

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

<b>Date</b>	<b>7 APRIL 2014</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE LOCALISM CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2013-14</b>

**1. PURPOSE/SUMMARY**

This report sets out the Council’s progress in delivering the Localism corporate objectives 2013-14.

**2. KEY ISSUES**

- Particular successes are:
  - 160 families in Fenland have been helped to be prevented from becoming homeless.
  - Successful funding bid to tackle rogue landlords in Fenland (£178,600 over 2 years).
  - The Community House in Wisbech has engaged with over 850 people from the Waterlees Ward.
  - Over 520 older people have attended Golden Age events, which identified over £37,000 in benefits that the residents did not realise they were entitled to.
  - A 36% increase in attendance at Fenland’s leisure centres for January and February 2014 compared to the same period in 2012/13.
  - Over £5,000 in grants awarded to local groups by the Youth District Council.

**3. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Panel consider the progress made by the Council in delivering the Localism corporate objective.

<b>Wards Affected</b>	All
<b>Forward Plan Reference No.</b> (if applicable)	N/A
<b>Portfolio Holder(s)</b>	Cllr Pop Jolley, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Tourism Cllr Steve Garratt, Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People, Sports Development & Golden Age Fairs Cllr Mike Cornwell, Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing, Health Inequalities and Vulnerable People

<b>Report Originator</b>	Phil Hughes – Head of Open Spaces & Leisure Dan Horn – Head of Housing & Community Support Geoff Kent – Head of Customer Services Annabel Tighe – Environmental Health Manager
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	Richard Cassidy – Corporate Director <a href="mailto:richardcassidy@fenland.gov.uk">richardcassidy@fenland.gov.uk</a> Alan Pain – Corporate Director <a href="mailto:alanpain@fenland.gov.uk">alanpain@fenland.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background Paper(s)</b>	Corporate Plan 2013-2016

# Overview & Scrutiny Report

## Progress Against the Localism Priority April 2014



### Portfolio Holders

	<p><b>Councillor Pop Jolley</b></p>
<p><b>Portfolio Holder for Leisure &amp; Tourism</b></p>	

	<p><b>Councillor Mike Cornwell</b></p>
<p><b>Portfolio Holder for Health &amp; Wellbeing, Health Equalities and Vulnerable People</b></p>	

	<p><b>Councillor Steve Garratt</b></p>
<p><b>Portfolio Holder for Children &amp; Young People, Sports Development and Golden Age Fairs</b></p>	

## L1 Supporting vulnerable members of our community

- *Process benefit applications quickly to ensure residents can access financial aid*
- *Support residents in claiming the benefits they are entitled to, including the new Local Council Tax Reduction scheme (Local Council Tax Support)*
- *Respond to changing government policy regarding the processing of housing benefits applications*

### **Benefits**

The number of households that we have helped with benefits this year has levelled out after the 2% increase last year. We are now helping 10,185 people compared to 10,347 this time last year. The resultant 1.6% is an indication that the local economy is improving.

Performance has improved. At an average of 20.9 days (as at 23 March 2014), we are just short of our target of assessing all new applications for benefit in an average of 20 days. For changes that are reported to us, we are taking an average of 7.5 days, much better than our target of 10 days. This is helping reduce overpayments, ensure that benefits paid out quickly reflect changes in customers' circumstances and helping customers pay their rent with more certainty when budgeting.

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was localised and replaced by Council Tax Support (CTS) from April 2013. At the same time, Government funding was reduced. This meant that in 2013-14 we have reduced CTS to be a maximum of 91.5% of working age customers' Council Tax liability, which enabled Fenland to benefit from a special transition grant from the Government to Councils that reduced CTS by no more than 8.5% in 2013-14 (this is for one year only, so in 2014-15 we are reducing CTS by 14%). Pensioners are protected from these reductions by Government regulations, meaning that they can still receive up to 100% CTS.

We have responded to two other big changes to Housing Benefit (HB) in 2013. The "Benefit Cap" was introduced, limiting the maximum total of all state-benefits awarded to customers limited to £26,000 per annum with any excess income over this limit being reclaimed from HB. 20 households in Fenland have been affected by this. The other change was "Spare Room Subsidy", sometimes known as the "Bedroom Tax" by the popular press. This applies to social housing only (properties owned by Housing Associations). 500 households have been affected in Fenland, where regulations deem that they have an excess bedroom for their needs, so HB has been reduced in these cases.

The Government increased our Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) budget this year to help soften the blow of the changes to HB (it cannot be used for CTS, as

it can only cover housing costs by law) from £50,000 last year to £146,827 in 2013-14. So far we have spent £128,345 and have used this budget to help households move to smaller, more appropriate accommodation by helping pay deposits on new tenancies. We have also provided longer-term help to households where they are unable to move, and have insufficient income to pay the increase in rent experienced as a result of the changes. To increase awareness and take-up of DHP, we have mounted publicity campaigns, worked closely with Housing Associations as well as regularly attending Wisbech Fenland @ your service Shop to provide a surgery and advice for potential claimants, and to give an instant decision to customers on DHP eligibility.

