,000 brief interventions that include heart health, smoking cessation and weight management assessments. Brief interventions are recognised by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to impact positively on health.
- Referred 58 clients to their GP as a result of health concerns identified following an assessment
- Set up and run six, 12 week exercise programmes for elderly people in community settings, with approximately 10 attendees per programme. All attendees demonstrated improved physical performance following participation in the programme.

L5 Engaging young people

Youth District Council

The Youth District Council (YDC) held their Annual General Meeting on 15 May 2013 which was attended by students representing Neale Wade Academy, Cromwell Community College, Sir Harry Smith Community College and Wisbech Grammar School.

The outgoing Chair of the YDC delivered the end of year report which highlighted the achievements of the YDC in 2012/13. These included successful delivery of democracy day, an employability skills day and full distribution of the £10,000 grant funding provided by FDC .

The YDC discussed priorities for the forthcoming year which includes increasing the profile of Youth District Councillors within the schools by working closer with School Councils/Parliaments. The YDC also elected their new Chair, Vice-Chair and Finance Officer; all students from Neale Wade Academy

East Cambs & Fenland Children & Young People Area Partnership

Councillor Garratt attended the June meeting of the partnership. Highlights included:

- How progress has been made to find a legal route that will enable the Council to provide details of families who (following an assessment of the Council's benefit database) should be benefitting from Free School Meals but are not doing so, allowing CCC to engage with the families directly.
- That the partnership has developed a tender opportunity for an organisation to deliver support to children aged 4 to 11 who display low level mental health needs.
- An update on how targeted support is being developed for parents living in Elm parish

Children's Trust meeting – July 2013

Councillor Garratt attended the latest meeting of the Children's Trust on behalf of Cambridgeshire District Councils.

Key highlights are:

The Board received an overview of the learning from three serious case reviews and points were discussed in detail. The lessons learnt help inform workforce development of all organisations supporting the Trust's work.

An update was received from the Together for Families programme. There is a target of 805 families to identify and work across Cambs by March 2015. To date 270 families have been identified using a combination of data matching and professional identification.

Prior to the meeting, partners provided information on their key areas to drive improvements forward, these were collated and discussed in three focus groups. The headlines included:

- Poverty & Welfare reforms
- Keeping children safe
- Mental Health
- Family resilience & community capacity
- Attainment and health outcomes
- Early Years
- Voice of the child and family

This will inform priorities and focus moving forward for the Trust.

Pride in Fenland Awards - Recognition for the work undertaken by volunteers in the third sector and increased engagement with community members

43 nominations for the 2013 Pride in Fenland Awards were received for the event, which took place on 22nd March. This was an increase of 23% from the previous year.

During the evening 96 people attended the event in total.

This year the awards included a Youth Category, which was won by Nuala Esfahani.



Nuala pictured above (3rd from the right) with her award)

Performance

| LPI | Description | Frequency | Baseline | Target 13/14 | Year to date | Variance |
|-----------------|--|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Localism | | | | | | |
| RACS10 | Average time taken to process new claims and changes to benefits | Monthly | 13 | 15 | 11 | 27% |
| RACS 1 | Time taken to process new claims for benefit | Monthly | 28 | 20 | 24 | -20% |
| RACS 2 | Time taken to process changes to benefit | Monthly | 10 | 10 | 9 | 11% |
| PC1 | Action taken to address issues in private rented / Houses in Multiple Occupation | Quarterly | New | 200 | 55 | 10% |
| HCS3 | % of attendees satisfied with Golden Age Events | Annual | 97% | 96% | N/A | N/A |
| LS1 | Number of Paid customer visits to our leisure centres | Monthly | 621774 | 625000 | 253925 | 0% |
| LS2 | % of those asked who are satisfied with FDC leisure centres | Quarterly | 87% | 82% | 90% | 8% |
| HCS4 | Satisfaction of young people involved in YDC activities | Annual | 100% | 80% | N/A | N/A |

Streets Ahead

SA1 Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing

Recap Advanced Joint Working

All of the authorities in Cambridgeshire, and Peterborough, are involved in a key work stream within the Recap Partnership's Advanced Joint Working that could see the first jointly procured contract for recycling services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The joint procurement of the sorting of some 70,000 tonnes of recycling materials, materials collected in customer's blue bins, is progressing to timescale and a paper was presented to Cabinet in September to agree the joint procurement approach.

Jointly procuring waste services such as these creates potential for cost savings for partners.

Positive Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Our customers continue to offer important feedback on our refuse and recycling services through half-yearly satisfaction surveys.

Of 163 customers who gave feedback during the summer, 158 were satisfied with the refuse and recycling service, representing a satisfaction level of **97%**. Of these 138 (84%) considered the service to be 'Good' or 'Very Good'

Levels of Missed Collections Reduced

The refuse and recycling team have worked hard through a very hot summer that created a range of problems for them to tackle.

This summer's heat wave was the longest in many years and resulted in some operational problems and some delays to normal collections.

Between April and August 2013 the levels of missed collections actually improved on last year and averaged at less than 300 a month (14 per working day). Of the collections missed, 94% (1,351 of 1,435) were collected successfully on the following working day.

Fenland's Domestic Recycling Performance

Overall recycling performance in Fenland remains very similar to the same period last year, and the end of year forecast is to maintain our existing performance of 53% recycling.

Commercial Blue Bin Recycling Service Launched

A recycling service, very similar to the successful blue bin recycling service offered to domestic customers, has been made available to Fenland's 500 commercial waste customers from September 2013.

The service improvement was put in place following customer consultation. Customers asked for an improved recycling service and now they can recycle cans, paper, card, plastics and glass at work just like at home.

