

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

A meeting of Council will be held at Council Chamber, Fenland Hall, County Road, March on MONDAY, 15 JULY 2024 at 4.00 PM and I request you to attend accordingly for transaction of the following business:

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 14)
To confirm and sign the minutes of 20 May 2024.
- 3 Civic Engagements Update. (Pages 15 - 16)
- 4 To receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Council and/or the Head of Paid Service.
- 5 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting.
- 6 To receive questions from, and provide answers to, councillors in relation to matters which, in the opinion of the Chairman, accord with the provisions of Procedure Rules 8.4 and 8.6.
- 7 To receive reports from and ask questions of Cabinet members with portfolio holder responsibilities, in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2. (Pages 17 - 60)
- 8 Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor (Pages 61 - 62)
Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor regarding weeds in Fenland.
- 9 Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24 (Pages 63 - 72)
To consider the overall financial and operational performance of the Council's treasury management activity for 2023/24.

Fenland Hall
March



Chief Executive

Friday, 5 July 2024

NOTE The Council may, by resolution, as exemplified below, exclude the public from a meeting during the consideration of any item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100 I of the Local Government Act, 1972

"Resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for Item No./Minute No. on the grounds that the item involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act"

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COUNCIL



MONDAY, 20 MAY 2024 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor N Meekins (Chairman), Councillor B Barber (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor G Booth, Councillor J Carney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Cutler, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor K French, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor A Gowler, Councillor A Hay, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor C Marks, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor C Boden, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor J Mockett, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Dr H Nawaz, Councillor D Oliver, Councillor D Patrick, Councillor M Purser, Councillor D Roy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor E Sennitt Clough, Councillor M Summers, Councillor T Taylor, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor S Wallwork and Councillor Woollard

APOLOGIES: Councillor G Christy, Councillor J Clark, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor Mrs D Laws and Councillor B Rackley

C1/24 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £4,120 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES TO BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and resolved that Councillor Nick Meekins be elected as Chairman of the Council for the period to the next Annual meeting and that he be paid an allowance of £4,120 plus travelling expenses.

Councillor Meekins received the Chain of Office, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and addressed the Council as follows: Fellow Councillors, thank you for re-electing me as Chairman of Fenland District Council. I will endeavour to represent the Council at as many events as I possibly can during the following year.

C2/24 TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £1,000 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES TO BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Mrs Mayor that Councillor Brenda Barber be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

It was further proposed by Councillor Booth, seconded by Councillor Cutler that Councillor Patrick be elected as Vice Chairman of the Council.

Following a vote, Councillor Brenda Barber was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the period 2024/25 and it was resolved that she be paid an allowance of £1,000 plus travelling expenses.

Councillor Barber signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and addressed the Council saying that she has enjoyed her role as Vice Chairman to date and she will continue to do her best to support the Chairman in any way she can over the next year.

C3/24 **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 26 February 2024 were confirmed and signed.

C4/24 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.**

There were no announcements from the Chairman or Chief Executive.

C5/24 **MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL 2024/25**

The suggested meeting dates for the Annual Meeting and for the ordinary meetings of the Council for 2024/25 were proposed as follows:

- Monday 15 July 2024
- Monday 30 September 2024
- Monday 16 December 2024
- Monday 24 February 2025
- Monday 19 May 2025

Proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED the proposed dates for the Annual Meeting and ordinary meetings of the Council for 2024/25.

C6/24 **TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM, AND PROVIDE ANSWERS TO, COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO MATTERS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF PROCEDURE RULES 8.4 AND 8.6.**

Councillor Meekins reported that there had been no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6. Under Procedure Rule 8.4, Councillor Booth asked the following questions as Leader of the Opposition:

- Given that the Annual Council meeting date was set last year for 13 May 2024, some members such as Councillor John Clark are not present today due to being on holiday, which was booked not to coincide with Annual Council. Why then was it felt necessary to reschedule the meeting; will this also be the case with other meetings in the future and can that be avoided if possible? Councillor Boden responded that he would do his utmost to avoid having to reschedule meetings in the future and explained that it is a difficult task to schedule a calendar of meetings for the forthcoming year. He said that when setting dates other factors must be considered, such as the various timescales which as an authority need to be adhered to, as well as considering the dates of meetings held by the County Council and the Combined Authority. Councillor Boden added that when he considered the draft calendar of dates, he had overlooked the fact that Cabinet and Council had not been scheduled to take place on the same day. He explained that the 13 May was not deemed to be a suitable date as there have been elections in several constituent authorities within the Combined Authority area and as a result there have been changes to the political proportionality in the Combined Authority for its committees, which is one of the matters which needs to be considered by the Council. Councillor Boden explained that had Annual Council taken place on 13 May then the political proportionality information would not have been available, and it would have proved difficult to conduct that part of business.

C7/24 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.**

Members asked questions of Portfolio Holders in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 as follows:

- Councillor Connor addressed Councillor Murphy and stated that he would like to congratulate Adam Pratt and his team of Refuse and Recycling operatives as well as Street Cleansing Operatives and Rapid Response crew for the excellent work that they carry out. He added that he has never heard any negativity from residents only words of praise for the work that they undertake in all types of weather. Councillor Connor commented that they are all a credit to the Council, and he asked for his sentiments to be fed back to the staff.
- Councillor Connor addressed Councillor Wallwork and asked if she could pass on his thanks and appreciation to the Environmental Health Officers for the excellent work that they undertake in often challenging situations. He added that Dawn Sadler has gone over and beyond in her duties to get several difficult cases dealt with to reach a satisfactory conclusion in a timely and proactive manner and he asked for his thanks to be passed on.
- Councillor Hoy stated that she was surprised over the weekend to see an open letter from the Chief Executive of the County Council, in which he called into question the professionalism of the Senior Officers Team at Fenland. She said that she has always found the officers to be very professional and whilst sometimes there maybe differences of opinion, they always act in a professional manner, and she made the point that she has no complaints about them and holds them in extremely high regard. Councillor Hoy asked whether Councillor Boden agrees with her statement, and whether he would refute the claims which were made. She added that she is genuinely concerned about how the letter came to light as she cannot ever recall this type of incident taking place in the 14 years that she has been a councillor. Councillor Hoy stated that it may be that a code of conduct complaint may be required but that will not become apparent until an investigation is conducted and asked Councillor Boden whether he will be prepared to investigate this matter further on behalf of the Council? Councillor Hoy added that, in her view, it is important to do so due to the fact as employers there is a duty to defend its employees when they have their reputation tarnished unfairly in such a way. Councillor Boden stated that he was also sent a copy of the open letter on Friday which Councillor Hoy has referred to and he explained that he does not want to exacerbate a situation which has already gone regrettably further than it should have done. He said he fully endorses the comments made by Councillor Hoy and has 100% confidence in the professionalism of the Senior Officer Team at Fenland. Councillor Boden added that he will be drafting an email to the Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire County Council, the content of such will be kept private and he has every intention of investigating further the potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, the Code of Conduct between officers and members as well as the Code of Conduct which relates to the release of information to the press within Cambridgeshire County Council. He explained that if he needs to initiate any appropriate action at County level, then he will do so, but that will be undertaken personally and not on behalf of the Council as that would be inappropriate to do so.
- Councillor Booth referred to the report from Councillor Mrs French with regards to Civil Parking Enforcement and the fact that there is a £500,000 shortfall and he has been made aware that the Council did receive an amount of money from what was known as Cambridgeshire Horizon, along with additional funding from DEFRA associated with drainage levies although he believes that money has gone into general reserves. He asked whether there are any other avenues which can be investigated to find the funding shortfall and that the detail concerning the deficient regulation orders is decades old and there are some issues which are 30 or 40 years old which need to be rectified before it can be progressed within the Fenland area. Councillor Mrs French stated that no money or any promise of any money has been received from Cambridgeshire Horizon and the money that the Council did receive, there has been no decision to date with regards to how that is going to be spent. She added that she agrees with the point raised by Councillor Booth concerning the out-of-date Traffic Order which dates back to 1984 and explained that it is hoped to introduce the 2004 regulations, but unfortunately it is not just the financial aspect which needs to be considered there is also the unreasonable contract which the County Council wish to impose on the Council which involves the Council becoming responsible for the maintenance of the lines and signs for perpetuity along with various other unreasonable

conditions. Councillor Mrs French explained that Fenland officers are in discussions with officers from the County Council.

- Councillor Patrick asked Councillor Mrs French if she can provide a timescale of when Civil Parking Enforcement can be pursued further as he has spoken to several people who are disappointed that this is not being carried through due to the fact that as a Council it was stated that it was a priority. Councillor Mrs French stated that officers are in discussions with the ongoing issues and made the point that the applications can only be submitted twice a year, once in April and again in October, so the Council will not be able to do that until next year and she explained that she is also frustrated since this was first discussed in 2019. She explained that South Cambridgeshire District Council have implemented it but that is because the Cambridge Greater Partnership have financed the £1million for the lines and signs and they have also agreed to financially support them for the next five years which is not something that Fenland has the luxury of.

C8/24 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MATTHEW SUMMERS

Councillor Summers presented his motion regarding Planning and Councillor Roy seconded the motion, and it was opened for debate.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Connor stated that in his 11 years as a County Councillor he has the misfortune to endure many poor motions brought by the County Council and, in his opinion, this motion before members is of the same level, although he has a lot of respect for most Independent members of the Council at Fenland. He made the point that the three independent members have either been a member of the Planning Committee or a substitute member in the last year and one of the new Planning Committee members had passed comment to him and stated that before he had been elected as a councillor, he did not appreciate the amount of work which goes into a Planning meeting, including reading the agenda and associated reports, numerous site visits all over the Fenland area and then the committee meeting which can last for many hours. Councillor Connor stated that the councillor also made the point with regards to how open and transparent the Planning system was in Fenland in both the process and determination of the applications and made the point that there is a process in which a councillor can call in an application if the site falls within their ward or the adjoining ward and there does need to be a material planning reason in order for this to happen. He made the point that as he as Chairman of the Planning Committee reviews these applications and if they meet the relevant criteria, he will ensure the application is determined by the committee rather than delegate it to officers, stating that he has received three call in requests over the last five years from members and all of those applications have been determined by the Planning Committee. Councillor Connor made the point that all applications recommended for refusal by officers are reviewed by him and if he feels that members of the Planning Committee would find the application interesting then he consults with the Head of Planning to bring the application forward and also highlighted that if six letters of support or objection are received then the application will be determined before the Planning Committee which is another tool which demonstrates the openness and transparency of the planning process. He made the point that one of the many concerns highlighted by Councillor Summers appears to be the number of planning determinations which go against the officer's recommendation, and he expressed the view that it could be because that the current adopted Local Plan is old. Councillor Connor made the point that planning is subjective and what may be acceptable to one member may not be to another and also to the general public. He expressed the view that for those reasons he will not support the motion and there are enough factors in place to give members the reassurance that the right process has been adhered to and hopefully the right planning decisions have been made. Councillor Connor added that he notes that Councillor Summers has not registered any interest with regards to sitting on the Planning Committee or shown any interest in Planning before this motion has been submitted.

- Councillor Hoy stated that she is speaking from experience as a local member who has engaged with the planning process and, in her opinion, previous planning committees may have appeared to be less democratic than the current committee are and the current Planning Committee are very professional, have a good understanding with regards to all aspects of planning applications and they determine each application on its own merits which is as it should be. She stated that she has been approached on a number of occasions by residents who have concerns with regards to various planning applications and she has resolved to either advise them to use one of the mechanisms which are already in place, which include contacting the Town or Parish Council or encouraging those residents who have concerns to submit letters of support or objections. Councillor Hoy added that members can discuss their views with the Chairman of Planning or officers in the Planning Team to seek their advice and also have the option of speaking at a Planning Committee and, from her experience, members of the committee do listen to the views and opinions when presented at the committee. She made the point that she is actually quite surprised as to how many members have actually taken the time to read the Local Plan in detail to gain an understanding with regards to the decision-making process. Councillor Hoy made the point that the mechanisms are there to be used but you need to take the time to use them.
- Councillor Hay stated that she sat on the committee for a number of years and, in her opinion, the system that is in place is robust and, as Councillor Connor has stated, if he is not content with the officer's recommendation he can request that the application is determined before the committee. She added that as a local member she has called applications into the committee previously when she has not been happy with the recommendation and there are enough checks and balances to make sure the right decisions are made. Councillor Hay expressed the view that there are going to be instances where people are not going to be happy with decisions that are made and she added that by going further and opening things up to the Planning Inspectorate, the Council could end up facing costs which has happened previously. She stated that the last thing that the residents of Fenland will want is to take something to the Planning Inspectorate when there is no possibility of the Council winning and she will not support the motion.
- Councillor Taylor stated that it is well known fact that he became a Councillor in order to help people and also due to the fact that he has issues with planning and drainage, but if anybody has a planning issue then there is a channel for research and correct investigation in order to find answers and work with other people. He expressed the view that this is a channel which would not achieve anything and for that reason he will not support the motion.
- Councillor Tierney thanked Councillor Summers for bringing the motion forward as, in his opinion, it is a thoughtful motion and brings forward an interesting idea which is worth investigating and considering. He added that, in situations such as this, it is looking to find a balance which suits the public so that they feel that they have a fair opportunity without adding too much bureaucracy so that it is unwieldy, difficult, expensive or impossible. Councillor Tierney stated that whilst it is a good idea he does not believe that Councillor Summers has made a strong enough case, and if the Council had a Planning Committee who were constantly doing everything incorrectly, which he does not feel is the case at this current time. He expressed the opinion that the current Planning Committee is the best that he has ever seen and their decision-making process is very robust and whilst the committee do not always agree with the officer's recommendation, he does not think that is a bad thing. Councillor Tierney stated that the committee is in place so that members can include their local input, whilst officers have provided their professional and legal judgement and the two put together enables a decision to be taken even if that is different to what the officers have recommended. He added that the system is built in that way and he does not see why an additional layer of bureaucracy would want to be included which would result in the replication of a Planning Committee at a higher level, however, possibly necessitating in a different appeal committee being formed to be the decision maker, which would not have enough benefit to make the cost, time and effort worth it. Councillor Tierney expressed the

view that if the current Planning Committee were making mistakes then Councillor Summers may have a case to put forward, however, in his opinion, they are not and, therefore, he will not be supporting the motion.