*(The information above is up to 23rd March 2013.)*

- *Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and our statutory Housing Duties*

### **Preventing Homelessness**

The Council has prevented 160 families from becoming homeless since April 2013 up until the end of February 2014 using various means at either no cost or by using the prevention fund. We have done this through a variety of methods including home visits with Circle Housing -Roddons, mediation with families, negotiated with landlords, paid for court hearings to stop evictions and reconnected people to their home countries. As a comparison for the same period the previous year we made 136 preventions.

As an example of the prevention work the Council undertakes, the Council assisted a family to stay in their home by paying £40 from the prevention fund for a court hearing to stop a bailiffs' warrant of eviction. The court granted that the warrant should be stopped due to the new financial agreement put in place at the hearing. If the Council had not helped in this way the property would have been repossessed and the family would have become homeless.

### **Rough Sleeper Initiative**

Since April 2013 up until end of February 2014 there have been over 20 multi-agency visits to rough sleeper encampments within Fenland by the Council, Police and an Eastern European speaking outreach worker. This has led to the closure of 3 camps and also led to 24 residents being supported to return to their country of origin. In comparison there were 22 repatriations between April 2012 and April 2013.

### **OPERATION PHEASANT**

This multi-agency project is aimed at tackling poor living conditions within the private rented sector and the exploitation of the migrant population. The Council, along with partners including the Police, Gangmaster Licensing

Authority, HM Revenues & Customs, Immigration enforcement, Cambs Fire & Rescue & Department for Work & Pensions are working proactively to stamp out exploitation of residents and poor management of private rented housing. Since the multi-agency project commenced in November 2012, over 300 properties have been visited over 2,000 voluntary questionnaires have been completed. Issues tackled have included making unsafe properties compliant with safety standards, tackling overcrowding, ensuring planning compliance, tackling fraud, non-payment of tax and human trafficking.

### **Operation Pheasant – Ministerial Task Force**

In July 2013, the Council was invited to attend a meeting chaired by MP Mark Prisk (Housing Minister) and MP Mark Harper (Immigration Minister) at the House of Commons. The ministerial task force received a presentation on housing related issues in Fenland and how the Council & Police, in partnership with broader Operation Pheasant partners are tackling issues around rogue landlords and the migrant population.

The approach to tackling issues was well received and will be used nationally as good practice. The Metropolitan Police and London Borough of Newham have already been in contact to share good practice.

### **Operation Pheasant Update at The Home Office**

In November 13 the Council along with other Operation Pheasant partners attended the Home Office in London to feedback on the project after its first year.

The Council fed back on achievements which included tackling overcrowded properties often in very dangerous condition and poorly managed private rented properties in Wisbech. The outcomes were very well received and efforts of the Operation Pheasant team was recognised as good practice, with the approach being replicated in 14 other areas across the UK.

### **Funding Success – Migrant Outreach Workers**

The Council, in partnership with an organisation called CRI and Cambridge City Council, have successfully won a bid to deliver an outreach service to migrants in Fenland and Cambridge City. The £144k funding which runs until December 2014 will deliver increased capacity to Operation Pheasant and continuation of the advice service which is run from the Ferry Project. The role will assist with advice to rough sleepers and sign posting to accommodation and employment options for migrants.

### **Operation Endeavour**

The Council played a leading role as part of a multi-agency partnership including the Police, Gangmasters Licensing Authority, National Crime Agency,

Salvation Army and British Red Cross in the delivery of a reception centre as part of the tackling migrant exploitation operation, known as Operation Endeavour. The Council had a role to ensure our statutory duties regarding tackling rogue landlords, homelessness and emergency planning were fulfilled as part of the operation. Through early morning activity on the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 82 Migrant workers were brought to the centre to enable them to receive support around finding alternative accommodation and work and to gather any evidence with regard to arrests undertaken of legal and illegal gangmasters at the same time. The Council helped prevent 37 people from becoming homeless during the operation by finding them alternative places to live.

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

250 separate property investigations have taken place by the end of February 2014:

Under Housing Act, the Council has investigated 97 separate HMOs in the current year to date. This has included 44 homes where action was taken to remedy identified health and safety related faults and failings (eg lack of smoke alarms, unsafe electrics, gas safety checks etc).

The Council has also investigated 139 complaints from tenants occupying privately rented accommodation in the year to date. Council Officers intervene to remove Category 1 hazards (serious faults) and Category 2 hazards (less serious faults) from properties to make them safe for the residents (typically works to fix broken heating systems, remove damp and mould, make safe electrical systems and gas safety checks).

As well as this there have been other interventions to 14 other properties in this sector to address adverse neighbour impacts, including noise, waste management issues, and anti social behaviour.

### **Rogue Landlord Taskforce**

The Council successfully bid for funding to tackle rogue landlords in Fenland. The grant of £178,600 over two years was awarded and commenced in January of this year. The Council have increased capacity in key enforcement areas to take a tough stance on poor property conditions, inadequate and illegal management, planning and tenancy relations to tackle illegal evictions and harassment. The work continues to be part of the broader Operation Pheasant Task force supported by Steve Barclay.

Since the start of the project in January, the Council has achieved 158 property inspections, 39 notices under housing and planning legislation, 3 enforcement actions, conducted a tenure survey, and prohibited 3 properties from use.

The project is funded until the end of March 2015.