Fenland Cleansing Service Success

The review of cleansing services 18 months ago resulted in each town having its own dedicated Rapid Response team to work alongside the Village Response service.

This 7 day a week service, along with the support of local Street Pride groups, is working well to keep Fenland looking as clean as possible.

Overall, the 473 requests for service have been responded to on 99% (472) of occasions on the same or next working day. Alongside this, the 594 cleansing quality inspections demonstrate a similarly high standard of work and have met a suitable standard 99% (589) of the time so far this year.

They have also maintained Fenland's public toilets in a suitable condition 99% (181 of 183 inspections) of the time for the more than 11,000 customers who chose to use them in the first part of this year.

Refuse & Cleansing Service Efficiencies

Across Environmental Services the team have been making changes to working practices and been on the journey of finding improved ways of working since the round review in 2009. This has reduced the net budget since 2009 by 24%.

SA2 Delivering community projects that improve the Streetscene

The Street Scene Team are ambassadors for the Council and are often the first link between the Council and the public. The work they carry out is shaped by the council's prevention, intervention and enforcement (PIE) approach.

Our Street Scene officers are active in the community and between April and August 2013, have spent a total of 1,870 hours out on patrol in the 4 market towns and surrounding villages. In the last 6 months whilst out and about, the team have spoken to more than 2,500 people. The information provided sets up the teams current priorities. The team responds to issues such as dog fouling and litter by raising awareness and enforcing the Councils Dog Control Order.

The team also take part in community events and support Street Pride groups in their activities.

Protecting our Open Spaces

The Street Scene team have a proactive role in keep our cemeteries safe and have carried out 2,532 individual memorial safety inspections. Where officers identify a concern they arrange for this to be rectified as soon as possible.

Wisbech Open Spaces

In support of the Wisbech 2020 priority to tackle street drinking issues, Fenland District Council and the Police are working together in partnership to provide a high profile presence in priority areas. From 4 June to 2 August a total of 26 hours of joint early morning and late evening patrols have taken place in,

- Wisbech Park
- St Peters Gardens
- Tillery Field
- Leverington Road Cemetery
- Harecroft Road Recreation Ground

As a result of the joint patrols, monitoring has shown litter levels have fallen by 63%. In addition to this 84 people were spoken to and the Police carried out 4 alcohol seizures. 3 Homeless people were referred to local night shelters and Officers also assisted with reporting an incident of shop lifting.

Enforcement

A total of 568 enforcement hours have been undertaken in key areas determined from customer feedback. Since April officers have:

- Issued 16 Fixed Penalty Notices for littering offences, with 2 people awaiting Court dates for littering following the non-payment of the notice.
- Issued 28 fixed penalty notices for parking infringements on March Market Place.
- Investigated 41 abandoned vehicles with 5 being removed.

Streets Ahead 'Hot-spot' Initiative

A cross team project group has been set up to concentrate on Streets Ahead priorities within the towns and villages. The project group has a particular focus on Renaissance and conservation issues such as dilapidated buildings and unsightly land.

Following a first walkabout visit to Fenland's towns by the lead Portfolio Holders, a number of potential 'hot-spot' issues have been identified and a

prioritised initial action plan is under development. It is also intended to extend the project to Fenland's villages later in the year.

In addition to tackling the action plan, the initiative will focus on building relationships with partners such as English Heritage. These partnerships will hopefully help to resolve the significant issues faced by Fenland in tackling many of the dilapidated buildings in our towns.

Street Pride

Street Pride has seen another successful few months throughout 2013. So far this year more than 4,000 volunteer hours have been committed by the groups.

This year's celebration event was another success and took place at The Manor Leisure Centre. Over 60 volunteers attended and two groups gave presentations on their own project successes.

A refresh of Street Pride was launched in September to the groups. The new plan will provide additional support for wider environmental projects. Joining Street Pride more closely with the Council's successful Renaissance project and providing low level funding for undertaking more joint projects working with partners.

Work with Community Groups

The Council continues to work with nearly 30 local community groups, encouraging them to take an active role in the management of their local open spaces.

Instead of an ad-hoc approach to community involvement in open spaces, several Friends and Street Pride groups have set out their aspirations for improvements and the management of their local open spaces. These plans span a two year period and allow the Council to target support for the local groups.

Green Deal

The Government has recently launched the Green Deal; Fenland is working with other Cambridgeshire authorities to appoint key contractors to carry out Green Deal work across the area. By procuring reputable businesses to carry out work on behalf of householders, it is anticipated that the Green Deal roll out in Cambridgeshire will gather pace later in 2013.

Promoting Fenland's Markets

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



The Council has run Love your Local Fenland Markets activities over the summer, attracting more than 150 extra people to the markets. This programme will continue up to Christmas with an emphasis on improved promotion to attract further footfall to the markets.

In March improved signage has been erected in the market place to promote future community events and highlight to the local community when markets take place.

Four Seasons Events

The Council has supported local partners to run key events over the year. All have run successfully, attracting many local people, despite a day of poor weather in Chatteris and changeable weather at the Whittlesey Festival.

- **March St George's Fayre 2013**
- **Chatteris Historic Festival 2013**
- **Whittlesey Festival 2013**

Wisbech Christmas market is currently in the planning stage and is expected to be as successful as previous years – weather dependant.

New for 2013 is a Christmas market in March. This event will be managed by the Council in the first instance with input from some community partners. This event is planned to be a smaller event initially, and the size to grown on the initial event in future years.

Fenland achieves best ever result in Anglia in Bloom competition

Anglia in Bloom is the horticultural and environmental campaign competition that covers Eastern England. The competition is not all about flowers, but also about community ownership of local areas, community cohesion and what can be achieved by a community pulling together. In the past, unkempt areas have been transformed. This leads to reductions in vandalism and litter, transforming trouble spots into pleasant areas improving the overall appeal of a community.