- Councillor Miscandlon stated that he was the previous Chairman of the Planning Committee and, in his view, the committee are the fairest that he has ever seen when they are determining applications and to add another layer of determination is an unbelievably bad idea. He stated that he trusts the committee because they have received training and whilst the committee might not always agree with the officer's recommendations that is how it should be. Councillor Miscandlon made the point that to add an additional layer of scrutiny is wrong and he will not support the motion.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she has been an elected member for 25 years and has received repeated training on the subject of planning, explaining that before a councillor can sit on the Planning Committee there is a requirement to undertake training as many applications can be controversial. She made the point that if the motion was approved then every single member of the Council would need to receive training which would mean a significant cost to the Council and it would slow down the planning process which in turn would mean that the Planning department would not reach their targets which in turn would mean that the Government would intervene. Councillor Mrs French explained that she has also held the position of Chairman of the Planning Committee and those members who form part of the committee have to spend many hours reading very lengthy reports and undertaking visits to site, making the point that if the motion were approved it would mean that every member would need to visit each site. She added that whilst she feels that the sentiment of the motion is right, she cannot support it in its current form.
- Councillor Gowler explained that he is the Vice Chairman of Chatteris Town Council's Planning Committee and, therefore, he takes a great interest in planning applications and often watches the Council's planning meetings. He made the point that he does not always agree with the decisions made by the Council's Planning Committee, however, the officers and members who sit on the committee are all extremely professional. Councillor Gowler stated that as part of the planning training that he has received he was advised that if there is a situation where the committee agree with every officer recommendation or alternatively every decision is overturned then there is obviously a cause for concern. He added that the committee is there to deal with many contentious applications and, in his view, they carry out their role exceptionally. Councillor Gowler expressed the view that the planning process needs finality to it and the suggestions within the motion will only mean additional delays to the planning process which is already a lengthy process. He made the point that there is the option for a judicial review to be undertaken once an application is determined, however, recognised that it is a costly and lengthy process.
- Councillor Booth expressed the opinion that some members do not appear to have fully understood what the motion is trying to achieve and members have made statements regarding the current checks and balances that are in place for when an application is determined at committee, however, the motion is focussing on what happens after the committee meeting. He made the point that there are other local authorities who have a similar process to that which has been highlighted in the motion and referred members to an application which caused much controversy, making the point that the process outlined in the motion could deal with such an application should the need ever arise again. Councillor Booth referred to the point made by Councillor Mrs French with regards to all members requiring training if the motion were adopted and he explained that there would only be the requirement to have a small sub-committee to deal with the applications. He added that the whole point about the motion is to introduce a mechanism which is agreeable rather than the assumptions that members are highlighting with regards to a process before it is actually being looked at, which he finds concerning. Councillor Booth stated that he feels that the motion does have some merit to be explored further and if officers put forward a proposal and members do not agree then it will not be carried forward, however, officers need to be given the opportunity to investigate the possibilities further including benchmarking other authorities who already operate such a scheme and then report back to full Council.

- Councillor Roy stated that he agrees with the points made by Councillor Booth in order to give the Council the opportunity to undertake similar systems that other local authorities do already and would mean the implementation of a mechanism in the future to keep up with the changing times. He stated that he appreciates that the planning process is very lengthy.

Councillor Summers summed up by thanking Councillor Tierney for his open mindfulness and expressed the view that he was not intending to offend those members who currently hold a position on the Planning Committee as that was not his intention and he appreciates the hard work and good job that those members undertake. He added that members have referred to openness and transparency during the debate and he agrees with them, but the point of the motion was to explore the options and as Councillor Booth indicated there are other authorities who have adopted this type of system. Councillor Summers made the point that the professionalism of officers and members of the committee is not in question, and he is not making any suggestion that the Planning Inspectorate should be involved as well as any associated costs unless that would be necessary to achieve any constitutional changes. He expressed the view that he has been contacted by residents on a number of occasions with regards to planning decisions which have been made, especially if the Parish Council have made objection to the application and it has been approved. He made the point that it does not sit well when he has to advise residents that the decision is final especially when the residents are particularly passionate about a site. Councillor Summers added that he is aware that members can speak at committee meetings and part of the motion was to explore the associated constraints which may be present.

Members did not approve the motion.

(Councillors Connor, Mrs French, Hicks, Imafidon and Marks declared that they sit on the Planning Committee, however, they would remain impartial with their decision making in considering this motion)

C9/24 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CHRIS BODEN

Councillor Boden presented his motion regarding the use of Industrial Bottom Ash Aggregates (IBAA), Councillor Sennitt Clough seconded the motion, and it was opened for debate.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Nawaz stated that he will support the motion, but questioned whether there is a recent report which has been conducted by the Environment Agency (EA) concerning the investigation and analysis as to the constituents that have been deposited. He added that if one has not been undertaken would it be possible for the Council to make a request of the EA to conduct a more recent investigation to determine the various organic and inorganic constituents of IBAA which has been deposited over the last few years as well as the current operations. Councillor Nawaz asked whether it would be possible for that report to be presented in such a way that it can be easily interpreted with clear indications of the normal expected levels in the environment and in the soil and what is actually present. He added that he would also like the report to incorporate the pollution caused by noise, smell and dust and to include the levels of those that can be accepted and if the levels exceed acceptable levels can the EA take some action.
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that it is his understanding from recent investigations that IBAA and IBA is banned in some European Union countries, and it is not permitted to be used in any construction or in domestic areas and he feels that it is a matter which needs to be addressed.
- Councillor Taylor made the point that IBAA is transported via lorry, and it has different size particles which are predominantly dust. He added that if the EA are stating that none of this can go anywhere near a water course then, in his view, it may be toxic in some form and, therefore, be a danger to humans. Councillor Taylor expressed the view that he would, therefore, like to see a higher authority than the EA deal with the issue properly and he will

fully support the motion but feels that the right answers and information need to be provided by an agency higher than the EA.

- Councillor Roy stated that it would appear that IBAA has been present on the site for a lengthy period of time and he questioned whether there is any information held which indicates whether there has been any contamination of nearby watercourses, how it is being stored as well as whether there is any risk to the local wildlife or residents who live in the vicinity. He added that he will happily support the motion and those local residents should be provided assurances that everything is being done by the Council to look into the issue.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that there were a number of conditions which were placed on the planning application in regard to the environmental impact of IBAA and it appears that a number of those conditions have not been adhered to. He questioned who the enforcer should be with regards to ensuring that the conditions are in place and added that it is his understanding that part of the application was retrospective and had already been started which meant that the Planning Committee found themselves in a difficult position.
- Councillor Booth stated that he will support the motion, however, in his view, it appears that the emerging Local Plan has not been included within the detail and he asked whether it is something that should have been considered as another mechanism to try and enforce or reduce the use of the IBAA and the policies of the emerging Local Plan should be developed to restrict the use of IBAA as much as possible.
- Councillor Carney referred to the EA and their relationship with farmers and landowners and added that he is surprised with regards to their position statement as the EA can be strict with farmers regarding the use of any fertilisers and growth promoters. He added that he recalls an instance, which was before the pandemic ,where a farmer was using wash water used to take soil off of vegetables from a local vegetable processing plant to spray it on his fields as a way of re-using wastewater and getting soil, and nutrients back into the land, however, he was subjected to action from the EA for his use of that water. Councillor Carney stated that the EA is very relaxed with some sectors, however, in other cases their sanctions are very harsh.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough acknowledged the points raised by Councillor Nawaz and explained that IBAA is deemed by the EA to be a waste derived from incinerator bottom ash after most ferrous and nonferrous metals and other wastes have been screened out or otherwise removed. She explained that it is a heterogeneous material that can commonly consist of concrete, ceramics, glass, brick, clinker metals and fused materials, but can include materials from batteries, sanitary products and other hazardous or toxic products. Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that it is a material that is prone to be dusty, that creates an unpleasant odour, and that should not be allowed to leach into water courses or sources. She made the point that the EA states that the use of IBAA in construction is a deposit of waste for recovery and a groundwater activity which should be carried out under an environmental permit, however, for licensing purposes, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) appears on at least some occasions to be treating IBAA as a product rather than as waste, and thus subject to far weaker controls and protections. Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that she would like Council to:
 1. express concern about unregulated or weakly regulated use of unbound IBAA in all circumstances in Fenland, especially given that this is a flat, marshy, agricultural region of the UK, so particularly vulnerable to leachate and water table pollution issues
 2. seeks assurances from the EA that its Regulatory Position Statement RPS247 not be extended beyond 31st January 2025, or that, if it is extended, the conditions under which the extension is granted are tightened to give greater assurance that the use of unbound IBAA will not cause (nor will be likely to cause) pollution of the environment or harm to human health.
 3. requests that the Council's Environmental Health raise with both CCC and the EA the concerning apparent categorisation (at least on occasion) of IBAA as a product rather than as waste by CCC, and that the Council presses CCC to formally recognise IBAA as a

waste product.

4. resolves that the Council confirms it treats IBAA as a waste and that, in any potentially relevant planning applications at this Council, it is asked if unbound IBAA is proposed to be used and that the Council notifies the EA in all cases if unbound IBAA is proposed to be used.
5. recognises that the EA is the subject matter expert and lead agency for IBAA and calls on CCC formally to recognise that the EA is the subject matter expert and lead agency for IBAA.
6. resolves that the published EA FAQ sheet entitled "Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA) and Incinerator Bottom Ash Aggregate (IBAA) FAQs" should be sent by the Council to all its councillors, to Parish & Town Clerks within Fenland and to relevant Council employees so that they are fully aware of this issue, and that CCC be requested to send the FAQ to their councillors and relevant council employees.
7. agrees additionally that this motion be sent to the EA, to CCC, to Stephen Barclay MP in his capacity as MP and to Stephen Barclay MP in his capacity as Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Councillor Boden summed up and stated that there have been many good points made by members and referred to the comments made by Councillor Nawaz expressing the view that he believes that he may have mixed two separate problems up with one being the depositing of non-conforming waste in the area of Saxon Pit and the second being the use of some of the products which are coming from a factory within Saxon Pit which are being used as IBAA in the environment. He added that in both cases there have been investigations by the EA and in the first case the investigations have been ongoing for a long time and in the second instance the results are still to come forward as a result of their investigation.

Councillor Boden referred to the point made by Councillor Roy with regards to having confidence that no contamination has taken place and that whilst it is already a known fact that the material has not been stored correctly, there is concern with regards to the risk to wildlife and residents and he hopes that any risk has been minimal and that if the EA had seen anything that was dangerous then they would have taken immediate action to ensure actions were stopped. He added that it is still unacceptable that IBAA is located so close to a watercourse when clearly the regulations state that it should not be used in that way. He stated that the point that Councillor Miscandlon made is correct as there are several countries in the European Union who have banned IBAA totally, however, this country's regulations should be observed and be vigilant about ensuring that the regulations are used effectively and efficiently.

Councillor Boden agreed with the point Councillor Taylor made with regards to taking our concerns to a higher level than that of the EA and was covered in point 7 indicated by Councillor Sennitt Clough by raising the issue to Stephen Barclay MP in his capacity as this area's MP as Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He referred to the comment from Councillor Booth with regards to the emerging Local Plan and agreed to discuss that with Councillor Mrs Laws and officers to ascertain whether this is something that can be achieved due to the ever-changing regulations.

Councillor Boden referred to the comments from Councillor Gerstner and Councillor Carney concerning enforcement and stated that is a separate issue which does cause a problem and there is inconsistent enforcement of regulations by the EA and not just in this area. He agrees that enforcement is an issue but beyond what the motion seeks to achieve and encouraged members to vote in favour of it.

Member approved the motion.

(Councillor Miss French and Councillor Mockett left the meeting at 5.12pm following this item)

C10/24 COMMITTEE BALANCE, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS

Members considered the Committee Balance, Political Balance and Allocation of Seats report and the Chairman drew members attention to the addendum which had been circulated to them which provides updates on the vacancies that still existed at the time of publication.

Councillor Boden, in presenting the report, advised members that Councillor Booth has confirmed that he does not have any further amendments to be included as part of the report. He explained that the apportionment of positions on outside bodies to individual councillors is not a matter which is being decided at the current time and that will be subject to further discussions between group leaders and will be taken forward at the next Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Booth requested that members move to the substantive motion.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Booth and AGREED:

- to approve the Committees and Panels set out at Appendix A for the 2024/25 municipal year;
- the terms of reference set out at Part 3 of the Council's Constitution in relation to the committees and panels referred to at paragraph 3.1;
- the politically proportionate allocation of seats to Committees and Panels as set out in Appendix B;
- the allocation of seats and position of Chairman and Vice Chairman also as set out in Appendix B;
- the appointments to seats allocated in accordance with paragraph 3.4 (Appendix B) including any co-opted or non-members;
- the list of Outside Bodies as set out at Appendix C for 2024/25;
- the politically proportionate allocation of seats to Outside Bodies all as set out in Appendix C; and
- to note that the distribution of seats amongst Outside Bodies, to achieve overall political proportionality based on the allocations approved at paragraph 3.7 and the subsequent appointments to those seats will be discussed between Group Leaders and presented for approval at the next meeting of Cabinet on 17 June 2024.

(Councillor Benney arrived at the meeting at 5.17pm, following the end of this item)

C11/24 CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY APPOINTMENTS

Members considered the Combined Authority Membership and Other Appointments Report, and the Chairman drew members attention to an addendum to the report which had been circulated and provides an update as to the overall political proportionality across the constituent area as well as revised nominations to the seats allocated to Fenland District Council.