## **L2 Promoting Cohesion throughout Fenland**

- *Deliver the Fenland Community Cohesion Strategy through the Diverse Communities Forum*

Fenland District Council's Corporate Peer Challenge positively recognised the facilitation role played by the Council to develop community capacity in delivering services, via partnership projects to residents including migrants, Gypsies and Travellers, and other minority groups within the district.

This is all coordinated through the Diverse Communities Forum and the Fenland-wide cohesion action plan.

Some of the achievements of the Diverse Communities Forum since April 2013 have been:

- The development / sustainability of local volunteer networks to support people from Central and Eastern Europe newly arrived in the Fenland area. The volunteer network aims to provide locally-based translation and interpretation for people who require English language support. They also run ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and these are available at the community hubs in Wisbech (Oasis Centre, Rosmini Centre and Queens Marys Centre) and other local places. The courses are run on various days and at various times, therefore being open to all. All are well supported and a continued need for these is well established. By the end of February there were 50 plus volunteers supporting new arrivals
- Providing a supportive infrastructure for organisations like KLARS (Kings Lynn Area Support Service) to work in Fenland. KLARS see around 525 clients a month. The nature of the enquiries include benefits and form filling remain, driving issues ( insurance, fines, accidents, parking, buying / selling / responsibility for vehicles) and housing (understanding access to housing and difficulties with private landlords.
- Minimising the costs of translation. The Forum has established the need for improved access to "low level" translation and interpretation services, both by service providers, (e.g. schools, Youth Services), and by families themselves. To underpin this, we are developing a volunteer based Community Volunteer Translation/Interpretation Services (CVTS) to support the integration of newly arrived Central and Eastern European communities in the Fenland area. The CVTS will recruit, train, deploy and



support volunteers from the settled A8/A10 communities e.g. Poles, Latvians and Lithuanians who are able to engage culturally and linguistically with newly arrived communities.

### **Tension Monitoring Group:**

We share a commitment to building safe and strong communities, where people of different backgrounds can live and work together with mutual trust and respect. For the most part, that is how people do live. But we are aware that sometimes there are circumstances where there can be distrust and antagonism within and between communities which cause fear and anxiety and can lead to disorder and violence.

To address this real concern the Forum has put in place a Tension Monitoring Group. Its primary purpose is in monitoring community tension to better inform local decision making and where possible avoid or minimise the impact of community tensions.

The Fenland Tension Monitoring Group has enabled local agencies and communities to get 'upstream' of problems and manage tensions through a measured partnership response. It is based on a strategy of establishing a multi-agency approach to improve communication, information sharing and community engagement to manage tensions.

Examples of the groups work since April 2013 include:

- Ensuring that all community hubs act as reporting centres.
- Developing an "on the ground" action plan to address any negatives that could occur from an anti-immigration rally that was held in Wisbech last spring.
- Bringing forward an International Children's day event to offer those who were looking to form a counter rally on the same day as the anti-immigration rally was being held an "alternative" event to support. This event was very well supported and stopped over 100 people marching to Wisbech Park in a counter rally.
- *Deliver services in the areas of greatest need*

### **Community House**

During 2013/14 (up until the end of February 2014), there have been 1,726 contacts / interventions by the Community House team, compared to 1,444

during 2012/13, these are broken down into the various quality of life topics in the table below.

This has equated to 854 different people being engaged with by the Community House and its team, of which 81 people were non British compared to 61 during 2012/13. In 2011/12 the house engaged with 527 different people and last year, 2012/13, 665.

Quality of Life issue	Number of Contacts / Interventions
Community Engagement / Cohesion	838
Diversionsary / Positive Activity for Young People	180
Skills / Job Support	108
Volunteering	199
Welfare Advice (financial)	42
Community Learning	170
Welfare Advice and Support (social including homelessness / Domestic Violence / Crisis support / health)	68
Business Development / Entrepreneurialism	42
Anti Social Behaviour / Crime	6
Environment	10
Other issues	63
<b>Total Contacts / Interventions</b>	<b>1,726</b>

Some typical comments / feedback the Council have received includes:

- *The staff are always welcoming*
- *The staff helped me a lot*
- *I enjoy coming to the Community House....as I feel safe there*
- *The house is very welcoming*
- *Thank you for a good night*
- *Brilliant to have activities that the whole family can take part in*
- *Thank you for your help and support*

In terms of satisfaction with the services provided, 91.25% were very satisfied (out of a sample of 80 responses), compared to 91% 2012/13.

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

The Big Lottery Funded Making Money County project is a £1 million Lottery funded project over 5 years launched in the summer of 2013. The aim is to improve the financial capability and confidence of social housing tenants living

in Fenland. The project seeks to equip tenants with the skills to budget, cope with changes in income and resilience to deal with financial change.

The Council have played an important part in delivering the outreach session on the refurbished New Horizons bus alongside lead partner Circle Housing – Roddons, CAB, and CHS group (formerly known as Cambridge Housing Society).