The breadth of success for Fenland communities this year is impressive, with Wisbech once again winning the large town award, St. Peter and St. Pauls Gardens winning the small park award and Parson Drove winning the large village award. The following list highlights the hard work of local community volunteers, working together with the Council and our grounds maintenance contractor, The Landscape Group.

Anglia in Bloom Results 2013:

| Area | Award |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Wisbech | Winner & Gold – Large Town |
| Waterlees (Wisbech) | Silver – Urban Community |
| Wisbech Park | Silver Gilt – Large Parks |
| St Peter’s Church Gardens, Wisbech | Winner & Gold – Parks |
| Wisbech | Environmental Quality Nomination |
| | |
| March | Silver Gilt – Large Town |
| West End Park, March | Silver – Large Parks |
| Norwood Nature Reserve, March | Winner - Best Conservation Project |
| | |
| Chatteris | Silver Gilt – Town |
| St Peter and Paul’s Church Gardens, Chatteris | Silver |
| Ormand Connelly, Chatteris | Roy Lacey Award Nomination |
| | |
| Whittlesey | Silver – Town |
| Memorial Gardens, Whittlesey | Bronze |
| Whittlesey | Environmental Quality Nomination |
| | |
| Benwick | Silver – Small Village/Village |
| | |
| Parson Drove | Winner & Silver Gilt – Large Village |
| Parson Drove Pond | Biodiversity Award |
| Parson Drove | Environmental Quality Nomination |

SA3 Promote a Safer Fenland

Fenland reduces crime, again!

Through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) coordinated action and the positive scrutiny to improve Community Safety the CSP meeting in July chaired by Councillor Oliver were appraised of the following impacts from the partnerships work as at the end of June 2013:

- All crime currently down 14.2% (1194 incidents in Fenland against 1352 from Apr - Jun 2012/13)
- Reduction in violent against a person by 13.9% (204 incidents in Fenland against 237 from Apr - Jun 2012/13)
- Reduction of shoplifting offences by 9.4% (126 incidents in Fenland against 139 from Apr - Jun 2012/13)

- Reduction in theft from vehicles 37% (58 incidents in Fenland against 92 from Apr - Jun 2012/13)
- Reduction in ASB against 12/13 figures (950 incidents in Fenland at the end of June puts the partnership on track to reduce the total ASB incidents down over the year from 4019 incidents in 2012/13 (no quarterly comparison available))
- Public perception of ASB being a problem (0.7% against the 1.5% target set)

SA4 Provide quality parks and open spaces in Fenland

Grounds Maintenance

In 2012, maintaining the open spaces across Fenland during the wettest summer for 100 years proved very difficult and led to long grass and customer complaints. 2013 has been much improved and Fenland's open spaces have been maintained to a good standard.

The partnership with our contractor, The Landscape Group (TLG) enters its fourth year in November 2013, with both the Council and TLG satisfied with the current performance of the contract.

Furrowfields Multi-use Games Area and Play Area Extension, Chatteris

The area was commissioned after public consultation, with the equipment purchased through section 106 funding.

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and extended playground, which includes a climb net and basket swing, were formally opened by Cllr Murphy on his last official day as Chatteris Mayor and attended by Town and District Councillors.

Improving Fenland's Cemeteries

Since 2012/13, the Council has invested over £100,000, ensuring that there is sufficient space in March's Eastwood Cemetery to continue burials for the medium term. The previous cemetery was running very low on capacity, so the Council has extended the cemetery, adding capacity that will be sufficient for many years to come. The Council manages 6 open cemeteries and following the recent work at Eastwood, all cemeteries now have sufficient capacity for the medium term.

Six Years of Green Flag Success in Fenland

Judges visited the St Peters Church Gardens and Wisbech Park, and paid compliments on the high standards achieved. However, Wisbech Park will be mystery judged this year, which means that the park will be visited at any time from June to



October without FDC knowing the outcome until the judges' report arrives at Fenland Hall. This ensures the parks standards are being kept to the highest level throughout the year.

The success for both of these Green Spaces shows we are meeting the national benchmark for excellence in Public Parks and Open Spaces.

Performance

| LPI | Description | Frequency | Baseline | Target 13/14 | Year to date | Variance |
|----------------------|--|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Streets Ahead | | | | | | |
| ES1 | Rapid or Village response requests actioned same or next day | Monthly | 99% | 90% | 99% | 9% |
| ES2 | % of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards (including graffiti and flyposting) | Quarterly | New | 93% | 99% | 6% |
| ES3 | % of household waste recycled and composted | Monthly | 51% | 51% | 53% | 2% |
| ES5 | Customer satisfaction with Refuse and Recycling services | Quarterly | New | 85% | 97% | 12% |
| EH1 | Street Pride and Friends of community environmental events supported | Monthly | 104 | 120 | 87 | 74% |
| EH2 | Local Businesses supported and treated fairly | Quarterly | 98% | 85% | N/A | N/A |
| HCS5 | % who state they feel safer after attending an event | Quarterly | 88% | 75% | 84% | 9% |
| POS1 | Community led management action plans for Fenland's key open spaces | Annual | 6 | 6 | N/A | N/A |
| POS2 | % of those asked who are satisfied with FDC parks and events | Quarterly | 86% | 80% | 80% | 0% |

Open for Business

OB1 Develop business and employment in Fenland

Fenland's Economic Estate

The Business Premises Estate has performed well and the overall occupancy of the business portfolio has remained positive, delivering occupancy levels of 77%, against a target of 78%, especially when considered against the National economic picture.



Of particular note is the continued success of the South Fens Enterprise Park, which accepted its first occupier in April 2011 and now has 4 occupiers.