Councillor Boden, in presenting the report, stated that the Combined Authority only provided the proportionality information to officers a few days ago.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to make the following appointments/nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the municipal year 2024/25:

1. appoint the Leader of Council to act as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority and one substitute member as set out in Appendix 3;
2. nominate two members to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and two substitute members from the same political parties as those appointed as set out in Appendix 3;
3. nominate one member to the Audit and Governance Committee and one substitute member from the same political party as set out in Appendix 3.
4. note the Leader's nominated appointments to the Thematic Committees as set out at

Appendix 3 and highlighted in green; and

- 5. delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make any amendments to the appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee in consultation with the Political Group Leaders as required between now and the next Annual Meeting of Council.**

5.18 pm

Chairman

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Fenland District Council Fenland Hall County Road March Cambridgeshire PE15 8NQ
Tel 01354 622285 www.fenland.gov.uk

Civic Engagements

From May 20, 2024 to July 5, 2024

May 27, 2024	Oak Apple Day – Northampton Town Council Attended by the Chairman
June 1, 2024	Raunds Mayors Show Attended by the Vice Chairman
June 9, 2024	Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Civic Service Attended by the Chairman
June 13, 2024	Cambridgeshire ACRE Centenary Event Attended by the Chairman
June 16, 2024	Peterborough City Council Civic Event Attended by the Chairman
June 20, 2024	Bishop of Ely Garden Party Attended by the Chairman
June 22, 2024	St Neots Armed Forces Weekend Attended by the Chairman
June 23, 2024	Wisbech Armed Forces Day Attended by the Chairman
June 25, 2024	Spalding Armed Forces Parade Attended by the Chairman
June 28, 2024	High Sheriff Garden Party Attended by the Chairman RAF Alconbury Independence Day Firework Attended by the Chairman

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Cabinet and Corporate Management Team

Portfolio Holder Briefing Report

**July 2024
(For performance in April & May 2024)**

Cabinet Members



Cllr Chris Boden
 Leader of the Council
 & Portfolio Holder for
 Finance



Cllr Ian Benney
 Portfolio Holder for
 Economic Growth & Skills



Cllr Jan French
 Deputy Leader of the
 Council, Portfolio Holder
 for Revenues & Benefits
 and Civil Parking
 Enforcement



Cllr Sam Hoy
 Portfolio Holder for
 Housing & Licensing



Cllr Dee Laws
 Portfolio Holder for
 Planning & Flooding



Cllr Alex Miscandlon
 Portfolio Holder for
 Leisure & Internal
 Drainage Boards



Cllr Peter Murphy
 Portfolio Holder for
 Refuse & Cleansing,
 Parks & Open Spaces



Cllr Chris Seaton
 Portfolio Holder for
 Transport, Heritage &
 Culture



Cllr Steve Tierney
 Portfolio Holder for
 Communications,
 Transformation, Climate
 Change & Strategic
 Refuse



Cllr Susan Wallwork
 Portfolio Holder for
 Community, Health,
 Environmental Health,
 CCTV, Community
 Safety & Military
 Covenant

Communities

Projects from Business Plan:

Support Vulnerable Members of Our Community

ARP updates (Cllr French)

ARP continue to work to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

- Local Council Tax Support
- Single Person Discount
- Council Tax
- Non-Domestic Rates.

The review of Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes. The ARP team are also working with the largest Social Housing provider in the Authority to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse.

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges, including possible retrospective charges.

The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils collected just under £1.8 million. This has increased from £1m in 22/23. This is a great result for a small team actioning complex further recovery cases for the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax. The Fraud teams work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £3.8 Million in fraud and error last year, an increase on the previous year. This is due to the further resource funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and has allowed ARP to expand proactive fraud and error identification

ARP also launched a new improved 'Contact Us' online form which signposts customers to online forms to streamline avoidable customer contact. The Annual Billing process was exceptionally well managed achieving tighter deadlines to facilitate the use of economy post for all annual bills and notifications. ARP also successfully implemented PDF attachment e-bills in Q4 of 2023-24 and with the 2024-25 Annual Billing. A Partnership wide e-billing take up campaign is in the early planning stages, to be implemented throughout 2024-25 in conjunction with the Customer Strategy Team.

The year end outturn for 2023-24 resulted in a deficit in the budget. This was mainly attributable to higher than anticipated pay awards for 2023, along with inflationary increases in supplier costs, an 18% Royal Mail increase in postages in October and a tighter triage on the cases sent through to the enforcement team. The efficiency target of £100,000 was met through the provision of fraud and enforcement services and we are working through a plan to achieve the £200,000 target set for the current financial year. Vacancies will be kept under review throughout the year as we manage the Universal Credit migration alongside inflationary pressures to achieve the budget.

In terms of performance in 2024-25 so far, Business Rates Collection is on target; Council Tax Collection remains on target year to date. Days taken to process Local Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit is not currently on target. This is due to the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit as migration files have increased, and staff have targeted new claims, so therefore volumes remain high. The staff continue to have focus days to target areas of work and we are confident that this will tackle the issue over the coming months.

Supporting residents to manage the effects of the costs of living (Cllr Boden)

Our customer facing teams provide support to residents struggling with cost-of-living issues in many ways:

- Issuing food vouchers
- Advising on additional benefits they can claim
- Signposting to other partners who can support
- Assisting with on-line Universal Credit (UC) applications
- Working closely with our ARP colleagues we signpost to avenues where discretionary benefits might assist
- We work with a huge range of partners who can also provide additional support, and we will link our customers into these channels
- We have just launched our Early Help Hub to provide an additional channel of support to residents who may be ready to return to the work environment, having had a protracted spell of ill-health.

The ARP has seen significant success thus far in 2023/24 and have achieved the following:

- In December 2022 a new Government scheme was announced to help support economically vulnerable families by providing additional reductions to their Council Tax bills. The Council Tax Support Fund (CTSF) we administered automatic reductions for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction at the time of annual billing and those making a claim successful claim during 2023-24. A residual fund was retained to provide additional support via the Exceptional hardship claim route throughout 2023-24. Fenland was allocated £190,482. The funds were managed to maximise use, with 100% of the funds being spent by 31st March 2024.
- The Energy Bill Support Scheme (Alternative Funding) which has been introduced to support households not automatically eligible for support via the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS), equivalent to the monthly subsidy direct payers receive. The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) now renamed Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are administering the scheme nationally via a claim route on gov.uk website. Local Authorities are required to undertake secondary checks, log the outcomes via a government portal and make the payments of £400. Fenland's number of estimated eligible residents is 2,199 with funding paid upfront to cover 80% of maximum costs. So far, Fenland had paid out £72,400 in support to residents.
- The Alternative Fuel Payments (alternative fund) also administered by BEIS with Local Authorities carrying out secondary checks and making payments of £200. Fenland's estimate of eligible residents was 1119 and Fenland has paid out £60,800 in support to residents to date.

Homelessness and meeting housing needs (Cllr Hoy)

Between 1/4 to 31/5 inclusive the Housing Options team has successfully prevented 58 households from becoming homeless.

Number of households seeking advice (homeless presentations) so far this year are 328. 134 cases within this period were advice only.

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work is 49%. The target for the year is 53%.

We are continuing to work hard to try and bring down the numbers placed into B&B. However, this continues to pose a significant challenge as the cost-of-living crisis continues which is leading to an increase in homeless presentations. We have placed 67 households into B&B compared to 41 for the same period last year. However, with more temporary accommodation (TA) now available as a result of the Local Authority Housing Fund the aim is to reduce the time taken in B&B before placement into TA.

Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)

The Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) 5 Project supported a total of 29 clients from April to end of May 2024.

Of the 29 clients, 4 were placed in off the street accommodation, 1 was sofa surfing and the remaining 24 were rough sleeping during this period.

However, with support from the RSI programme we successfully moved 3 clients on into settled accommodation, which includes supported living routes, into the private rented sector or reconnected with family and friends.

A total of 3 clients had alternative outcomes such as custody, hospital or lost contact with services.

The remaining 18 clients continue to be supported to find secure accommodation and move off the streets. For the total 29 clients that were supported during this period, 3 had restricted eligibility, 2 had unknown eligibility and the remaining 24 were eligible.

The Prevention and Move On Fund (P&MO) which was granted by DLUHC continues to be a success by supporting our rough sleeper cohort to move on and settle into accommodation. A total of 26 clients have been supported under this funding as of May 2024. The breakdown of these interventions is below:

Prevention & Move On (P&MO) Fund:

- 10x Under intervention 1 (Moving On Fund)
- 1x Under intervention 2 (Deposits)
- 4x Under intervention 3 (Decompression for Rough Sleepers in work)
- 2x Under intervention 4 (Arrears)
- 6x Under intervention 5 (Flexible prevention fund). This has supported with matters such as fast tracking a passport for a client to be able to work, transport for re-connection to another area, as well as clearing a property for an extremely vulnerable client.
- 3x Under intervention 6 (Extended Support)

Housing Enforcement Policy (Cllr Hoy)

April 2024 – May 31st 2024

Town	HMOs investigated	Other Homes investigated
Wisbech	8	18
March	4	5
Chatteris	8	4
Whittlesey	0	4
Villages	2	6

Total homes investigated is 59.

VILLAGE BREAKDOWN

Benwick = 1
Coates = 1
Coldham = 0
Christchurch = 1
Doddington = 0
Eastrea = 0
Elm = 1
Fridaybridge = 1
Foul Anchor = 0
Gorefield = 0
Guyhirn = 1
Leverington = 1
Manea = 0
Murrow = 0
Newton = 0
Parson Drove = 0
Stonea = 0
Throckenholt = 0
Thorney Toll = 0
Tydd = 1
Turves = 0
Wimblington = 0
Wisbech St Mary = 0

Year to date enforcement in Private Sector Housing

No.s of Notices Served April - December 31st 2023	S.11 Improvement Notice *	S.12 Improvement Notice **	Notice of Intent ***	Final Civil Penalty Notice ****	EICR *****	MEES *****	EPC *****
April	1	1	0	0	2	1	0
May	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Total	1	1	0	0	3	2	0

Notices served in relation to Category 1 (serious) hazards identified during inspection

**Notices served in relation to Category 2 hazards identified during inspection

***Notice issuing intent to serve a civil penalty fine due to a breach of legislation & can be reviewed by Assistant Director upon appeal if a request is submitted by the landlord.

****Final Civil Penalty fine issued after review by Assistant Director- (landlord can only make a further appeal to the First Tier Tribunal)

***** EICR- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Electrical Installation Regulations- Final Number of fines issued after internal review

***** MEES- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Minimum Energy Performance Regulations- Final Number of fines issued after internal review

***** EPC- Requirement for Landlord to comply with Energy Performance Certification Regulations- Number of fines issued after internal review

In summary, since the new approach to enforcement was implemented in September 2019, out of the 134 Improvement Notices served:

- 91 have been paid in full.
- The remaining debts will continue to be registered as a formal Land Charge on the title deeds until they are paid, or the property is sold, at which stage the debt will be recovered as a 1st charge.

Of the 77 Civil Penalty Notices served:

- 39 have been paid in full,
- 7 are subject to payment arrangements,
- 3 is subject to formal court action,
- 3 are with the High Court Bailiff,
- 3 are proposed to be written off as not recoverable
- 10 have been revoked
- 12 are subject to an ongoing appeal.

All fines from the EPC breaches have been paid.

There are 3 CPN's being progressed but not served as yet.

Empty Homes

Table 1

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use through officer involvement.
From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

	LTE 6-11MTHS	LTEP 12MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	5	5
Total for the period	1.4.24 – 31.3.25	10

Table 2

Represents the number of properties brought back into use for the New Homes Bonus
From 3 October 2023 to 7 October 2024 (CTB1 submission date)

	LTE 6-11MTHS	LTEP 12MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	32	17
Total for the period	3.10.23 - 7.10.24	49

Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)

No events have been held since the last Council update in May. However, planning is underway for our annual Golden Age partners event taking place at South Fens Business Centre. This will identify any gaps in our service and provide an opportunity to discuss different ways that we could expand the Golden Age brand to more residents in Fenland. We will also have the chance to find out more about new and existing partners with them having the opportunity to present upcoming projects and promote their organisation.

Due to the pre-election period, we postponed our planned event in Eastrea on Friday 21st June as part of the Big Bash event week and will re-arrange to ensure the number of events planned for the year remain the same.

Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Leisure & Freedom Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)

Freedom continues to deliver the leisure centre service – we are now more than 5 ½ years into the contract. Last year over 500,000 visits were made to the leisure centres, with this number excluding the number of school based visits and club based visits.

Freedom is having excellent success with the development of the learn to swim offer with the current performance far exceeding what was anticipated at the start of the contract. Fitness membership on the other hand, is slightly down on expectations, but the team in Fenland continues to push opportunities to be healthy in these facilities.

Recently the George Campbell has had pool filters replaced, new pool boilers on order, the gym changing facility has been modernised and the reception area now has a Department for Levelling Up funded Changing Places toilet and a larger space adjacent for people to wait for partners and friends.

The project to add additional solar PV to the roofs of the swimming pools is continuing and is finally at the procurement phase. Additionally, the building management systems are being updated to replace redundant equipment and will improve the effective management of the pool and air heating the facilities.

As a result of Fenland's success last December in securing support from the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund for excess energy costs, FDC will not have to finance any support to Freedom for last financial year. Despite recent challenges including covid, energy crisis and the current cost of living crisis, the overall financial performance of the Freedom / Fenland contract is slightly better than anticipated at the bid stage nearly 6 years ago.

Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)

The Council's Active Fenland team continues to deliver affordable activity sessions within local communities to encourage people to be more active. The three activity co-ordinator posts remain funded by the County Council Public Health Team (1 post) and the Integrated Care System (2 posts). In the first two months of the year 247 different sessions have been offered.