Year to date (to the end of February 2014):

- New Horizon bus visits: 54 visits / 774 residents engaged – average 14 per visit
- Training of Frontline workers to improve their delivery and support to Fenland residents: 124
- Laptop learners: 8 completed / 10 in training
- Money Mates: A money mate is a volunteer who works closely with CAB and supports activities on the New Horizons bus. They receive regular information and training updates to offer signposting and support for residents accessing the service. Currently 4 active & 9 in training

Feedback from customers:

- *"Excellent staff very well informed"*
- *"Keep up the good work "*
- *" We need buses like this across the whole county"*
- *"I was offered coffee and the bus is warm and the top tips were easy to follow"*
- *"Perfect service"*

### **Credit Union**

There has been significant progress in 2013-14 in developing a greater credit union presence in Fenland which has seen a March branch established and operating once per week from the Fenland @your service shop. Since opening in January the March branch has signed up around 25 new members.

Wisbech Rainbow Savers volunteers have maintained two weekly collection points at popular community centres. The steering group has also linked in with high street banks to train staff in referring customers to the credit union.

This has led to Barclays offering Wisbech Savers the chance to open a monthly customer point in the Branch which went live in March. This is a significant offer

and will give local people who cannot access banking products the chance to access some form of safe and fair banking products.

Numbers of collection/customer points in Fenland (as of 20<sup>th</sup> March): 4 (2012 = 0, 2013 = 2)

Number of weekly collection points: 3 (2012 = 0, 2013 = 2)

Number of volunteer training sessions across the District: 3 (2012 = 0, 2013 = 2)

### **Young People March - £8,000 FDC Grant for 13/14**

Young People March (YPM) are continuing to offer high quality youth provision in the town, however they have had a substantial amount of funding from other sources reduced or come to a natural end.

The facility has achieved the following:

- On average, YPM see 150 young people each week (of which 30 are Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET))
- There are 1000 members on their data base
- During a month there are on average 55 drop-in sessions per week ranging from sexual health and C-Card support to their community cafe.

### **Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services – Funding in 13/14 is £15,000**

The Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services (CCVS) is an organisation funded by the Council, CCC, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and South Cambs District Council to provide support to Fenland's Community and Voluntary Sector to help build the capacity and resilience of the Fenland community.

Their work highlights for 13/14 include:

- Supporting 157 members from Fenland (and ones which operate within Fenland). For example in October, November and December the organisation has dealt with 81 enquiries from groups within Fenland, given advice to 19 groups (of which 6 were 1-2-1s), one training session on writing good funding applications and held an annual funding fair in which 18 groups were represented. For the same 3 months the previous year they supported 10 groups and undertook a funding focus event with 14 groups represented.
- In the first 2 quarters the CCVS held a drop-in 1-2-1 session every month at venues across Fenland with on average 3 groups attending each 1-2-1 drop-in

### **Wisbech and Fenland Museum - 13/14 funding £50,000**

The funding helps to provide curatorial support to 3 other main museums within Fenland namely; The Chatteris Museum, Whittlesey Museum and March Museum. The Curator from the Wisbech and Fenland Museum offers curatorial advice on a monthly basis.

In January 2013- January 2014; there has been an increase in:

- website hits from 9229 to 11, 769 across the 4 museums,
- visitor numbers from 636 to 1,220 across the 4 museums
- school children accessing the museums from 23 to 171

The number of school visits has stayed the same at 5.

### **The Rural Cambridgeshire Citizens Advice Bureau – Funding in 13/14 = £81,000**

The Rural Cambridgeshire Citizen’s Advice Bureau supply Fenland District Council with 6 monthly reports. The figures shown below are correct up to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.

The group has negotiated £157,666 amount of debt and have seen 1715 unique users (defined as individuals not returning to the CAB for support within a 6 month period). In addition they have acquired £187,664 of benefits.

Since April 2013 the Rural Cambridgeshire Citizens Advice Bureau has supported 245 people who have had council tax arrears (this is expected to increase by 25% in Fenland).

The group have trained 8 new volunteer advisors so far.

## **L3 Supporting our ageing population**

- *Deliver a programme of Golden Age events, including Golden Age Fairs and Fenland @ your service shop events*

### **Golden Age**

The numbers of people accessing Golden Age events has increased by 21% from 431 at this point last year, to 522 at the same time this year (end of February 2014).

There has been an increase of 16% in the number of attendees accessing benefit health checks from 107 in 2012-2013, to 124 to date for this current financial year. This also equates to an increase of 37% in identified funding from £13,766 in 12/13 to £37,173 between 13/14.

There has been 12 Golden Age events including; 1 Golden Age Fair at Tydd St Giles, 6 x events in our One Stop Shops and various surgeries around the district.

To date for this financial year there have been 69 feedback forms received from attendees from the Golden Age fairs and the drop-ins which responded that the events were good or very good in addition 6 commented that the events were ok. In total 77 forms were completed to the end of February which gives a satisfaction rating of 97%.

There have been a number of exciting developments within the Golden Age programme. This includes supporting our older person's groups to keep fit and stay healthy through the New Age Kurling initiative and helping keep older people safe by testing their electric blankets and supplying new ones.

### **Golden Age Case Study**

Mr x and Mrs y are both elderly residents. Mr x is Mrs Y have been living on the breadline for a number of years. They didn't think that they would be entitled to any benefits at all but attended the Golden Age Surgery in Murrow.

The couple were assessed to see their eligibility and as a result the Fenland Ferret found them £2,300 over a 12 month period equating to an addition £191 per month.