The Boathouse Business Centre has also seen a recently flurry of activity and continues to provide regionally recognised business 'incubation' space. Notwithstanding the successes of the year, we have engaged the services of local marketing experts, Tinfish Creative, who has been commissioned to assist with the proactive promotion of both the BHBC & SFBC.

Regional recognition of the Business Centres extends to include the first class conference facilities, which in the last financial year created a turnover of £147,580, hosting 1,475 events.

The entire Business Premises Estate provides accommodation for around 80 businesses and it is estimated that these businesses employ 400-500 people, providing a diverse range of professional, trade and service sectors.



The Café at The Boathouse was recently reopened following a short period of closure and initial indications are that a strong trade has been established.

'My Loyalty Card'

As part of the Wisbech 2020 project, the Council has worked with partners Horsefair Shopping Centre, Wisbech Town Council and the private sector to develop 'My Loyalty Card', a pilot shoppers voucher scheme which will have an official launch on 31st October 2013 and support;

- Shoppers with weekly discounts

- Retailers with improved footfall
- Increased vibrancy of the town centre
- Attractiveness to inward investors

OB2 Promote the economic profile of Fenland

Broadband

Connecting Cambridgeshire has developed a new online tool to help people look up 'where and when' they can expect to get superfast broadband in their area of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

New 'my area' pages go live this week on the Connecting Cambridgeshire website at www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk with an A-Z list of 267 areas across the county.

The 'my area' pages are designed to help people to see broad timescales for how their area or parish fits in to multiple phases of the broadband roll-out plan.

The project is on track to deliver better broadband countywide by 2015 but the roll-out is still at an early stage, so more information will be added to the 'my area' pages when it becomes available for each area.

Fenland Renaissance

The Fenland Renaissance programme continues to deliver visual improvements to the street-scene across the District. The programme focuses attention upon 'high visual impact' areas to drive improvements to the street-scene. The Building & Shop Front grants offered to owners will provide up to a maximum of 50% of the cost of any improvement works, to the property.

During 2012/13, the Renaissance Team have offered Building Grants worth £45,800, improving 6 properties in Whittlesey, Wisbech. In addition, the Shop Front Grants scheme has also funded improvements to 2 shop premises in Chatteris. Funds remain available for shop front improvements.

Business Start Up Advice Sessions

- The Fenland for Business partnership has run over 30 workshops and seminars on Business Development, How to use Social Media, Updates from the Budget, Financial Planning, Succession Planning and Employment and Taxation around the district and over 200 business have attended and feedback from various partners suggests that over 50% of business have improved the way the business has developed.
- Working with Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Service (NWES) and delivering 20 workshops and seminars, including presentations from the Bank of England,

UKT&I, HMRC and the Local Enterprise partnership have seen the creation of over 25 new Fenland businesses.

- Since the 'Thinking of starting your own business' initiative started in January 2013 with 4 new businesses created with a further 4 currently going through the Fredericks Foundation funding panel.
- Since delivering Start-up workshops at Community House, NWES has supported 20 residents through the process of self employment with 3 residents starting their business ventures as a courier, a supplier of wooden materials and an IT Repair man.

Promotion of Nene Ports to increase opportunities for leisure and commercial usage

From a commercial shipping aspect, the Council, as port authority, has been proactively engaged with both port operators and as a result, has seen a stabilisation in shipping numbers, with 240 projected for the Nene ports for 2013/14.

It is pleasing to note that the Council's boat lift and boatyard facilities have attracted strong interest from not only leisure craft, but also new commercial customers. These include fishing vessels from local ports and wind farm support vessels.

Leisure marketing and opportunities are being explored, including active links with Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council for a 'Sail the Wash' approach.

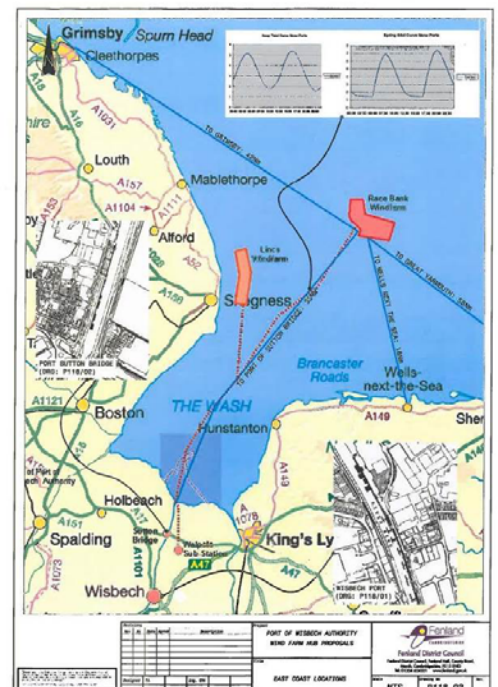
From a leisure perspective, the Yacht Harbour continues to support 84 vessels.

Plans remain in place to develop a combined leisure and commercial mooring facility at Sutton Bridge in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council. Land issues have regrettably delayed delivery, but all parties remain committed to the project with a view to construction later this year.

Lincs Wind Farm

The Council, as Harbour Authority and from a regeneration perspective, has been successful in attracting wind farm craft and business to the Nene ports linked to the Lincs Wind Farm.

Benefits include:



- Additional income for FDC for pilotage, and port fees related to cable laying and wind turbine construction and maintenance
- Additional moorings-related income
- Additional boat yard / boat lift activity and income
- Engagement with the local supply chain and development opportunities for local companies, eg engineering.

Race Bank Wind Farm

Planning approval has been given for the construction of a wind farm of up to 80MW capacity, which means it could meet the equivalent annual electricity demand of more than 450,000 homes, if fully developed. The project remains subject to a final investment decision by Centrica Q3 2013.