Integrated Care Partnership (Cllr Boden)

The next meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board is 19 July 2024.

Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

New help hub

Work in May has focussed on recruitment for the FDC managed triage service, training and engagement with partners in the public sector, the community and the voluntary sector ready for the commencement of the service as a quiet launch in June. The service initially will focus on residents out of work engaging with the DWP or GP practice.

Funding for the help hub service is through health budgets. September full council will receive an update on the progress of the first couple of months.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

Working with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage (Cllr Seaton)

Fenland Culture Fund:

A total of 19 applicants were successful with grants of up to £2000 each as part of the Fenland Culture Fund, funded by Arts Council England and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. With a combined value of more than £34,000, some more of those funded projects and activities have continued to take place since the last report.

- **Lilian Ream: Faces and Places** - A major exhibition of work by Wisbech photographer Lilian Ream. Robert Bell, Chair of the Lilian Ream Trust, said “We are extremely grateful to the Fenland Culture Fund for providing funding to enable to us to mount this exhibition here at the Museum. We will highlight the career of a businesswoman who came to dominate professional photography in Wisbech for nearly half a century.”
- **Launch of 'Why do we celebrate women's art?' Exhibition** - The exhibition has been curated by Fenland-based artist Lisa Banks and features works by 18 female artists from across the country. The exhibition has been funded by Arts Council England and the Fenland Culture Fund.
- **Dragon's Head** - Young artists at Neale Wade Academy were able to participate in a student workshop with Mandinga Arts in preparation for the St George's Festival parade. Mandinga Arts researches, designs, creates, and delivers extraordinary and innovative outdoor performance costumes, puppets, and processions, engaging communities in collaboration with skilled professional artists.



Express Yourself:

The Integrated Care System funded project 'Express Yourself' supports children and young people's health and wellbeing through positively engaging with arts and cultural activity based on the NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing.

- It is now in delivery and being administered by 20Twenty Productions. With their subject expertise, they are a Fenland based Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. 20Twenty Productions were ideally placed to administer this project because they work with many young people and schools already and they understand very well some of the challenges that young people are facing today.
- 9 artists and professionals are delivering the sessions, they have been supported with training to further their own skills and development.

Phase Two was delivered across Fenland villages and in Whittlesey, Wisbech and March working with 40 teenagers, 10 young adults (aged 18-24) and 81 primary school children on a wide range of artforms. Feedback from the students included:

- “In the beginning I was scared but now I am not, I love this place and I never want to leave.”
- “I learnt that meeting new people and talking to new people isn’t that hard.”
- “I know that when I get angry now, I can colour.”
- “I enjoyed doing art and doing the wellbeing, it was fun. Now I know how to do art and relax”.



Supporting groups to hold public events (Cllr Murphy)

The Council have established an internal working group to help support organisers wishing to hold events on FDC land. Transformation has also been involved in digitising applications for land use. Collaboration between teams will help to ensure that events on FDC land are held safely.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)

Following the successful Pride In Fenland Awards 2024 earlier this year, the team are reviewing the event with lead members. This will be the focus over the next few months and we plan to hold our next Pride In Fenland Awards in 2025 (date to be agreed).

5 Market Place Wisbech – Fire Damaged Building (Cllrs Laws & Seaton)

The Planning, Building Control and the Police are all working on resolving the situation, but it is dependent on the willingness of the property owner and their resources. Formal action taken against the owner, such as s215 notices from Planning, would potentially make things more difficult for the developer and put pressure on the authority to do works in default. The developer does seem to be progressing the works, but at a slower pace than we would like. There are concerns about the impact on adjoining buildings, but this is a civil matter between property owners.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	9.52 days	10.00 days	9.84	
ARP2	Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	7.37 days	10.00 days	13.36	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	294	250	59	
CELP2	The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	45%	53%	49	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	86	50	10	
CELP4	Number of Active Fenland sessions delivered and total attendance per year	621	600	132	
CELP19	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	47	38	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP20	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland	£199,000	£201,000	N/A (March 2025)	N/A

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
The time taken to assess Council Tax Support new claims/changes has been achieved. However. The time to taken to assess Housing Benefit new/claims has not been achieved this month by 6.12 days. Due to the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit, migration files have increased, and staff have targeted new claims volumes remain high. The staff continue to have focus days to target areas of work. DHP expenditure is currently 13.80 % of the allocated DWP budget.

Environment

Projects from Business Plan:

Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service

Diverting Waste from Landfill (Cllr Murphy)

During 2023/24 the teams collected a total of almost 40,000 tonnes of domestic and commercial waste from our customers. Within this total, the Residual Waste (green bin waste) has reduced by 3.4% (1,102 tonnes) and blue bin recycling waste collected has reduced by around 1.8% (428 tonnes). However, there has been a significant increase in the amount of garden waste collected, 19.5% (1,329 tonnes).

Collected Waste Tonnages	2022/23	2023/24	% Change
Overall tonnage	39,928	39,997	<0.2%
Residual Tonnage (green bins)	24,250	23,418	-3.4%
Dry Recycling Tonnage Actual (blue bins)	8,887	8,459	-1.8%
Compost Tonnage Actual (brown bins)	6,791	8,120	+19.5%
Dry Recycling & Compost Tonnage Total (blue and brown bins)	15,678	16,579	+5.7%

Collected Waste –		
Percentage Recycling (blue bins to green bins)	26.8%	26.5%
Percentage Recycling (blue and brown bins to green bins)	39.3%	41.5%

Customers are producing less waste than previous years even with the significant property growth that Fenland has experienced. Customers remain active recyclers and the good quality recycling collected has dropped by a smaller proportion than the residual waste.

In 2023/24, we achieved a net income of £318,657 from the materials presented, which is £144,853 less than the same period the previous year. This is because the material markets have been impacted by reduced demand and a tonne of Fenland's recycling has reduced in value over the past 12 months as a result. The 50% profit share within the contract has been impacted by this change in the value of the materials.

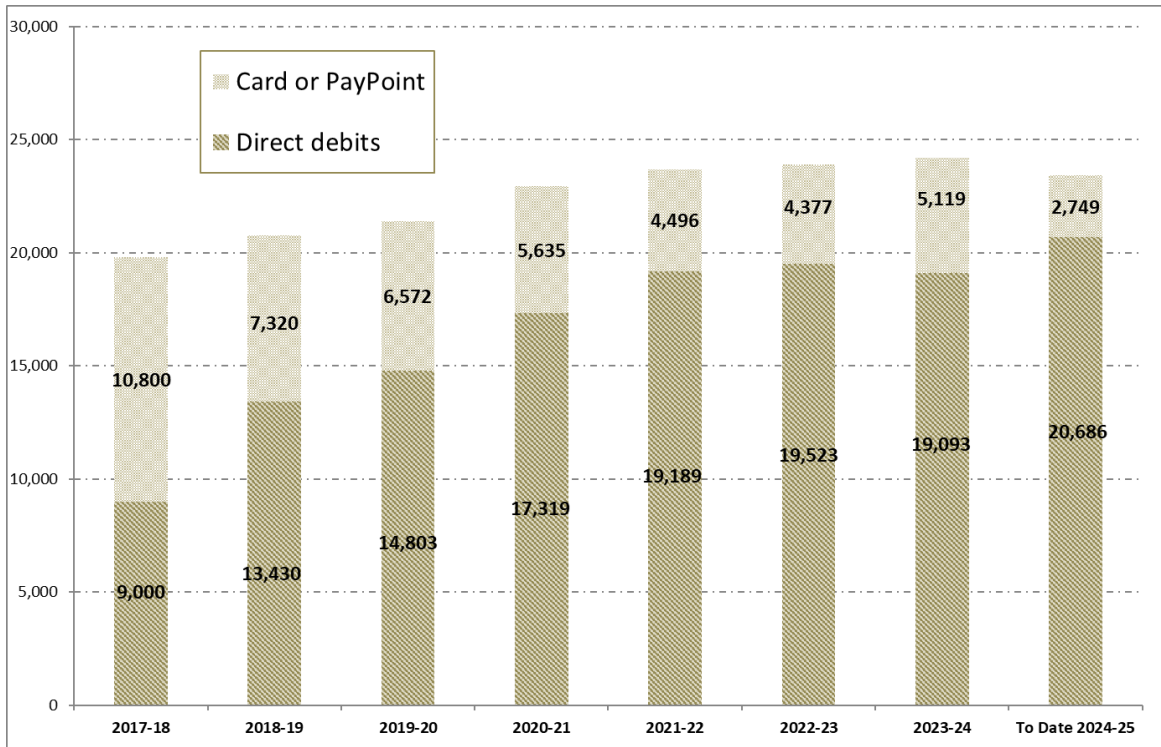
We will continue to support our customers to maximise their recycling efforts and to treat their waste as a resource, but the economic situation is having an impact across the recycling resource chain and reducing income from the materials collected.

To protect the quality of recycling materials collected, the team rejected 7,864 blue bins last year. Each of these customers is written to with information about how to get their recycling correct. Alongside this, through inspections, 4,796 properties received information directly from supervisors encouraging best use of recycling bins. Of these 4,796 bins inspected, 5% contained incorrect materials (227).

Garden Waste Collection (Cllr Murphy)

To date this year we have 23,435 subscriptions, with 88% direct debits and a total of £1,061,000 of income. Last year there were a total of 24,212 subscriptions, with 78% direct debits, which generated an income of £985,000. This covered the costs of providing the garden waste service to those who chose to make use of it.

Garden Waste Subscriptions 2017-2024



Delivering clean streets and public spaces (Cllr Murphy)

The cleansing team works 7 days a week, 364 days a year to keep Fenland’s streets and public open spaces clean.

Since April, the team have received 238 requests from the public to resolve environmental issues, such as litter, broken glass, flytipping, drug related litter or similar. 92% of these were attended and dealt with the same or next working day.

The development, increased kilometres of kerbs requiring sweeping, the weather and the amount of building work taking place in some of the Fenland towns continues to place increased pressure on the available HGV mechanical street sweeping resource and schedules have had to move out to 8 or 10 weeks as a result.

The scheduled cleansing and Rapid Response service, with support from Fenland’s active local volunteers, including Street Pride groups, deliver clean streets and public open spaces in Fenland. The standard of cleanliness is monitored by Street Scene officers using Keep Britain Tidy surveying methodology across a range of land use types and all wards. Since April, officers have completed 220 surveys for litter and street sweeping and found 217 to be of a suitable standard (99%).

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

Tackling fly-tipping, illegal parking, dog fouling, littering and ASB (Cllr Murphy)

Total number of fly tips for April and May. Wisbech rural villages have been the most affected across the district.

Month	Total	Chatteris	March	Whittlesey	Wisbech	Villages
April	120	7	11	10	60	32
May	158	7	19	16	76	38

The Street Scene Team aim to be as proactive as they can and aim to attend fly tipped sites to look for any evidence and bring those responsible to account. Some of our proactive work is included below:

6 members of the public have been issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice in connection to fly tipping offences.

- 2 of these were to householders who failed to employ the services of a licensed waste carrier which resulted in their waste being given to fly tippers.
- 3 tickets were issued to those we have reason to believe are responsible for waste found dumped.
- 1 fine was issued to a director of a business when we found his trade waste in the A605 layby.

All but 2 of these fines remain unpaid (but are still within payment time)

6 Formal Interviews Under Caution have been carried out. All were questioned in connection with waste found dumped.

Additional enforcement work is taking place on March Marketplace to raise awareness of the parking order following the recent improvement works. We have had to issue **5 parking fines** to cars who were found to be parking illegally.

The team have received **a total of 36 reported abandoned vehicles. All were investigated and 2 were removed by our contractor** due to being a danger to the highway.

Maintain parks and open spaces (Cllr Murphy)

Fenlands open spaces have been challenging to maintain in the initial part of the growing season. The wet and mild weather created ideal conditions for rapid growth in grass that the current regime of a cut every two weeks struggled to keep up with. However, things have settled down in June and the cut and finish in Fenland's open spaces is excellent. The large spaces that the Council maintains in our towns are all looking particularly impressive, with our contractor, Tivoli, working hard to ensure these spaces are well prepared for the many community activities that the spaces are used for throughout the summer.

The Tivoli contract is in its ninth year, with the final year starting in November 2024. This being the case, officers are preparing for a procurement exercise in 2025 to put in place a grounds maintenance partner in November 2025 on the current contract conclusion.

Support community groups including Street Pride, In Bloom, Green Dog Walkers and Friends of groups (Cllr Murphy)

Highlights for Street Pride groups in May have included 97 per cent of Fenland areas surveyed for litter and street sweeping in the past year being deemed of a suitable standard.

More than 1,100 areas across the district were surveyed using Keep Britain Tidy methodology.

The cleansing team works 7 days a week, 364 days a year to keep Fenland's streets and public open spaces clean. Street Pride volunteers work relentlessly to make Fenland cleaner and more beautiful with clean-up projects.

Volunteers in Benwick also completed yet another community project in the village, with the unveiling of a miniature replica of St Mary's Church - nearly 40 years after landmark's demolition. Determined to preserve the memory of the beloved landmark, Benwick in Bloom / Street Pride group took up the challenge of recreating the church in meticulous detail.

Working with town councils and the community to provide local markets and market town events (including Four Seasons events) (Cllr Murphy)

April was an incredible month for events. Fenland District Council in partnership with March Events Committee, March Library, Market Place Creative People, 20 Twenty Productions and Cambridgeshire Skills delivered March St George's Fayre. This included a whole programme of arts activities running up to the event focused on the parade. London based Notting Hill carnival production company Mandinga Arts and Local Artist Ricky Outis worked with the community to create stand out head dresses and show pieces for the parade.

Market Place hosted a medieval encampment on West End Park which included headline performances from re-enactors and fire breathers! Popular taster arts also included making shields. Thousands enjoyed the event and engaged in the arts.