Both Mr x and Mrs y are overjoyed that Fenland District Council have been able to find them extra money to help ease their financial burden.

- *Plan our services to meet the changing needs of an ageing population*

### **Improving Older People's Healthcare and Adult Community Services**

Four organisations have been shortlisted in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) tendering process for improving older people's healthcare and adult community services.

The organisations will now go through to the next stage of the Integrated Older People's Pathway and Adult Community Services procurement process during which they will develop and refine the initial proposals they submitted in January 2014.

The organisation judged to have put forward the best overall proposal will be selected as the preferred bidder in September 2014, with the 5 year contract starting in January 2015.

The CCG will undertake thirteen weeks of public consultation on proposals to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services will begin on 17 March 2014.

The consultation will ask for residents views on initial proposals put forward by a shortlist of NHS and independent organisations

More than 50,000 copies of the consultation document have been sent out and more than 25 public meetings across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been arranged.

The consultation document is available online through Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group's (C&PCCG) website [www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk](http://www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk) from March 2014.

The Council have been supporting the process by:

- Providing supportive context of the issues that Fenland face relating to health and wellbeing from a Fenland perspective.
  - Influencing health and social care to broaden the selection process to include how the winning provider will utilise health and also non health related organisations to improve health outcomes for Fenland residents.
  - Marking and attending validation meetings relating to the bidders submission.
  - Inputting and influencing the development of a new multi-agency older person strategy across the whole county.
- 
- *Continue to support community transport services*

Since April 2008, FDC has provided a Concessionary Fares scheme for community transport services. This 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.

### **What is Dial A Ride?**

Dial-a-Ride (DAR) services provide door to door transport for those people who do not have access to a car, where there is no public transport, or where they cannot access public transport. These services in Fenland are operated by Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT). To use these services

customers must be members of FACT. Membership is subject to meeting the eligibility criteria for Dial a Ride services.

Between 2008 and 2010, Peterborough Dial a Ride also operated services in the Whittlesey area and was part of this scheme. The Peterborough services transferred to FACT in April 2010.

### **FACT Membership**

To use FACT services you have to be a member. DAR is not available to the general public. To become a FACT member you pay a 12 month subscription fee of £10 and you must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Have no access to your own car during the day
- There is no public transport available
- Public transport is limited and does not meet your needs, eg a hospital appointment
- You have difficulty using public transport due to disability or frailty

FACT currently has around 1,187 members in Fenland District (end of February 2014).

### **Use of Community Transport services April 2013 – February 2014**

<b>Journey</b>	<b>Total</b>
West Route (Whittlesey area)	1,818
North West Route (Wisbech area)	3,132
North Route (Wisbech area)	2,442
Central Route (March & Chatteris area)	6,999
<b>Total Passenger Journeys</b>	<b>14,391</b>

When compared with the last two years there has been a reduction in the number of dial a ride journeys. In 2011/12 yearly journeys were 17,837 in total and they were 19,588 for 2012/13. In those previous years the target was to increase the use of dial a ride journeys by 5% per year. Each time this figure was achieved.

The FDC concessionary fares budget for 2013/14 was capped at £50,000 for the first time. This compares with spend of just over £62,000 for the year 2012/13.



Given the funding gap it was not going to be possible to sustain the level of use of dial a ride when compared with previous years. Community Transport services now operate on Monday – Friday, there is no longer a Saturday service which had been provided in previous years.

#### **L4 Promote healthy lifestyles**

- *Encourage more people in the community to be more active, more often through our leisure facilities*
- *Promote healthy lifestyles for Fenland residents*

#### **Leisure Strategy 2013 - 2018**

The Leisure 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

Several project streams are supporting the implementation of the strategy, with significant progress having been made in the past six months.

#### **Continue to provide an efficient service**

To reduce the cost of the service to the Council, increasing the number of users, where capacity exists, is essential. In the past few months the following projects have been completed.

- **Procurement of new gym equipment and fit-out of three gyms at the Hudson, Manor and George Campbell Centres**

This work included the formal procurement of an equipment partner and evaluation of equipment requirements, consultation with staff and an assessment of feedback from customers over the past 12 months. The equipment was delivered and installed in December / January and feedback from users and staff has been exceptionally positive. The increase in membership sales in the first 3 months of 2014 is partially due to the revised gym equipment, justifying the decision to replace the five year old equipment that the gyms used previously.

- **Rebranding the service to improve its attractiveness to our clients**

In January 2014, New Vision Fitness was launched to the Fenland public. Whilst dropping the facility names was a mistake that has been rectified, the use of New Vision Fitness as the brand for the Council's leisure service has proved very positive with customers and staff alike. Refurbishment of

flooring, lighting, paint work and ceilings has taken place that has considerably enhanced the Manor and Hudson centres.

A focus of promoting the new brand on Facebook, where New Vision Fitness now has more than 1,100 followers has proved worthwhile. This channel of communication to current and potential customers is becoming increasingly important. The viral reach of social media, along with the limited cost of this channel, is proving crucial for successful businesses in today's 'connected' world. Increasing the number of interesting posts and recruiting more customer 'likes' to the page is a focus for 2014.