Preliminary meetings with Centrica have been held to outline:

- The Council marine service offer, eg Pilots, crew transfer
- Utilisation of FDC land and marine facilities, mooring, boat lift
- The opportunities to utilise the supply chain companies
- Training opportunities linked to schools and the College of West Anglia
- Utilisation of the Boathouse for business and meeting requirements
- Economic development and business support around the marine sector.

OB3 Raising aspirations and improving learning opportunities

Support further and higher education providers to promote a range of learning opportunities for Fenland residents

Construction has now finished on the new £7.2million Technology Centre at the College of West Anglia Isle Campus in Wisbech. Fenland District Council contributed £1.5million to the project which will offer a state-of-the-art training and learning environment which will support learners' aspirations and fore fill the needs of local business.

Work Experience Placement Scheme

The Council is also working with JobCentre Plus on pilot work experience placement scheme, which are now available to young people (16-24 year olds) who are out of work and claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA).

Currently, the Council has two work experience posts; one is in the Economic Development team to support the Fenland Enterprise in Education project and the other with the HR team supporting the learning and development administration.

The Council continues to actively promoted NVQs for all areas of the workforce and over the past year, developed 15 apprenticeships. The council has also

been working with F1 Training and other training providers to promote these opportunities within our communities.

Work with education providers to assist in improving educational attainment and links to industry

The Fenland Enterprise in Education (FEE) project is fast becoming an important enterprise/school vehicle to support business growth and learner aspirations with over 120 businesses involved in the project delivering business skills and training outputs include:

- 1562 students engaged with local business
- 389 hours of business time
- 43 different businesses involved, and
- 81 business people delivering activities.

Work with businesses, local schools and Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure a successful Building Schools for the Future programme

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a programme to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in England. Thomas Clarkson Community College is one of the schools within Cambridgeshire that has experienced an exciting change as an outcome of significant capital investment as part of the national Building Schools for the Future programme. The Council has also contributed additional £400,000 to the project to help address the limited facilities for large public performance space in Fenland. The Performance space was officially opened in March 2013.

Since the official launch of the Thomas Clarkson Performance Space in March 2013, the Council has been working with various partners including the Angles Theatre to develop a programme of events that will support the performance space including;

- The Rat Pack
- Into the Woods, and
- Orchestral events such as Big Bands

OB4 Promote Fenland as a Tourism and Visitor destination

Supporting the Fenland Tourism Board (FTB)



Earlier this year, the Council supported the Fenland Tourism Board for the launch event for Tourism by Adam Henson; farmer and BBC television presenter for Countryfile officially launched the new tourism website.
www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org



The FTB has produced annual Welcome to Cambridgeshire Fens, Visitor and Accommodation Guide 2013 also developed 4 new Market Town mini guides and Town Trails.

The FTB are now working more closely with Fenland District Council's Leisure, Markets and Events teams to further promote and enhance the districts markets and events through the Board's existing marketing channels and the emerging Tourism Marketing and Communication plan.

Building on previous years' success, the FTB is working with partners to help further develop and promote events in Fenland, including the Fenland Four Seasons, Wisbech Rose Far, Whittlesey Straw Bear and Heritage Open Days.

Since April 2013 the new website has received 4,538 unique visits, 84% of these visits have been new visitors and 16% have been return visits. In comparison to the same period last year, the hits are up slightly by 52. The FTB are developing a marketing campaign through the emerging Tourism Strategy to increase the hits to the website and in turn, visits to Fenland.

20,000 copies of the annual Welcome to Cambridgeshire Fens Visitor and Accommodation Guide were printed with 10,000 being distributed nationally, out of this 10,000, 6,283 have been picked up nationally.

Lever in external funding to deliver projects in Fenland

The Council was instrumental in delivering a £200,000 funding bid to develop a skills centre around Horticulture and Botany sectors with partners Delamore Ltd and the LEP and was officially opened in September under the banner of Fenland Horticultural Academy.

The skills centre will boast;

- 1000m² Training Glasshouses to support growing and cross-pollinate techniques and Sciences.
- 43m² Learning Centre that will support a Scientific Lab and learning environment.

The centre will help support:

- 6 apprenticeships growing to 15+ in 2016
- 5 new job growth in the first year, and 15+ in 2016+ within areas of Horticulture and land based sectors.

The Council has proactively worked with the Fens Adventurer programme to approve funding applications that total over £950,000 to enable 12 local business to deliver projects to help expand and grow, including:

- Westfield Farms - Grader machine **£36,000**
- Skylark Garden Centre - extension **£53,000**
- Newling Fruit growers - Packing Facility **£124,000**
- A&E G Heading – Onion Store **£125,000**
- English Mustard Growers – equipment **£50,000**
- L&A E Munns – bottling facility **£40,000**

Performance

| LPI | Description | Frequency | Baseline | Target 13/14 | Year to date | Variance |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Open for business | | | | | | |
| AP1 | % occupancy of Business Premises | Monthly | New | 78% | 77% | -1% |
| AP2 | % of customers satisfied with our Business Estates | Biannual | New | 90% | N/A | N/A |
| MS1 | Nene Berth holders | Monthly | 85% | 90% | 91% | 1% |
| ED1 | Attended at least 3 sector specific business events as per Economic Development Strategy | Annual | 3 | 3 | N/A | N/A |
| ED2 | Businesses engaged in the Fenland Enterprise in Education project | Annual | New | 75 | N/A | N/A |
| ED3 | Financial support to the BSF programme in Wisbech in line with the programme targets (milestones met) | Annual | 100% | 100% | N/A | N/A |
| ED4 | Support the Fenland Tourism Board action plan | Annual | 100% | 100% | N/A | N/A |

Quality Organisation

Q1 Providing good quality and access to services for the community

Contact Centre and Fenland @ your service Shops

The Contact Centre continues to see an increase in the volume of calls. We have received 6% more calls for the first half of this financial year (52,300) compared with the same period last year (49,300). This increase has mainly been the result of additional calls generated from changes to Council Tax Support and the resultant increase in recovery action being taken to recover more, smaller Council Tax debts (although we remain on target for Council Tax collection as discussed later in this update).