Working collaboratively, the group are already planning to bid for funds for 2025.

Review the current arrangements for parking enforcement in Fenland (Cllr French)

There is no further update on the implementation of the CPE project. Currently progress on the CPE has been paused until such time as additional funding in region of £500,000 is found or committed.

Reference should be made to the joint portfolio holder report for May and the Cabinet report dated 18/12/2023 - Property, Assets & Major Projects – On and Off-Street Parking Enforcement Update Paper.

Officers are currently exploring the option and associated cost of introducing a District wide parking places order across all FDC owned car parks. Whilst this would not offer enforcement of on-street highway areas, this would enable off-street parking areas owned by FDC to be regulated and enforced which would in turn free up parking spaces to reduce on-street parking contraventions.

Streetlighting (Cllr French)

Streetlight Repairs & Maintenance

A total of thirty-four streetlight faults were reported and attended to during the months of April and May by Fenlands streetlight maintenance contractor on behalf of FDC, Clarion Housing Association and the seven Parish Councils that FDC provide streetlight services for. Eighteen of the reported faults related to District Council streetlights during this period.

An overview of the fault attendance can be seen below. These figures exclude any programmed replacement or upgrade works.

Fenland DC -	18 Fault Reports
Clarion -	2 Fault Reports
Parish -	14 Fault Reports

The above figures include one fault which required emergency attendance.

The current streetlight service provider contract is scheduled to end at the end of August. A new streetlight repairs, maintenance and replacement work contract has been put out to tender and is due back on 15th July. Following completion of the tender evaluation, governance and award procedures it is anticipated that the new contract will commence on 1st September. The contract duration will be for three years with the option to extend for a further two.

Capital Streetlight Replacement Works

A number of streetlight replacements or upgrades have been ordered through the existing contract for both FDC and on behalf of six Parish Councils. Some works remain outstanding where either material delivery is awaited or where connectivity works are outstanding with UKPN. Officers will continue to progress any outstanding works with the existing streetlight service provider and UKPN.

The remaining capital streetlight replacement and upgrade works shall be ordered through the new service provider contract following completion of programmed electrical and structural testing works which are due to commence in August. The streetlight electrical and structural integrity testing works contract has been put out to tender and is due back on 13th June.

FDC Car Park Maintenance (Cllr French)

All FDC's public car park asset inspections are currently being undertaken and any associated defects shall be quantified and actioned.

The FDC car park gully and surface water drain cleansing works contract is scheduled for re-tender later this year and will be in place prior to the annual cleansing work being undertaken in January/February 2025.

Liaison with the National Trust associated with the Chapel Road car park site continues following the expiry of the long-term 60-year lease agreement on 25th March 2024. FDC's former lease will hold over on a protected lease arrangement until a way forward is determined and agreed.

Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime & antisocial behaviour and promoting social cohesion

Community Safety Partnership updates (Cllr Wallwork)

UKSPF and Wisbech ASB fund

UKSPF (Wisbech ASB) funding, has enabled two fire break schemes to be completed, a boxing course, Posh football workshops at Thomas Clarkson Academy and Living Sport delivering an eight-week programme, as well as youth workshops over the school holidays which included, beatbox, dance and computer coding.

Wisbech Youth Outreach and Diversion Projects - Youth of Fenland delivered youth detached outreach work in Wisbech, primarily on the locations where young people congregate. This included the town centre and town park.

Through this outreach activity and subsequent contact with young people some were further supported with accessing education opportunities, mental health referral and referral into young career support networks.

Community Engagement

A number of community engagement events have been held across the district.

A rural engagement event held in Leverington was attended by over 50 people from the local community. This event was supported by Cambridgeshire Constabulary with a local PCSO present and their Scams, Cybercrime and Fraud prevention officer.

Safer Streets 5 Engagement Officer has conducted regular engagement with the out-of-town retail sector and also held a community engagement at Belgrave Retail Park.

Safety Zone

In person Safety Zones have seen a return and these sessions for primary school year 6 children are being delivered by a wide range of partner agencies. These include the Fire Service, Education, Healthy Schools and Fenland District Council. The session provides year six pupils with a range of lifelong safety skills, in an enjoyable and interactive way. They help students to stay safe through practical activities focusing on Fire, Water, Road, Personal and Dog Safety. Cybercrime and an awareness of age restricted products are also included along with some knowledge of lifesaving skills.

The first sessions have been held at Whittlesey Fire Station with further sessions planned for March and Wisbech.

Feedback from schools who have attended a session includes:

- Really informative delivery, with age-appropriate information provided.
- Very sensitive to our pupils' needs, particularly during the firefighters' workshop.
- Wide range of activities/workshops meant the children learnt about a wide range of things and lots of practical tips.
- The booklets were very informative.

Fenland Diverse Communities Forum updates on delivering the Community Cohesion Action Plan (Cllr Wallwork)

Fenland has one of the largest Gypsy Traveller communities in the Country. To help capture the history of Travelling people in Fenland and to aid integration, members of the Diverse Communities Forum and in particular Chatteris Museum, March Camera Club and One Voice4 Travellers have undertaken a project to document the complex histories of the Gypsy Traveller communities who have made Chatteris and Fenland their temporary or permanent home in the last half century. This follows on from an earlier project "Who lived in my House in 1921" which focused respectively on the changing townscape and its landmark buildings, and its population as recorded in the census of that year. This relied upon historic records, whether built or written. This project addresses the question but what about those who did not live in houses, and moved from place to place?

The Museum's photographic collection and those of one of the members of the March Camera Club contain many historical images, from the 19th and 20th centuries, of Gypsy Travellers living on the Fen in their vans.

The project focused on a then and now picture from the perspective of their modern-day counterparts. Looking at:

- How did/ do Travelling people shape the life of the town;
- Why did/ do they stop or settle here?

The project will enable all to reflect on these questions and to do this it will focus on documenting the discrete but overlapping lives of:

- Past and present Gypsy, Romany and Traveller communities;
- Travelling fairs, show people and entertainers
- Horse traders and general traders

The project will also reflect on both van- and house- based lives, and the transition between them.

Work has been/ is being undertaken/ project rollout;

- Launch at the Chatteris Museum on the 15th May;
- Cultural awareness training for Museum volunteers
- Collect local stories at the Museum during May;
- Plan for Roadshows and Festival - May to August)
- June – Feasts and Fairs (including Chatteris Midsummer Festival during GRT History month
- July 2024 – Horses, working, trading and Moving (Wimbledon)

Throughout July and August the Museum will host 5 "Museum of Me" making events, which may include sound recordings, videography, scrapbooking and photographing treasured objects. North Cambridgeshire Training Centre will host the Festival of making.

Throughout the summer/ autumn the Museum will offer physical and digital space to display the outcomes of the project and take a pop-up version to other fairs and festivals and onto local Gypsy sites.

The project will be archived permanently at Chatteris Museum, to be used in future exhibitions, and digital outputs will be hosted on its YouTube channel, OV4T website and offered to the Traveller Times News Magazine.

The project received £18k funding to allow it to happen with an officer at FDC helping to enable and support the successful bid.

Community Safety Grant Agreement updates (Cllr Wallwork)

Following receipt of ASB allegations against an elderly female (the subject) and reports of concern about their well-being, a visit was conducted to make sure all aspects of the allegation were covered.

The subject was spoken to at length about the situation. There were no immediate safeguarding concerns and appropriate advice was provided with further contact to be made regarding identification of potential support networks the subject may choose to access as well as discussion with Social Prescribers in the health service.

An operational visit to a commercial premises identified an area that was being used as living space including young children whilst the premises was open to customers. Concerned it wasn't suitable for such a purpose, appropriate safeguarding measures were taken internally as well as notification to external agencies.

Community Safety assisted the Fenland Neighbourhood Police Team with Op Spectre, a knife crime initiative. Joint visits were carried out at premises to check if they sold knives, to enquire if children had attempted to buy them, improve awareness of the laws related to selling knives and how to report concerns. This was followed by some open green space patrols looking for potential locations where a knife may be concealed for later use.

Deliver the CCTV shared service with Peterborough City Council (Cllr Wallwork)

The CCTV shared service has maintained its 100% service function across a 24/7 period – the CCTV service is the only council service that is delivered across 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

From April to end of 31 May 2024, the CCTV service has been able to respond to 229 incidents across our four market towns including incidents relating to anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, violent crime, illegal drug use, possession of weapons and theft. As a result of CCTV intervention this has led to 27 arrests being made by Cambridgeshire Police. This highlights the work CCTV services do to support the council and partners in responding to crime and disorder and helping to make our communities safer and reduce the fear of crime.

The CCTV service also continues to be pro-active in delivering services that helps reduce crime & disorder and anti-social behaviour by delivering regular camera patrols of our four market towns and other key locations. During 1st April to 31st May 2024, the CCTV team have delivered 800 patrols. All patrols are conducted across the 24/7 period ensuring that no matter what time of day and night our local communities are being protected and that any issues or concerns are being identified as early as possible.

The CCTV service also provides the councils 'out of hours' telephone contact services for example, homelessness, stray and lost dogs, cleansing incidents, dangerous buildings and structures, damaged trees, to name but a few areas. The CCTV service has responded to 62 calls for services from our telephone contact service from 1st April to 31st May 2024.

The North Cambs Hospital CCTV works was completed in May 2024, which was in response to the planned demolition of the tower at the location which housed critical radio infrastructure for the town centre CCTV system. The new design relocates the transmission pathway utilising local street lighting assets to maintain and improve communication pathways. The works also included a new CCTV camera located on the Wisbech Park pavilion to provide protection against damage and anti-social behaviour in the area.

Street Drinking Update (Cllr Wallwork)

Ongoing work with the Police via visits to retail premises and review meetings with Local Neighbourhood Police Team continues alongside site owners to ensure site security. Anglia Water confirmed that they will be installing fencing on the former encampment after review which will be actioned in the next few weeks.

Joint patrol activities with Wisbech Neighbourhood Policing team linked to their work around Op Luscombe continues. In addition to the focus around begging and street drinking related nuisance, the patrol activity now considers other ASB related hotspots, such as those where litter is an issue especially alcohol related litter and the use of Nitrous Oxide.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 24/25	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP7	Rapid or Village Response requests actioned the same or next day	93%	90%	92%	
CELP8	% of inspected streets meeting our cleansing standards	97%	93%	99%	
CELP9	% of collected household waste – Blue Bin recycling (1 month in arrears)	26.6%	28%	Awaiting data	
CELP10	Customer satisfaction with refuse and recycling services	93.6%	90%	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP11	Customer satisfaction with our garden waste service	89.8%	85%	N/A (March 2025)	N/A
CELP12	Number of Street Pride and Friends Of community environmental events supported	255	204	29 (March) 23 (April) 21 (May) YTD 73	
CELP13	% of businesses who said they were supported and treated fairly	100%	95%	N/A (Jul 2024, Jan & Mar 2025)	N/A
CELP14	% of those asked who are satisfied with events	97%	90%	St George's 122 received 114 satisfied – 93%	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
CELP9: We are waiting for data to be confirmed for April.

Economy

Projects from Business Plan:

Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses

Attract inward investment and establish new business opportunities (Cllr Benney)

Attendance at the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) held in Leeds May 20th to 22nd. The overall objective was to promote Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to potential investors under a “Team Cambridgeshire” approach. The Combined Authority took a pavilion space at the forum, held seminars in the pavilion on each day of the forum, attended fringe events and held meetings with potential investors. Several of the local authorities provided resources, including Fenland, to support the Team Cambridgeshire approach. The seminars attracted 272 visitors from 209 organisations. A full evaluation and follow up on enquiries are currently under way and will be reported on when available.

Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is now live and being used by the Economic Growth Team to enhance the service it provides to local business, to support the targeting and engagement with potential inward investors, to enable significant efficiency improvement in the management of grant programmes such as Shared Prosperity fund and to provide more insight into the Fenland economy. The CRM has also enabled us to provide a commercial property search facility hosted on the Fenland for Business website. The Economic Growth Team will enable other council services to benefit from, for example, being able to send out targeted communications to businesses by size, sector, location, number of employees and so on. A presentation will be provided later in the year to highlight the capabilities of this system.

Joint meeting with Age UK at their offices in South Fens Business Centre with Growth Hub.

Meetings with companies in the care sector that attended the Care Micro-Enterprise Development Event at March Library.

The latest newsletter was circulated to 1,325 to local businesses with an open rate of 40% and 747 clicks to access further information highlighted in the newsletter.

Promote business premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Units (Cllr Benney)

The Estates team remain actively engaged with tenants of all sites. Overall occupancy across the investment estate remains high at 94.7%

- Industrial units are fully occupied.
- Boathouse occupancy has now risen to 100%.
- South Fens Business Centre has fallen to 68.1%

We continue to have had a high turnover of tenants at SFBC. However, following the

relaxation of the rents we are able to charge, we have seen a flattening of the curve and at least one tenant who had served notice to quit has reversed that decision based on the new rent profile and agreed a new lease.

Skills Update (Cllr Benney)

Meeting with CPCA to discuss how Fenland Businesses can benefit from the CPCA Skills SPF funded projects of All Age Careers, Internships and Digital Badging.

Meeting with North Cambridgeshire Training Centre to discuss how to encourage more Fenland businesses to take advantage of the training on offer and the recruitment of apprentices.

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)

The council's food safety and health and safety regulatory service plans have been published following portfolio holder consultation in May. These plans set out the forward plan for these statutory services and comply with the council's enforcement policy and national enforcement concordat. The plans can be read here:

[Food Safety Service Plan 2024/25 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/health-and-safety/Fenland-District-Council/Food-Safety-Service-Plan-2024-25)
[Health and Safety - Fenland District Council](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/health-and-safety/Fenland-District-Council)

Throughout April and May, 45 businesses received an in person visit and were offered a score using the food hygiene rating scheme, where applicable.