New Vision Fitness has launched with an independent web page. The result is a fresh, clear, commercially focussed set of web pages. Please visit [www.newvisionfitness.co.uk](http://www.newvisionfitness.co.uk) to see the impact of the revised branding.

Customer feedback regarding the brand has been very positive, with New Vision drawing in more clients in January and February.

<b>Number of paid customer attendances to our leisure centres</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
January	57644	80428
February	58982	78892
<b>Total</b>	<b>116,626</b>	<b>159,320</b>

- **Increase demand and participation in active leisure through an effective marketing plan:**

Having previously worked with data from Experian, the Council is now able to access information from Sport England that informs who to target when marketing our services.

This technique was used last year following price changes and has helped the service reach improved direct debit income levels – £104,061 in March 2014, compared to £94,150 in March 2013. With changes to the memberships underway, the service is using the same technique again to target likely users across Fenland.

Specific imagery, wording and colours are used to direct mail to specific people, increasing the likelihood of sales when compared to a 'scattergun' approach.

- **Use customer satisfaction to promote the service, ensuring customers are at the centre of our work**

The leisure team uses several forms of feedback to monitor whether we are providing customers with the service they require. 100 email surveys per month are sent out to active customers asking them to rate the experience of their last visit between 0 and 10 and provide us with a narrative comment that would further improve their experience.

In the past year, using just our email customer service channel, there have been 649 responses (55% return rate) to our survey about the service. 73% of customers rated their experience as a positive one, scoring it between 7 and 10. Feedback from email is very honest as the customer is not talking face to face to an individual and this score is very encouraging.

Customers rating their experience between 0 and 6 are contacted by a Leisure Centre Manager to discuss their feedback in more detail. The Manager then ensures that improvements are implemented where possible, in order to enhance the customer experience and make them more likely to score closer to a 10 on the next occasion they receive a survey to complete, and, in turn, actively promote the leisure centre to a friend or family member.

### **More People, More Active, More Often**

Some of the projects that have been highlighted above also contribute to this theme of the leisure strategy.

New Vision Fitness has a target of 625,000 paid visitors to the leisure facilities this year; the team is expected to hit this target in March, with a particularly strong attendance performance since January.

### **Continue to develop a strong 'learn to swim' programme:**

Learn to Swim is a key pool income stream for the service and the Council is now working together with the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) to improve the 'aquatic' offer in Fenland. This work includes using ASA marketing materials to promote swimming to the local community and ensure that our learn to swim programme is as strong as possible.

At present there are more than 1,400 young people on swimming lesson courses at New Vision Fitness pools on our own swimming development programme. This number has been consistent for the past year, with affordability increased with the introduction and promotion of our direct debit payment scheme; this allows parents to spread swimming lesson costs on a monthly basis instead of affording a lump sum up front. The ASA is giving New Vision support with education for our

swimming teachers, as well as analysing our current offer to see if it could be improved.

### **Retain a higher number of leisure centre users**

In order for the service to become more sustainable, increasing the 'length of stay' for monthly direct debit members is a key focus. In the past year the service has addressed this in several ways:

#### **1. Improved membership packages, encouraging commitment by financial discounts**

From April we are introducing a Daytime Membership, which allows all customers the option to pay an off peak / reduced monthly direct debit. The Daytime Membership is available between 09.30 and 16.30 weekdays and anytime at weekends only. This approach will provide affordable options for more customers and increase usage where capacity is available to accommodate more customers.

Current information indicates that 2041 customers have opted for the "Anytime membership", with 275 initially opting for the "Daytime membership". Based on these initial indications, 13.5% of membership base will be made up of "Daytime members".

These figures are broadly in line with the assumption of 12% "Daytime Membership" uptake detailed in the Leisure Services 2014 pricing report. These assumptions were based on a similar scheme from a neighbouring authority.

#### **2. New fitness equipment and exercise classes in the gyms**

Following a robust procurement process, new gym equipment was installed in January 2014. The new kit has been positively received by customers, offering state of the art equipment that provides additional value for money and supports members in achieving their fitness goals.