There have been some issues with long-term sickness in the team, we are working closely with these staff to help them recover and return to work and two have started a phased return in September. This has impacted on capacity to answer calls but the combination of a temporary additional staffing resource and the phased returns is helping see performance levels stabilise. In the first half of September, call answering has improved to 66% for the month compared with 62.5% for August alone.

We are implementing a detailed recovery plan to ensure that performance levels improve still further to regain the high standards that our targets and our customer expectations rightfully reflect.

Chatteris Community Hub

This was officially opened in August, bringing together services from Fenland and Cambs County Councils together under one roof in a ground-breaking new way of service provision.

CCH is about offering all the Fenland services that were offered in the Fenland @ your service Shop around the corner in Chatteris, where we have now relinquished the lease on the shop unit that we had provided a service from since the end of 2004.

Working with CCC, we devised and implemented joint service delivery model for Chatteris, called the Chatteris Community Hub. We are creating a full-year saving of over £30,000 per annum in costs for premises. At the same time, revised staffing arrangements will release a further full-year saving of £40,000 in staffing costs.

CCH allowed us to extend our service hours in Chatteris at no cost. Our Shop was open 24 hours a week over four days (including Saturday morning). CCH is open 27 hours a week over five days (including Saturday morning). At all times this service now includes the Public Library and our services in the same place at the

same times. CCH has allowed us to continue to provide high quality face to face customer service but also improve efficiency.

Paperless Office Project

This project has started looking at how we hold, share and retain information within the Council, with the aims of reducing the amount of paper and electronic records we store, freeing up space but also restructuring how we organise this information so that we can both find it easier and also share it with external partners where appropriate.

In May we revised our Data Retention Policy, and then undertook a “Spring Clean”, removing paper files no longer needed. This saw ten tonnes of paper being disposed of, most of which was shredded or recycled where possible. We have repeated this exercise at the start of October.

We are now looking at cleaning the electronic data we have (e.g. Word documents, PDFs etc. that are held on our IT network) to restructure folders of data, reduce duplication and make things easier to find, access and share. We are seeking to ensure we have one copy of key files that many people may have their own e-copy of now. We are also looking at information management best practice amongst Councils, to see what we can learn and adopt ourselves.

Our e-mail disposal process has now changed as well. We now permanently delete emails that are no longer wanted after a month, i.e. where we put them in the “trash” or “deleted items” bin on the email system. The first tidy up of these has saved over 200 GB in valuable data storage capacity.

Council Tax

Collection rates continue to hold steady, at the end of August they were just 0.1% below target for this time in the year, which is important as it helps the overall cash flow of the Council.

We continue to target non-payers quickly to both aid collection but also help catch signs of customers having difficulty paying as soon as possible. In August we issued 1,714 Reminder Notices, which was 486 more than the same month in 2012. The total value of these was £278k compared with £248k a year ago.

Business Rates

Collection rates continue to fluctuate during the year. At the end of August they were 0.8% below target. However, historical data shows that collection rates are currently comparable with longer term historical trends and that we are on track to collect our target income this year. This is important as we now retain 50% of the business rates collected and therefore non-collection will directly impact the Council's budget.

Council Tax Support

We have started consulting residents on our proposed Council Tax Support scheme for 2014-15. This includes writing to the 4,700 working age customers who receive CTS (we are not contacting pensioners as they still receive 100% of their CTS award as they are protected from the changes that came into effect in April 2013). We are also contacting a random sample of customers who do not receive CTS to ask for their feedback regarding the 2014-15 CTS scheme. The results of this consultation will be reported to O&S at its November meeting.

LGA Peer Review

We have invited a Peer Team from the Local Government Association to undertake a 'Peer Review' on behalf of the Council. This will run between 14 and 16 October. Although this is similar to the previous CPA Assessment, it is entirely voluntary and will constructively challenge the way we work to achieve our key priorities. This is timely as we continue to change working practices, join up with partners and modernise services in times of increasing financial pressure.

The Peer Team is made up of a range of 6 members and officers who are experienced in Local Government and the public sector. They will be looking at five corporate criteria: local context and priority setting, financial planning and viability, organisational capacity, political and managerial leadership, and governance and decision making. In addition, we've also asked the team to specifically look at economic growth and regeneration, making better use of public sector property and assets, how we interface with health services, partnership working and unlocking community capacity.

We have already sent the Peer Team background information in the form of a position statement, a selection of case studies and copies of key corporate documents. Over the course of the 3 days, the Peer Team will complete their assessment by speaking to members, officers and partners. They will also attend focus groups, and visit key sites across the district, along with attending part of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 14 October.

Cambridgeshire County Council will also be undertaking an assessment at the same time, and all the other Cambridgeshire local authorities will be undertaking a county-wide review into economic growth. Feedback will be given to us on Friday 18 October, which will highlight our areas of strength and any areas of development for the future.

Armed Forces Day

The Council has supported Armed Forces Day since the first event which took place on 27 June 2009, an Annual event which replaced Veterans Day, to support the Armed Forces and Veterans. It was introduced at Fenland at the request of the Chairman of the Council.

The feedback from the Community has been tremendous, allowing the Council to continue its support of the Armed Forces and local Veterans, giving something back to the community which ensures the Chairman and Council are involved at a local level with local residents.