15 businesses were offered a questionnaire-based inspection as they are categorised as 'low risk' to public health due to the type of food they prepare and sell.

The purpose of the food hygiene rating is to allow consumers to make informed choices about the places where they eat or shop for food and, through these choices, encourage businesses to improve their hygiene standards. Some premises may be excluded from the scheme or their rating may not be published for sensitivity purposes (e.g. data protection) however they are still rated in accordance with the standard.

Food Hygiene Ratings were awarded as follows:

- 38 businesses received a 5
- 4 businesses received a 4
- 0 businesses received a 3
- 1 business received a 2
- 1 business received a 1
- 1 business received a 0

The lower scoring businesses have received follow up support and revisits to assist them in achieving at least a 3 rating consistently.

In April and May we received 7 applications for a food hygiene rating rescore visit. An opportunity to request a re-visit when improvements have been made in order to be re-assessed for a 'new' rating is one of the 3 safeguards to ensure that the Food Hygiene Rating scheme is fair to businesses, alongside a right to appeal and a right to reply. The re-score visit is unannounced and must take place within 3 months of the application being made by paying a fee via our website.

Businesses that were subject to the questionnaire-based approach do not receive a new food hygiene rating.

We also received 28 support requests, ranging from new business enquiries to foreign body and food poisoning complaints or issuing a food export certificate.

Recently we also participated in a national sampling study focusing on both unpasteurised and pasteurised milk cheese at retail sale to ascertain their microbiological safety and quality. We collected 6 samples from shops located in Wisbech and all the results came back from the laboratory as satisfactory.

Next, we will be involved in a study designed 'to collect and use microbiological data to assess environmental hygiene and cleaning standards in Tattoo and Piercing premises.

These sampling programmes assist in developing good practice procedures and provide data to support businesses in assessing risk and implementing suitable cleaning or food safety procedures.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

Delivery of new homes (including affordable homes) (Cllr Laws & Cllr Hoy)

The Council helped enable Platform Housing to invest into Fenland to deliver a new 137 affordable home scheme in Wisbech. The homes were completed before the end of April but occupation commenced in May.

External funding bid and major projects updates (Cllr Boden)

Long-Term Plan for Towns, Wisbech (Cllr Hoy, Cllr Tierney, Cllr Wallwork)

The Long-Term Plan for Towns programme has successfully set up and held its inaugural meeting of the Wisbech Town Board where members have formally appointed a chair and provided an initial high-level steer on priorities for the programme.

Work is ongoing with CPCA and CCC to clarify membership appointments.

The initial £50,000 of capacity funding has been received with a further £200,000 capacity funding to follow in the coming weeks.

Officers have been working together with Norr consultants (formerly of the Wisbech Masterplan) to cost out the work required to submit the 10-year Vision and 3-year delivery plan as required by DLUHC. This work requires community consultation on the plans that the Town Board are putting in place.

The next Wisbech Town Board meeting is to be held on Wednesday the 26th June for the Board to consider the costs associated with undertaking the work and provide further steer for officers to generate the documents in conjunction with a consultant.

The deadline for submission of documentation to DLUHC for review is November the 1st. If the documents are not at that standard required by Government, the substantive grant award and the subsequent project delivery will be delayed. Ensuring that the 10-year vision and 3-year delivery plan are developed to Government's specification is critical to success.

Accommodation Review (Cllr Boden)

The Outline Business case in respect of the shortlisted options in respect of the Accommodation Review is now complete. The Outline Business Case will support the decision-making process in relation to the future of the corporate accommodation.

As part of the next steps, we are engaging with key partners via One Public Estate (OPE) to ascertain the potential for future co-location.

A report seeking members agreement to a preferred option regarding the Corporate Accommodation will be brought to Cabinet in Summer 2024, following which, if Cabinet are in agreement, a full business case of the preferred option will be commissioned.

Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (Cllr Benney)

UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2024/25 full applications have been sent out to businesses; closing date is 14th of June 2025. Unfortunately, Fenland District Council only received enough funding to support 17 businesses. The need is great, particularly for capital grants, so many businesses may feel disappointed. If levelling up grants or equivalent are available in 2025/26, we can evidence the need to the Government and hopefully secure a more realistic amount of funding.

UK Rural –27 Full applications have been sent out, closing date 14th of June 2024.

Start-Ups- This grant programme was also oversubscribed; 25 expressions of interest were received with a total ask of £250k. Total funding available is £140k.

March Future High Street Fund (Cllr Seaton & Cllr French)

The March Future Highstreets fund programme continues through delivery phase and at pace. To date the Marketplace scheme has been completed on time and under budget, along with four property grants being provided to local property owners. March Dental and 24 Market Place have both received grants totalling £100,000 to improve their premises from empty/derelict properties to bring them back into use. Following intervention by the grants, FDC have been able to support the creation of two new purpose build business units (now let) and three new residential units (also let) within the town centre.

The Broad Street project continues to be delivered by Octavius, with regular community coffee mornings making officers and staff available to members of the public that may have questions or concerns. At time of writing, phase one, two and three of the scheme are completed. The March toilet block has been removed and works have switched to the western side of the road with a temporary roundabout and temporary road surface currently in operation throughout the works site.

Most importantly for the Town, the temporary traffic lights in Broad Street have now been removed. This allows traffic to flow through the town. As expected, the new roundabout design, alongside zebra crossings, is working very well and traffic is flowing much more effectively than it did in the past. The removal of the traffic lights at the northern end of Broad Street has significantly improved the traffic flow, with the zebra crossings allowing safe and swift pedestrian flow in the town centre.

11-12 High Street, Wisbech and 24 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Boden, Cllr Hoy & Cllr Tierney)

These projects are covered by monthly Cabinet report items. Please review Cabinet Report packs for further information.

The Elms, Chatteris (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney, Cllr Tierney)

Please see [Fenland Future Limited](#) update below.

The business plan for this site being finalised by Fenland Future Limited with their Partner Lovell Homes, which will trigger a reserved matters planning application.

Nene Waterfront Development (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney, Cllr Tierney)

The reserved matters application for a new extra care affordable home scheme on the site is being finalised following a pre application process with Fenland District Council Planning Team. Option assessment is ongoing for the other 4 plots.

Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)

Chatteris Projects

The Chatteris Town Council managed Chatteris Museum project has now moved the museum into its new premises (the old Barclay's bank building in the High Street) as scheduled.

The contract for the works to 14 Church Lane has been awarded and work is well underway in converting the former museum and town council chambers to create better work spaces, badly needed storage facilities and new community rooms. The existing first floor accommodation is already taking shape as a residential flat, and initial work is now complete for the new build above the flat roof part of the building at the rear to create a second residential flat for rent. The building work continues but should be completed shortly, allowing Chatteris Town Council to move back after using temporary accommodation at 2 Park Street. As a result of the building works large meetings of the Council, including full council meetings, are being held at the King Edward Centre.

Whittlesey Projects

Funding from the CPCA, following the suspension of the Whittlesey Heritage Centre project, has been secured for work to;

- Develop an SOBC regarding a Whittlesey relief road. Consultants will be appointed to progress this work.
- Add additional solar PV to the Manor swimming pool; Business case developed. Application to UKPN underway – awaiting notice from UKPN to proceed, whilst procurement is undertaken.
- Improvements to the netball / tennis court area at the Manor Centre:

Fencing replacement has been completed, playing surface refurbishment completed and lighting units have arrived in the UK and will be fitted in July.

- Whittlesey Buttercross
A meeting with local Members will be booked shortly to consider the situation.

Wisbech Projects

Further works needs to be carried out to install equipment at Exchange Tower before the Shop Watch Radio Scheme can be progressed.

Continue to review council land and property assets to ensure they are fit for purpose and optimised to deliver better public services, improve efficiency and release surplus land for residential and commercial development as outlined in our Commercial Investment Strategy (Cllr Benney)

The Estates team continue to engage as a key stakeholder in the ongoing accommodation review. As reported to members, this has included member tours of both Fenland Hall and The Base and work with appointed agents in preparation of an outline Business case to be presented to members in due course.

The first tranche of disposal continues as planning consents are granted followed by either a sale via auction or by private treaty. In the case of private treaty sales, to ensure fair value an independent valuation by a local RICS qualified surveyor is undertaken prior to disposal.

Work is concluding in relation to identifying potential sites for a further tranche of disposals, and these will be put before members for approval prior after the General Election and prior to disposal work commencing.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

Promotion of sustainable road, rail and concessionary travel initiatives (Cllr Seaton)

Whittlesea Station

Following the completion of the second strategic outline business case and options appraisal work in late 2022, additional funding needed to be sourced for the Outline Business Case (OBC) and to deliver projects on the ground. Following a public consultation in late 2023, the CPCA have approved £3 million pounds for Whittlesea Station from April 2024 to end of March 2027. The grant funding agreement with the combined authority is nearing completion. Project Board meetings have been set up in diaries. Work is ongoing to set up key documentation such as the risk register and programme for the project.

Further details about the Whittlesea Station funding are available here [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Hereward Community Rail Partnership

The CRP Try a Train and Community visit programmes have now commenced. Young people from FACET have been to Peterborough as part of their skills programme and they also have been learning about station safety with support from the British Transport Police. Doddington Girl Guides visited March Station to learn about careers in the railway for women, they travelled on the train to Ely. At Ely they were met by a tour guide. Had a visit to the park and did a trial around Ely Station. Several other visits and trips are being planned for the coming months.

The latest Meet the Manager Event was held at Ely Station in April 2024. This was in partnership with all the train companies serving the station and other Community Rail Partnerships in East Anglia. This gave local people the opportunity to meet with train company representatives and ask questions.

The latest CRP Management Board Meeting from May 2024 was held in Whittlesey. This gave everyone a chance to learn about the Whittlesey Heritage Walk project and to consider railway tourism in accordance with the new CRP Marketing and Tourism Strategy.

Engagement with CPCA and CCC on delivery of major road and rail infrastructure projects (Cllr Seaton)

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

There is no specific update on this project.

The LTCP sets out the forward transport strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is an essential document to help secure funding for local transport improvements. The CPCA are currently updating this document. In November 2023 the latest version of the LTCP went to the CPCA Board for further discussion and was adopted. This version of the document includes the full draft LTCP with the district chapters, the main report and all the appendices. It can be viewed from the link below.

[CMIS > Meetings](#)

Relating to the September 2023 version of the LTCP, at FDC Council on 2 October 2023, a motion was passed that the LTCP should be revised. The good elements should be retained and matters relating to deliverability and funding should be amended and prioritised. Any such prioritisation should recognise differences within individual districts. A copy of the motion has been sent to all CPCA Board members. Further details can be found in the FDC press release, a link to which is below

[Call for revised local transport plan - Fenland District Council](#)

Wisbech Access Strategy

There is no specific update for this project.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It contains a range of transport projects in Wisbech that aim to address transport issues within the town and to help support the delivery of the scale of growth in the Fenland Local Plan. The latest information about the project can be found on the County Council website from the following link:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/wisbech-access-strategy>

A Wisbech Access Strategy report was presented to CPCA Business Board in July 2021 and CPCA Board in September 2021. The report required a strategic decision on the way forward linked to timescales and budgets. It was agreed that funding would be made available to complete the detailed design and the land acquisition for the 3 schemes – A47 Broad End Road, A47 Elm High Road and A1101 Ramnoth Road/Weasenham Lane. A copy of the main accompanying paper for the meetings mentioned above can be found from the following link: <https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1529/Committee/62/Default.aspx>

There has been delays relating to land acquisition and ongoing discussions around related issues such as probate. This work is now expected to complete before the end of 2023. The next step for these 3 projects is to secure funding for their construction.

March Area Transport Study – Main schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. It includes a range of transport projects across March to address transport issues and to facilitate new housing and employment growth.

In January 2023, A paper went to CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. The paper asked the Committee to:

- note the completion of the Full Business Case stage 1 (FBC1);
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £4,149,825 for the construction of MATS Broad Street;
- Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the drawdown of £300,000 for the completion of the FBC 2;

Here is a link to the Committee Paper and relevant reports for further details: [CMIS > Meetings.](#)

Work is ongoing to deliver these projects until Spring 2024.

The schemes forming part of this project are:

- A141 / Peas Hill Roundabout Upgrade (52m ICD), including the creation of an allmovement signalised junction at the A141 / Hostmoor Avenue Junction.
- A141 / Twenty Foot Road Signals.
- Broad Street / Dartford Road / Station Road Mini Roundabout, with one lane in each direction on Broad Street
- High Street / St Peter's Road Traffic Signal Improvements.
- Development of a Northern Industrial Link Road (NILR) – As a larger more complex project this scheme is expected to be taken to FBC2 in 2024.

March Area Transport Study – Walking & Cycling Schemes

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

The MATS project also includes a Walking and Cycling Strategy. £562,800 was approved at the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting. This funding allows for schemes in the Walking and

Cycling Strategy to be progressed in 3 phases. The phase one schemes which are primarily lining and signing will be constructed and completed in full. Phase 2a schemes require further investigation and design work to determine the solution to be built. Phase 2b schemes require option development work as well as further investigation and design work. This funding will enable 28 projects to be progressed as set out above. Phases 2A and 2B will require further funding in the future for their construction.

A copy of the October 2022 CPCA Board meeting paper setting out more details and information including for the 28 schemes can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2117/Committee/63/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

The full technical details and feasibility study work associated with the March Area Transport Strategy can be found on the County Council website from the link below

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/march-transport-study>

March to Wisbech Railway Line

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

This is a CPCA funded project with study work being taken forward by CPCA.

In November 2022, CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee and the Board approved work to Undertake an Options Assessment Report to provide the economic analysis on mode options, including existing information on heavy rail. This will be based on a service operating between Wisbech and March which removes the current dependency on Ely Area Capacity Enhancements whilst still being mindful of the future strategy to link into Cambridge. £80,000 has been drawn down from CPCA Medium Term Financial Plan to undertake this options assessment work. This study work is currently ongoing.