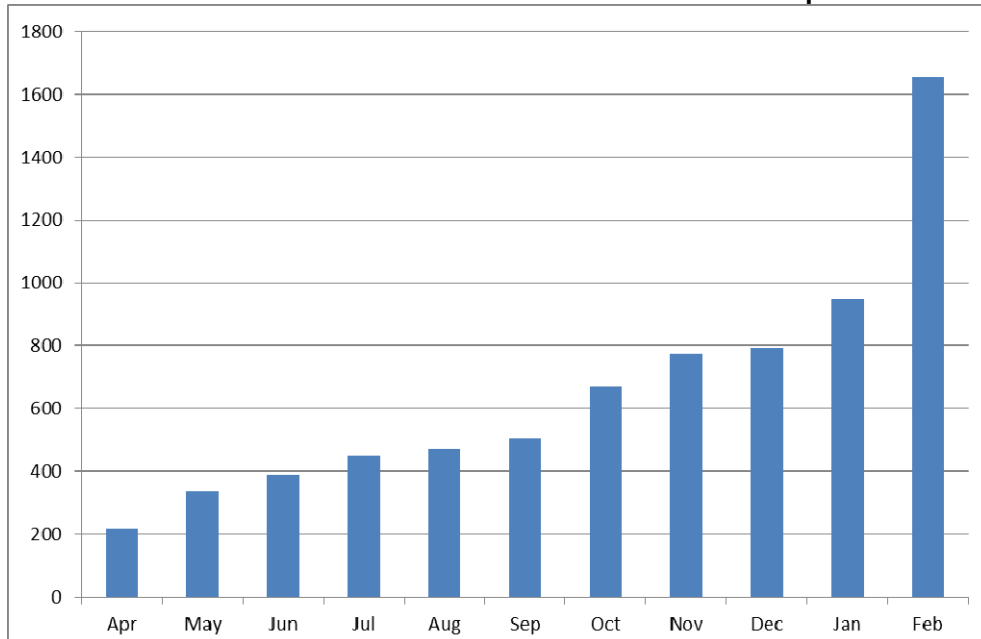
#### **3. Customer focus**

The service is working closer with those customers who attend less regularly and are more likely to 'drop out'. Our TRP retention software allows us to interact closely with those customers that are likely to cancel their membership. The software provides the fitness team with data on those customers that have visited the centre less frequently to establish what we can do to help them achieve their goals and attend more often. This has helped increase the average length of memberships from 7.9 to 8.3 months in the last 18 months.

These three actions have led to an increase in the sale of 12 month committed memberships – highlighted in the chart below, with a reduction in the number of members who are uncommitted, paying by direct debit from month to month. This approach provides a more sustainable business model.

In the past 11 months, the number of all types of direct debit members has grown by 29% to 3,499 customers using monthly direct debit payments.

**Growth in committed 12 month direct debit memberships 2013 / 2014**



The growth in 12 month committed memberships from 200 in April 2013 to over 1600 in February 2014 shows the benefits gained through added value, quality of equipment and responding swiftly in a positive manner to customer feedback.

The breakdown in membership types in March 2104 is detailed below

<b>Membership type</b>	<b>Membership numbers</b>	<b>Membership percentage</b>
12 months contract	1657	47.7%
6 month contract	1356	38.8%
Non contract	486	13.8%

### **Supporting Community Sport**

The Sports Development Team has undergone further significant change in the past 12 months. The team no longer delivers coaching to primary school children, instead focussing efforts on supporting local community sports clubs. In the last six months several events have been supported by the team including

summer sports camps and a multi-sport day for FENDIS at the Hudson Leisure Centre.

Additionally the sports development team has supported several clubs with successful funding bids including March Town FC, Whittlesey Cricket Club and Wisbech Tennis Club. Sports development has also worked with Living Sport to put on five funding workshops signposting community sports clubs to potential funding sources. A Doorstep Sports Initiative bid has been submitted for Street-games and currently a consultant is being sought to develop a March Community Sports Facilities Strategy.

### **Working with partners to further develop cycling as a community sport**

Following the success of the Circuit of the Fens ([www.circuitoffens.co.uk](http://www.circuitoffens.co.uk)) cycle race around Whittlesey last year, the Council is supporting an enhanced event this year over the weekend of 26 July . Planning is underway for a Sportive cycle event and then a family focussed town centre event during the cycle race on Sunday 27 July.

This focus promotes cycling as a sport in the local area, as well as supporting local clubs and encouraging more people to get on their bikes. With the Tour de France coming to Cambridge in July, the Grand Depart Trophy was displayed at the Manor Centre in Whittlesey in March, generating further interest in cycling in the town.

### **Work Healthy Fenland**

During 2013-14 five business focussed health events were held across Fenland. The events took place on business premises and provided useful support and interactive services to help staff learn about health issues, eat healthily and keep active. There are benefits for the employers too as this all helps reduce sickness absence and improve motivation and wellbeing.

For 2014-15 Fenland has joined forces with an NHS Cambridgeshire project, Work Healthy Cambridgeshire.

This project will provide even more support and resource for our businesses. The aim being to train up health champions within the workplace who can then deliver sustainable health support and liaise with local health projects and services for their staff.



**Safety Zone events** have been delivered for Year 5 children attending schools in March, Chatteris, Wisbech and Whittlesey. The events are held in the local fire stations and children are brought in by coach to attend at their scheduled time.

The children are then taken by their teacher to visit scenarios about:

- water safety
- food hygiene – to avoid cross contamination
- Healthy Eating
- first aid
- road safety
- age related sales
- health and safety regarding cigarettes, solvents and fireworks
- stranger danger and distraction burglaries
- warning signs on household products
- Internet safety

Safety Zones are organised by the Council and delivered with several agencies i.e. Trading Standards; Cambridgeshire Constabulary; County Council Road Safety; Environment Agency; Community Safety; Fire and Rescue Service; St John's Ambulance.

In total nearly 900 children attend the events laid on in the 3 weeks that Safety Zones are held. As in previous years, local schools are enthusiastic about Safety Zone and are pleased to allow school time to attend.

- *Work with local commissioning groups and others to develop effective approaches to improve community health outcomes*

### **Local Commissioning Groups and Cambridgeshire's Health and Wellbeing Board**

During 2013-14 the Council's work with health partners has developed. There have been opportunities for Fenland to work in partnership with health providers to improve local health outcomes through the Fenland Health & Wellbeing Partnership (see separate update report).