The Council supported Armed Forces Day for the fifth year on Monday 24 June 2013 with support from Armed Forces Organisations such as the Royal British Legion, Royal Naval Association, Royal Airforce Association and Old Comrades Association, local Dignitaries, Veterans and local residents who were all willing to get involved and attend a Parade of Standards and show their appreciation by acknowledging a minutes silence in remembrance, culminating in a raising of the Armed Forces Day and Union Flag in honour of our military.



Emergency Planning

Following on from the flooding in the Whittlesey Washes area during 2012, a group of Whittlesey residents have volunteered to become trained Flood Wardens for their area. This has now been progressed with joint meetings between FDC and the Environment Agency to set the group up formally. Their key role during flooding is to assist vulnerable persons, act as a conduit between the FDC and the Environment Agency. This will become the first Flood Warden group to be set up within Fenland

Customer Service Excellence

We have again been reaccredited as a whole Council for Customer Service Excellence, and remain one of the few Councils in the country to have this certification for not just individual services but the Council as a whole.

Customer Service Excellence or "CSE" is the Government standard for public sector organisations to provide high quality, customer-focused service. It measures, using an annual assessment, how public organisations put customers at the heart of what they do by using customer insight, learning from feedback, publishing standards and performance.

It's not just a certificate but real proof to staff and customers that we passionately believe in, and deliver excellent, customer-focused services.

It reflects how all of our staff have kept our residents at the heart of everything we do, and have continued to make a difference to our community.

The CSE Assessor summed things up by saying "Staff have a passion and desire to provide the best possible customer experience" and "There is a corporate culture in ensuring that the customer experiences the best possible services".

They also commented two areas of "compliance plus" where we go even beyond the high standards of CSE. The first was Community House for an excellent example of working with partner organisations and helping resident's access services remotely such as the CAB and receiving help in preparing for Universal Credit when it is introduced this year. The second was Building Control. Here we have started texting Builders to gain feedback on service delivery that proved unsuccessful using traditional methods and this has helped us improve our inspections booking service.

We look forward to our next annual assessment in March 2014.

Investors in People (IIP)

The Council has recently retained our IIP status, having successfully passed the reaccreditation process with flying colours. The IIP assessment focuses on staff performance and development, which is seen as vital for all staff at the Council. The Council was first awarded IIP accredited status in 1998 and the recent visit was one of our 3 yearly re-accreditation assessments.

In her feedback, the assessor stated that despite the unprecedented challenges facing local government, she was highly impressed by the continued strength of the Council and its clear commitment to organisational and staff development. Not only did the Council meet the required standards, but in many areas the organisation is operating at a much higher level than the core IIP requirements.

3Cs

The Council's 3Cs service continues to help us provide services of a high standard through listening to feedback from our customers. Our 3Cs process monitors the number of Compliments, Correspondence and Complaints we receive and the time it takes for us to reply to those enquiries. This helps us to understand the levels of enquiries we receive, whether we are providing a speedy service and whether we are getting it right first time. Monitoring this information allows us to identify any trends and adapt our service to the customer's needs which enables us to provide an efficient service.

The number of Correspondence, Compliments and Complaints received from our customers during the first 6 months of the financial year are as follows:

| 3Cs category | Measure | 1 April – 31 August 2012 | 1 April – 31 August 2013 | % Change |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Compliments | Total number received (over given period) | 120 | 78 | Recorded compliments down 35% |
| Correspondence | Total number received (over given period) | 192 | 163 | Recorded compliments down 15% |
| Complaints | Total number received (over given period) | 143 | 154 | Recorded complaints up 7% |
| Total contact (over given period) | | 455 | 395 | Overall contact down 13% |

Q2 Continue to use our resources effectively

Provisional Outturn 2012/13

The provisional financial outturn for the Council for 2012/13 was presented to Cabinet on 20 June 2013. It has been another challenging year and the Council has successfully delivered over £1m of savings with minimal effect on front line services. In addition to these savings, it is pleasing to report that a small underspend of £25k has been achieved. Given the scale of the challenges, this is a considerable achievement and is due to the hard work of officers across the Council in achieving savings and controlling costs with Member's direction. This continues the strong financial management shown in the last three years during extremely challenging circumstances.

Budget 2013/14 and Onwards

The Council is making excellent progress on delivering its 2 year savings target of £1.252 million, with a number of restructures and savings initiatives being delivered with the priority of protecting front line services. Work continues to identify further savings to prepare for the future challenges in the medium term following the Comprehensive Spending Review in June.

Corporate Governance

The Corporate Governance Committee has been fundamental in the review and maintenance of the Council's Governance Framework including reviewing the Annual Governance Statement and internal audit outturn report.

In addition, the Committee approved the 2012/13 accounts at the end of September, where the Council's external auditors praised the Council for its strong financial management and excellent provision of information and working papers.

County Council Election

On 2 May 2013, Fenland District Council delivered the Cambridgeshire County Council elections across the District.

The team were responsible for the election in relation to the 11 County Council divisions in the Fenland area, all of which were contested. Fenland had an eligible electorate of 74,345

Electors across the District were able to cast their vote in person within the 53 Polling Stations located across Fenland. In addition the team also issued 10,372 postal votes. The overall turnout in our area was 28.86%

The District Council's performance in relation to the management of elections is rigorously monitored by the Electoral Commission. The standards set assess all aspects of electoral management including Planning and Organisation, Administering the Poll, Absent Voting and Verifying and counting the votes. The commission have assessed us as meeting all the required standards which is a significant achievement.

Member Services Hotline Summary

The Member Services hotline has now been in place for four and a half years. It was introduced at the request of members to ensure that there was a dedicated telephone line to aid councillors to manage their work, including dealing with enquiries, researching information and providing access to other Council officers.