A link to the papers and information from the November 2022 CPCA meeting with the the relevant reports and papers can be found from the link below:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2139/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

A47

There is no specific update for this project. Work is ongoing to progress the individual projects as set out below.

In May 2023 National Highways released a series of documents and a consultation to support the Roads Investment Strategy 3 process covering the period 2025 – 2030. The consultation is live until 13 July 2023. It includes a Strategic Road Network Initial report, regional reports, and interactive maps. There are several references to A47 within the East of England regional report. The outcome of the consultation will feed into the RIS3 decision making by Government. The documents can be viewed from the following link:

<https://routestrategies.nationalhighways.co.uk/>

As part of RIS2 National Highways are working on a series of Pipeline scheme undertaking feasibility and other technical work to support decisions for RIS3. One of these projects is A47 Elm High Road roundabout. They are also considering this roundabout alongside Weasenham Lane/Ramnoth Road. Officers are providing extensive technical input into the project. The outcome of the work will go forward to Government as part of their decision making for RIS3. Any such decisions are expected to be in 2024.

Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project is being procured and managed by Fenland District Council with funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) market towns programme. The project commenced in March 2023 with a paper approved by FDC Cabinet for the Governance arrangements and procurement of a contractor to deliver the project. Please see the link to the Cabinet paper for further details.

[Cabinet Paper March 2023 - Whittlesey Relief Rd V2 6.2.2023 updated 02.03.23.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

During April and May the base line data report was completed along with the case for change. A stakeholder workshop was held to develop a long list of possible scheme options. Project Board members discussed and agreed proposals for the public consultation for this project that will be held in the autumn 2024. All the steps of the project are in line with government business case guidelines. The project remains on target.

Work with CPCA to influence housing and infrastructure funding to stimulate housing development and economic growth (Cllr Boden)

Officers across the Council have been providing information and comments to support an infrastructure delivery framework that can be used to support submissions to government to secure additional inward investment to meet infrastructure challenges. Officers have been working with lead members to ensure the document compliments and supports approved ambitions of the Council in relation to infrastructure set out in existing access strategies and planning documents in the district.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 24/25	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	92.5%	70%	100%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	68%	70%	87.5%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	85.75%	80%	100%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our Business Estates	94.2%	90%	94.7%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	95%	97%	91%	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments
Performance in relation to minor applications has improved steadily over the last year and is nearing the target. The authority is not in danger of designation.

Quality Organisation

Projects from Business Plan:

Excellent Customer Service

Customer Service Excellence accreditation (Cllr Tierney)

Our annual assessment took place on 13th June, and we are currently awaiting the formal confirmed outcome.

Supporting vulnerable customers with complex queries (Cllr Wallwork) – ALL

Please see updates on [Homelessness](#), [Rough Sleepers](#) and [Community Safety](#).

Elections Update (Cllr Boden)

Police and Crime Commissioner Election 2 May 2024

On Thursday 2 May 2024 an election took place for the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Cambridgeshire Police area.

The Cambridgeshire Police area is made up of six voting areas: Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Peterborough, and South Cambridgeshire.

There were 57 polling stations located across the Fenland voting area where 5254 electors voted in person and a further 8095 voted by post. The Fenland area turnout was 17.44% of the registered voters.

The overall turnout across the whole of the Cambridgeshire Police area was 25.63% of the registered voters and Daryl Preston was duly elected.

Following our Modern Polling pilot, the Elections Team and Polling Station Staff successfully rolled out 40 iPads to polling stations in May's PCC Election and at the Parliamentary General Election in July this will be rolled out further, all of Fenlands polling stations will be using the Modern Polling iPads.

Whittlesey Town Council By-Elections 2 May 2024

On the same day, Thursday 2 May 2024, the Council successfully delivered two By-Elections for Whittlesey Town Council as follows:

- North West Ward following the resignation of Councillor Luke Turner. There were two polling stations located at Whittlesey Baptist Church and Bowker Way where 323 electors voted in person and 437 voted by post. The overall turnout was 20.05% of the registered voters and Alex Miscandlon was duly elected.
- St Andrews Ward following the resignations of Councillor Simon Black. There was one polling station located at St Andrews Parish Hall where 242 electors voted in person

and 270 voted by post. The overall turnout was 29.27% of the registered voters and Gurninder Gill was duly elected.

Elections Act 2022 Update

Postal Vote Handling

Two new rules on the handling of postal votes were introduced. From 2 May 2024:

- any postal vote pack not returned via royal mail must be handed to an authorised officer and a Postal Vote Return form completed.
- you will not be allowed to hand in more than five postal vote packs plus your own (six in total).

We can no longer accept postal vote packs posted directly into the letterbox at Fenland Hall. Any postal vote packs delivered without the completed Postal Vote Return form, by law, must be rejected. This new rule was widely publicised, we added messaging to the instructions in the postal vote packs, on the outer return envelope and placed signage on the letter box at Fenland Hall. 15 postal vote packs were rejected as they were returned without the completed postal vote form at the elections on 2 May 2024.

3C's Update (Cllr Tierney)

April – May 2024	Total received	On time	% On time
Correspondence			
	14	12	86%
Stage 1			
CELP	22	18	82%
GI	-	-	-
PRCS	13	11	85%
Stage 2			
CELP	-	-	-
GI	-	-	-
PRCS	1	1	100%
Stage 3			
CELP	2	2	100%
GI	-	-	100%
PRCS	-	-	-

Governance, Financial Control & Risk Management

Finance and internal audit updates (Cllr Boden)

The new Head of Internal Audit joined the Council in mid-May and is currently working alongside the contracted Interim HoIA who departs in July. A new Internal Auditor is due to start on 1st July filling the remaining vacant position. The contracted auditor will remain in place over the summer to assist with audits, shadow-training and cover. The 2023-24 audit work is being finalised and an annual audit opinion of 'reasonable assurance' over our governance, risk management and internal control arrangements will be provided to the Audit & Risk Management Committee at their July meeting. Meanwhile the 2024-25 audit plan work has started.

The Draft Annual Governance Statement is currently being prepared to provide assurance over the Council's governance framework for the year 2023-24. This will also be presented at the July meeting.

Data Protection Updates (Cllr Boden)

There have been no reportable breaches of the UK GDPR during the period to which this briefing relates. However there has been 1 recorded breach requiring no further action. In the same period, there have been 2 data subject access requests.

Transformation and Efficiency

Transformation Project updates (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

The Transformation service is supporting the continued roll out of Transformation Agenda 1 (TA1) efficiencies within the Planning Team. Tablet devices have been issued to Planning Officers to improve application times and support a paperless approach to working including enabling greater efficiencies when undertaking site visits.

Work is also well progressed in respect of the enterprise functionality within IDOX which facilitates automated workflow of planning applications removing the current labour-intensive manual process, which will enable further time savings therefore releasing greater capacity for planning officers.

In addition, service reviews have commenced in collaboration with the following services;

- Marine Services
- My Fenland including the Help Hub initiative
- Hybrid Print and Post
- Housing Options
- Sports Development
- Finance
- Cemeteries including Public Health Funerals

- Legal Services
- Land for Events
- Procurement

The service Reviews are already identifying potential costs savings and improvements to the customer's experience, reducing exposure of risk to the Council and impacting on the forecast budget deficit. Our team approach is allowing synergies between services to be identified and best practices replicated across the organisation. We also pride ourselves in advocating a culture for continuous improvement encouraging services to consider their costs of recourses and engage with us to make impactful and sustainable change.

The Transformation Team have project managing the new Help Hub service in conjunction with My Fenland, to support the successful delivery of this new multi-agency initiative, which aims to support residents who have needs in respect of their health and well-being which are impacting their ability to work. The Help Hub pilot went live in June 24 for an initial 12-month pilot.

Identify and deliver projects that support us to become a 'Council For the Future' (CFF) (Cllr Boden & Cllr Tierney)

Individual project updates are as detailed elsewhere in this report. A full review of 2022-23 was published in the Annual Report as approved by Cabinet on 17th July 2023. The report is available on our website. A review of 2023-24 will be presented to Cabinet in September 2024.

Communication, Consultation and Engagement

News update:

Due to the PCC Elections on 2 May and the pre-election period commencing on 25 March, we were unable to publicise our normal selection of press releases in April.

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in April = 2. We also created an additional 5 news articles we published on our website.

The number of news stories added to the FDC website and distributed as press releases to local media in May = 11. We also created an additional 5 news articles we published on our website.

Highlights include:

- £20 million for Wisbech Town Centre is a real opportunity.
- Deaf-led business benefits from business grant to increase inclusive employment opportunities.
- Fly-tippers hit with penalties totalling more than £3k.
- Council partners with new HIA to enhance support for vulnerable residents.

- What to expect at the polling station for elections on 2 May.
- Benwick volunteers preserve memory of historic village landmark.
- Whittlesea Railway Station £3m investment moves forward.

All press releases are distributed to relevant press and media organisations, appear as a web article on the news pages of the [Fenland District Council website](#) and on our social media channels [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Monthly update on FDC social media sites:

The number of social media updates added to the FDC twitter and Facebook accounts in:

April:

Twitter = 124

Facebook = 105

May:

Twitter = 119

Facebook = 103

We currently have 7,801 followers on Facebook and 8,846 followers on twitter.

Asset Management and Commercialisation

Commercial & Investment Strategy (Cllr Boden)

As part of the Commercial and Investment Strategy, a facility of £25m was granted to the Investment Board to finance capital expenditure to be undertaken in accordance with the aims and objectives of the agreed strategy. At the end of March 2024, £4m of this facility has been utilised to fund the acquisition of a commercial investment in Wisbech and a house in March. These acquisitions were approved at Investment Board meetings held on 16th March 2021 and 3rd December 2021 respectively. Further utilisation of this facility was used to fund the development of the two sites now owned by Fenland Future Ltd in line with the agreed Business Plan for 2024/25 has now been agreed.

The Commercial Investment in Wisbech has delivered a rental income of £230k every year since acquisition in March 2021 and continues to be on track for 2024/25. As we used our own funds to acquire this asset there is no external cost of capital and the loss of interest foregone on our funds is minimal at present. This acquisition has enhanced the Councils revenue position and has had a positive impact on the MTFs.

Updates on the work of the Investment Board were presented to Cabinet at its meetings on 30 January 2023, 16th March 2023 and 11th September 2023. The annual report on Investment Board activity was presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 19th September 2023.

Fenland Future Limited (Cllr Boden, Cllr Benney & Cllr Tierney)

Fenland Future Ltd (FFL) has been granted Outline Planning permission on the two Council owned sites identified for development in their Business Plan. Work now progresses on options for the delivery methodology to be utilised in delivering the developments.

On The Elms site in Chatteris, Lovell Homes have been commissioned to work with FFL as a Development Management Partner and Design Architects, Planning Consultant and Engineering specialists have been appointed to work up the Reserved Matters Application. At the Nene Waterfront in Wisbech, a Reserved Matters Application is being prepared for 1 of the 5 plots for a circa 70 home affordable housing extra care scheme.

Workforce Development

Workforce skills and training (Cllr Boden)

We have a strong commitment to learning and development. We believe that if we are to continue to deliver excellent services to our customers, our staff must be well trained.

We have an extensive learning and development offer for our workforce, which involves opportunities for formal and informal training; we have a range of learning resources available to all staff, e-learning, coaching, shadowing, secondments, in house training workshops delivered by our own in-house experts; as well as more formal courses and training and apprenticeships.

Staff value the learning and development opportunities that are offered at FDC and are able to indicate the difference that training makes to them and their team.

However, it is important that we continually review our learning and development offer to ensure it is fit for purpose and as accessible as possible.

We believe that talent exists in all our staff and that it needs to be encouraged and nurtured. Every manager with staff responsibility manages talent through the following activities:

- Performance management
- Coaching and development
- Springboard (appraisal) discussion and regular 121's, which include a discussion about the learning needs and aspirations for each member of staff
- Recruitment

In the first few months of this financial year, we have arranged and delivered numerous development interventions based on the requests of our workforce, such as:

- IT skills courses
- Qualified project management skills courses
- Fire safety training
- First Aid training.
- People management skills workshops

to name but a few.

Talent management and succession planning ensures ongoing organisational capacity and capability for the future and enables transformation; and at a time when more is demanded of less, it becomes increasingly important.

Supporting and empowering staff (Cllr Boden)

We are committed to supporting and empowering our workforce, and we have a range of support that our staff can access, from an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The EAP is free and confidential for staff to use, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessible by phone, email and online.

The EAP is designed to help with a wide range of work, family, and personal issues. It provides practical information, fact sheets and packs, resource information on support services in the local area and even short-term face to face or telephonic counselling if required.

It is supported by a comprehensive EAP website offering extensive resources including articles, interactive tools, regular online seminars, confidential 24/7 support, self-help workbooks, Podcasts, blogs, videos, and articles on a range of topics, Debt advice, Debt Management, Domestic Abuse support, Wellbeing portal & App, Trauma programme and Exercise and Fitness advice.

Alongside this we provide additional support via our team of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA), our Occupational Health Advisor, a range of family friendly policies and procedures, a comprehensive (cost neutral) employee benefits platform.

We also provide individual support via our HR team, service managers, our Management and Trade Union and Staff Partnership (MTSP) reps.

This year we will be carrying out pulse surveys for our staff via our new HR/Payroll system app to obtain more immediate feedback.

Enforcement

All enforcement policies updates (Cllr French (CPE), Cllr Laws (Planning), Cllr Murphy (Streetscene) & Cllr Wallwork Environmental Health))

The council's food safety and health and safety regulatory service plans have been published following portfolio holder consultation in May. These plans set out the forward plan for these statutory services and comply with the council's enforcement policy and national enforcement concordat. The plans can be read here:

[Food Safety Service Plan 2024/25 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/health-and-safety)
[Health and Safety - Fenland District Council](#)

A review of the level of fixed penalty fines for environmental offences will be presented to Cabinet in the next 2 months.