### **Better Care Fund (BCF)**

As part of Government's health and social care change agenda the way funding is allocated to health and social care services is changing. The changes create an opportunity for local councils and the voluntary sector to get involved in designing and transforming services which are; patient focussed, integrated and preventative.

In the June 2013 Spending Round Government announced the Better Care Fund (BCF) to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care. The BCF is a single pooled budget to support health and social care services to work more closely together in local areas. The BCF not only brings together NHS and Local Government resources, but also provides a real opportunity to improve services and value for money, protecting and improving social care services by shifting resources from acute services into community and preventative settings.

The Better Care Fund locally has a budget of £38 million for 2015/16. The fund includes local Council's Disabled Facilities Grant allocations and therefore provides an opportunity for Fenland to get directly involved in the design of services and allocation of funds, whilst ensuring transformation and more effective services.

Fenland submitted three proposals for consideration as part of the Better Care Fund transformation work currently taking place. The County Council have received over 100 such submissions from Councils, voluntary sector organisations and housing providers.

Plans to allocate this funding must be approved by Health and Wellbeing Boards in April 2014.

### **L5 Engaging young people**

- *Maintain our commitment to engaging with young people and raising their awareness of democratic processes, particularly through events like Democracy Day*

### **Democracy Day**

Due to an unfortunate series of teacher training days, exams and facilitator availability, the YDC were unable to run their very popular and effective Democracy Day. Officers are working with all concerned to ensure we can run the event again in 2014/15.



- *Commit to consulting with young people on issues that affect them*

### **Free School Meals**

A legal route has been secured through using Children's act powers for FDC to share the backlog of families who should be benefitting from Free School Meals but are not doing so with CCC. In Fenland this amounts to 774 Children (August 2013). At £900 per child this represents a potential £696,600 per annum inward investment into Fenland schools. Since August 2013 CCC have been engaging with families on that list through locality teams and children's services. In April 14 the council will commence re-running the data extract to see how successful the engagement has been with the families. CCC are exploring whether they can share the data with schools using the Education act as a pathway to legally do so.

### **Consultation with the Youth District Council (YDC)**

The YDC have continued to be consulted on issues affecting the community.

In 2013/14 the YDC were consulted on the following topics:

- Corporate Plan and priorities – The YDC were given the chance to find out about the corporate plan and offer their opinion on what the Council's priorities should be. Officers will deliver feedback to demonstrate how their views were taken into account.
- Police and Crime Commissioner – The YDC received a presentation from the P&CC Outreach worker – this incorporated the role of the P&CC and the P&CC priorities which the YDC were asked if they were relevant to young people.
- Shape Your Place – In March 2014 the YDC will be/were given an opportunity to give their views on Shape your Place and how to better get messages across to young people.
- *Maintain the funding distributed to youth projects via the Youth District Council*

### **Youth District Council Grants 13/14**

As of 12/03/14 (amount awarded 12/13 = £10k)

The YDC have awarded grants, funded by FDC, to the following organisations:

- C4 Basket Ball
- March Town Cricket Club

- March Marlins Swimming Club
- Manea & Chatteris Youth Club
- Girls Venture Corps Air Cadets Wisbech
- 20TwentyProductions CIC
- 1220 (March) Squadron Air Training Corps
- Estover Park Girls Under 16 Football

The total awarded is: £5,163.07

On 19 March 2014 the YDC held a well-publicised grant meeting. The publicity generated 18 applications for the remaining amount.

In July the Youth District Council awarded March Marlins Swimming Club £600 to purchase equipment for the club. Funding enabled the purchase of equipment for specific training activities which will improve the skills of young swimmers (currently 220 young members). Funding paid for pacing clocks and an iPad to be used to improve the club's administration.

The Youth District Council awarded funding to March Town Cricket Club to enable them to run their annual three day sports festival. The funding awarded by YDC specifically contributed towards paying for coaches to support the sports on offer. 110 children aged between 6-12 attended the sessions and got to take part in sports including: squash, football, cricket, hockey and boxing.

Now in its ninth year, the group were pleased to report that they are now starting to see young people who participated in the early events now coming back to volunteer and help the next generation of young athletes.

**Performance  
April 2013 to February 2014**

LPI	Description	Frequency	Performance (Apr 12–Feb 13)	Baseline (12/13)	Target 13/14	Actual	Variance
RACS10	Average time taken to process new claims and changes to benefits	Monthly	13.71	13	15	10	34%
RACS 1	Time taken to process new claims for benefit	Monthly	28.68	28	20	21	-5%
RACS 2	Time taken to process changes to benefit	Monthly	10.76	10	10	8	20%
PC1	Action taken to address issues in private rented / Houses in Multiple Occupation	Quarterly	n/a	New	200	195	30%
HCS3	% of attendees satisfied with Golden Age Events	Annual	n/a	97%	96%	N/A	N/A
LS1	Number of Paid customer visits to our leisure centres	Monthly	562689	621774	625000	598069	5%
LS2	% of those asked who are satisfied with FDC leisure centres	Quarterly	88%	87%	82%	85%	3%
HCS4	Satisfaction of young people involved in YDC activities	Annual	n/a	100%	80%	N/A	N/A