Between April and August we have received:

- A total of 446 calls
- 26 different councillors have used the Members' Hotline

The feedback that has been received shows how successful the Hotline has been.

A question included within the recent Members' Survey for 2013 on the Members' Hotline, the question asked:

"Do you use the Members' Hotline? If yes – how do you rate the service you have received?"

- 72% of respondents stated that they used the Members' Hotline; 100% of these users rated the service they have received as Excellent

Comments made by those that use the service included:

- Rarely let me down
- Often used the number as you know that regardless of who picks up the call the service is always excellent
- Excellent service, quick service.
- Use the helpline frequently as always answered promptly

Q3 Deliver regulatory services in a customer focused way.

Individual Electoral Registration (IER) Results

The Electoral Administration and Registration Bill has introduced Individual Electoral Registration, which will go live during 2014 in preparation for the Parliamentary election in 2015. A key element of the project is to validate the electoral registration data for all Councils to check the accuracy of current electoral records against those held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Those individuals who match with records held by DWP will automatically transfer to the new electoral registration system.

Electors who do not match with DWP data or are not currently on the register or have moved address in recent months will be required to provide additional information in the form of their national insurance number and date of birth in order to register under the new scheme. Individual Electoral Registration will require each individual to register as opposed to the current scheme which enables one member of the household to register all eligible electors.

All councils have recently undertaken a dry run of data matching. Of the 74,165 electors currently registered in Fenland, we achieved an extremely positive 82.31% match rate which significantly exceeds the national average.

Civic Reception

The Council holds a Civic Reception in honour of each new/newly elected Chairman. This is an Annual event which gives the Chairman a chance to showcase Fenland and to network with other Chairmen and Mayors. This year the event was held on the 12 July at the Function Suite at The Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey with 148 people in attendance. Feedback from the Civic Dignitaries, members of the Business Community, Armed Forces and personal guests was very complimentary with all lauding the event a success for another year.

Communications

The Fenlander monthly page continues to keep residents up to date with news about Council events and services. Each edition is made up of three main feature stories covering community news and events and a selection of briefs, including details of up and coming news and events in Fenland. Feature stories over the last six months include:

- Consultation on March plans (Core Strategy)
- Rural Capital Fund grants: £520K handed out in past 2 years
- Successful employment skills day
- Armed Forces Day event
- Good news on broadband
- Ministers briefed on Operation Pheasant success
- Launch of Chatteris Community Hub

In addition to the monthly page, a new enhanced News and Events section of the FDC website was launched, www.fenland.gov.uk/news. This is used as the central hub for all of the Council's latest news and events information. It is also the central landing site for all our social media sites; Facebook, Twitter and Shape Your Place. There are also user friendly tabs to access all our Fenlander monthly pages, all our archived news, and key information on how to contact the press officer or communications team. Key monthly updates include:

| Month | Web Hits | News Articles on Website | Facebook Posts | Twitter 'tweets' |
|--------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| April | 34,666 | 15 | 11 | 11 |
| May | 32,980 | 23 | 18 | 18 |
| June | 29,727 | 19 | 13 | 13 |
| July | 34,498 | 21 | 9 | 9 |
| August | 35,998 | 15 | 13 | 13 |

New Approach to Delivering Environmental Health Services

The refreshed Environmental Health Team has been delivering their plan to inform customers, colleagues and partners of their new ways of working.

Since August 2013, the team has been working on a geographic district basis which means an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) is responsible for all environmental health related matters within an area of Fenland's district. The EHO is supported by a small team of Environment Health Protection Officers who specialise in certain work areas such as food safety or pollution control.

This generic way of working, which is very similar to the successful Street Scene Team approach, will help to build relationships between the Council, our customers and also importantly local businesses. The approach of the team is to support businesses to comply with legal requirements in the most cost effective way whilst building resilience and good practice. Smaller business in particular will benefit from this approach.

The team is currently developing their information pack to take to the town Councils in October and November this year. Following this, an update will be offered to each Town Council along with all other Streets Ahead issues.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Celebration

The Council recently held a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Celebration at which local food businesses that achieved a 5 Rating, for the first time in 2012/13, were presented with a Celebration Certificate by their ward councillor.

Many businesses have made great efforts to improve their Food Hygiene Rating, for example from 1 to 5, the highest rating possible. Giving recognition encourages businesses to improve and also to respond more quickly to requests for improvements, as the business is entitled to a rescored revisit at between 3 – 6 months from the original score issued. A total of 97% of local food businesses are now broadly compliant, the highest ever figure.



Performance

| LPI | Description | Frequency | Baseline | Target 13/14 | Year to date | Variance |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Quality Organisation | | | | | | |
| RACS 9 | % of customers dealt with at 1st point of contact | Monthly | 94% | 85% | 95% | 10% |
| RACS 5 | % of customers satisfied with overall service at the shops | Annual | 97% | 95% | N/A | N/A |
| RACS 6 | % of customers satisfied with overall service in the Contact Centre | Annual | 95% | 95% | N/A | N/A |
| RACS 7 | % of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds | Monthly | 80% | 80% | 61% | -17% |
| RACS 8 | Annual average percentage of abandoned calls | Monthly | 4% | <5% | 12% | -6% |
| RACS 3 | % of Council Tax collected | Monthly | 98% | 98% | 56% | 0% |
| RACS 4 | % of NNDR collected | Monthly | 98% | 99% | 51% | -1% |
| HR 10 | % of staff that feel proud to work for FDC | Biennial | 84% | 80% | 84% | 4% |
| PC1 | Number of visits to the FDC website | Monthly | 358980 | 398129 | 167869 | 1% |