Health & Safety

Maintaining Health & Safety Systems to comply with legislation (Cllr Boden)

The Council has a comprehensive suite of Health and Safety Policies and procedures, which all managers are aware of and trained on.

We have a Health and Safety Panel, with membership drawn from all areas of the Council. This Panel meets every quarter to ensure ongoing compliance in all areas; to track all health and safety related issues, accidents and near misses.

An ongoing Action Plan to monitor the corporate health and safety goals is in place and well established.

Work continues to drive forward improvements in health and safety management where required.

In 20224/254 the emphasis will be to support managers and staff to continue good standards of health and safety,

A summary of some of the work planned for 2023/24 is provided below:

- Continue to review and update of the Council's Codes of Practice as required under the three yearly revision programme, and/or as a result of any legislative changes.
- Delivery of the ongoing corporate health and safety training programme.
- Conduct accident investigations as applicable and continue to build management skills in conducting these investigations.
- Coordinate delivery of a health surveillance programme across the Council.
- Development of e-learning training courses for the Council's new e-learning platform.
- Undertake audits/inspections of individual services/teams/buildings as per the audit programme.
- Continue to update intranet-based health and safety information for staff use.
- To deliver a programme of proactive health and welfare events across the Council

Health & Safety Action Plan updates (Cllr Boden)

Good progress has been made over the last 12 months to deliver our objectives as set out in the health and safety action plan for 2023/24.

Some of the actions are highlighted below:

- The final roll out of internal health and safety e-learning courses developed for staff training via the Intranet.
- An analysis of all accidents and their consequent actions has been undertaken.
- The Accident Incident Rate (based on 100 per employees) was 7.71, which is an increase of 1.4 on the previous.
- Health and Safety corporate training was delivered to a total of 65 staff.
- A programme of audits and inspections undertaken.

Other Updates:

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) update (Cllr Chris Boden)

Information relating to the CPCA can be found on their website:

[Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Mayoral decisions can be found [here](#).

Office decisions can be found [here](#).

The papers for recent meetings can be found by clicking on the links below:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Combined Authority Board AGM	05.06.24	Agenda for Combined Authority Board on Wednesday, 5th June, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Combined Authority Board	05.06.24	Agenda for Combined Authority Board on Wednesday, 5th June, 2024, 11.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Audit & Governance Committee	20.06.24	Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Thursday, 20th June, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	01.07.24	Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 1st July, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Skills & Employment Committee	17.06.24	Agenda for Skills and Employment Committee on Monday, 17th June, 2024, 11.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	26.06.24	Agenda for Transport and Infrastructure Committee on Wednesday, 26th June, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Business Board	08.07.24	Agenda for Business Board on Monday, 8th July, 2024, 2.30 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Human Resources Committee		
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	19.06.24	Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee on Wednesday, 19th June, 2024, 11.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Forthcoming CPCA meetings include:

CPCA COMMITTEE	DATE OF MEETING	LINK
Combined Authority Board	24.07.24	Agenda for Combined Authority Board on Wednesday, 24th July, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Business Board	11.11.24	Agenda for Business Board on Monday, 11th November, 2024, 2.30 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Audit & Governance Committee	18.07.24	Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Thursday, 18th July, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	31.07.24	Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee on Wednesday, 31st July, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	07.11.24	Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 7th November, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Skills & Employment Committee	29.07.24	Agenda for Skills and Employment Committee on Monday, 29th July, 2024, 10.00 am (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	22.07.24	Agenda for Transport and Infrastructure Committee on Monday, 22nd July, 2024, 1.00 pm (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Target 24/25	Cumulative Target	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
PRC1	% of customer queries processed at the first point of contact	99%	85%	98%	
PRC2	% of customers satisfied with our service (measured annually in February)	97.94%	N/A	N/A (Feb 2025)	
PRC3	% of contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	43.96%	46.5%	59.87%	
PRC4	% of contact centre calls handled	83.46%	80%	93.65%	
ARP3	In year % of Council Tax collected	100%	19.05%	19.22%	
ARP4	Council Tax net collection fund receipts	£73,595,060	£14,019,994	£14,141,450	
ARP5	In year % of NNDR collected	96.57%	18.90%	18.23%	
ARP6	NNDR net collection fund receipts	£28,409,318	£5,408,503	£5,623,915	

Key:	
	Within 5% of target
	5-10% below target
	10% or more below target

Comments

Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor

WEEDS

The failure by Cambridgeshire County Council to deal properly with weeds on Highways land, including gutters, footpaths, and verges has not merely led to unsightly weed overgrowth, but has led to significant additional problems in neighbouring land and properties with weed seed spreading far more widely than usual, including onto land owned by FDC. In an area with a great deal of farmland, we in Fenland need the County Council to deal effectively with weeds growing on Highways land.

The County Council has been forced to bow to pressure from across the County, and has reinstated preventative weed spraying using glyphosate weed killers twice a year.

However County Council is planning to spray its second application this year in October.


The correct application time for glyphosate is when the plant is actively growing. It is recommended the first dose is applied around April or May and the second dose in July or August for any volunteer or later growing weeds.

Applying glyphosate in October is irrational, wasteful, and pointless.

FDC therefore resolves to ask County Council to bring forward their planned date of application of the second dose of glyphosate in 2024 on all Highways land in Fenland.

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Agenda Item 9

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Council	
Date:	15 July 2024	
Report Title:	Treasury Management Annual Review 2023/24	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider the overall financial and operational performance of the Council's treasury management activity for 2023/24.

2 Key issues

- Outstanding loans of £7.8m and investments of £14.251m as of 31 March 2024.
- No new borrowing was undertaken, and the authorised limit was not breached during 2023/24.
- The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.
- Total investment income received from temporary investments and pooled property fund distributions was £1,029,151 (estimate £985,000) and £129,512 (estimate £130,000) respectively.
- Overall interest rate achieved from temporary investments and pooled property funds was 5% and 3.84% respectively. The benchmark for temporary investments is the 7 day backward looking Sterling Overnight Index Averages (SONIA) un-compounded rate for 2023/24, 4.96%.
- Property funds are viewed as long term investments where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income. It was another challenging year for UK real estate, an increase in the cost of capital, weaker investor sentiment and constrained liquidity led to a further fall in the pooled property funds valuation to £3.25m at 31.3.2024, (£3.45m, 31.03.2023). Distributions from the fund are not affected by the movement in capital value.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that members note the report.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance
Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24

Report:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2023/24. This report meets the requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 1.2 During 2023/24 the minimum reporting requirements were that Council should receive the following reports:
- an annual Treasury Strategy in advance of the year (Council 22/02/2023);
 - a mid-year treasury update report (Council 11/12/2023);
 - an Annual Review following the end of the year, describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report).
- 1.3 The regulatory environment places responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.
- 1.4 In normal circumstances, the treasury management reports would be reviewed by Audit and Risk Management Committee before they are reported to Council. This Annual Review report is being presented directly to Council due to the Audit and Risk Management Committee not meeting until 22 July 2024. For all of the other above treasury management reports prior scrutiny by the Audit and Risk Management Committee has taken place as required by the Code.

2 The Council's Capital Expenditure and Financing

- 2.1 The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:
- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Council's borrowing need; or
 - If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

	2022/23 Actual £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000	2023/24 Actual £000
Capital expenditure	9,487	22,023	15,847
Financed In Year	8,485	16,395	10,010
Unfinanced capital expenditure	1,002	5,628	5,837

3 The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

- 3.1 The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the capital financing requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's indebtedness. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Council and resources used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2023/24 unfinanced capital expenditure (see above table), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.
- 3.2 Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies, (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLB], or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.
- 3.3 **Reducing the CFR** – the Council's underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The Council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP, to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the borrowing need. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.
- The total CFR can also be reduced by:
- the application of additional capital financing resources, (such as unapplied capital receipts); or
 - charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).
- 3.4 The Council's 2023/24 MRP Policy, (as required by DLUHC Guidance), was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2023/24 on 22/02/2023.
- 3.5 Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for gross borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.
- 3.6 **Gross borrowing and the CFR** - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2023/24) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2024/25) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure.
- 3.7 In February 2020 Council allocated £25m in the capital programme to enable the Council to take forward projects linked to its Commercial and Investment Strategy (CIS). At the 31.3.2024 £11.194m has been spent on property acquisitions and loans to Fenland Future Limited as approved by the Investment Board in accordance with the CIS. This impacts on the Capital Financing Requirement as explained in the table below. Currently the expenditure has been funded from internal borrowing, i.e. no specific external borrowing to fund the investments has been undertaken, but the Council retains the flexibility to externalise the associated borrowing if it is deemed appropriate to do so.

3.8 The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR (See Appendix A).

	31 March 2023 Actual £000	31 March 2024 Revised Estimate £000	31 March 2024 Actual £000
CFR opening balance	7,456	8,052	8,052
Capital expenditure – Capital Programme	1,002	4,628	3,661
Capital expenditure – Commercial and Investment Strategy	0	1,000	2,176
Less Minimum Revenue Provision	(406)	(384)	(384)
CFR Closing balance	8,052	13,296	13,505
of which: Capital Programme	4,038	8,282	7,315
Commercial and Investment Strategy	4,014	5,014	6,190
Gross Debt (see table at 4.1 below)	7,823	13,430	7,800

- 3.9 The opening CFR includes a finance lease. A finance lease is a commercial arrangement between the Council and a lessor (finance company), where in consideration for a series of payments the Council has the right to use an asset (e.g. refuse vehicle) for the lease duration (typically 7 years). The annual lease payment is made up of a capital and interest repayment.
- 3.10 Although legally the Council doesn't own the asset during the lease duration, International Accounting Standards require that the Council capitalise the asset and liability on its balance sheet, much like a loan. Whilst this increases the CFR, the nature of the finance lease agreement doesn't require the Council to separately borrow to fund the asset.
- 3.11 The authorised limit - the authorised limit is the "affordable borrowing limit" required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level.
- 3.12 The operational boundary – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.
- 3.13 Neither the authorised limit nor operational boundary were breached during 2023/24.

4 Overall Treasury Position as at 31 March 2024

4.1 At the beginning and end of 2023/24, the Council's treasury position was as follows.

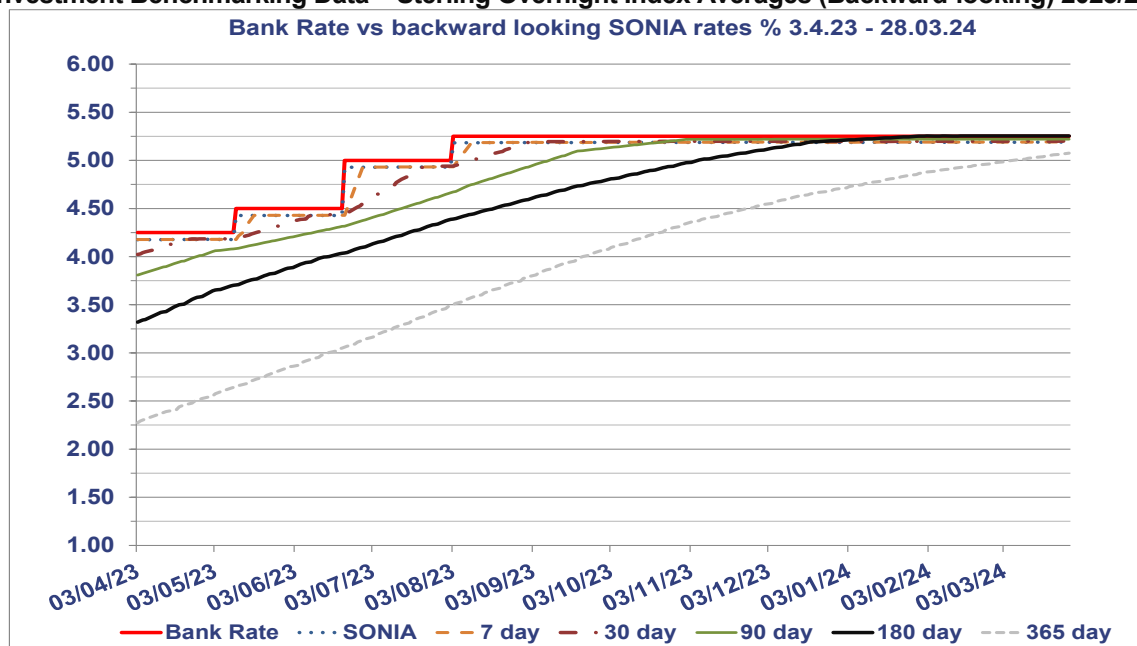
	31 March 2024 Principal £000	Rate / Return	Average Life years	31 March 2023 Principal £000	Rate / Return	Average Life years
Fixed rate funding						
• PWLB	4,500	7.29%	6.40 yrs	4,500	7.29%	7.40 yrs
• Market	3,300	4.70%	29.96 yrs	3,300	4.70%	30.96 yrs
• Finance Leases	0	2.87%	N/A	23	3.59%	350 Days
Total debt	7,800			7,823		
Investments						
• Banks/Building Societies	(11,000)	5%		(19,100)	1.86%	
• Property Funds	(3,251)	3.84%		(3,450)	3.33%	
Total Investments	(14,251)			(22,550)		
Net debt /(Investments)	(6,451)			(14,727)		

4.2 In line with the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy approved by Council on 23 February 2021, the Council invested £4M, split equally, into the Federated Hermes and Patrizia Hanover, Property Unit Trusts, in late March 2022. The distribution payable for the year was £129,511.67, which is a 3.84% return on the initial £4m investment.

4.3 All other investments held at 31 March 2024 are fixed term or callable deposits due for repayment within the next twelve months.

5 The Strategy for 2023/24

Investment Benchmarking Data – Sterling Overnight Index Averages (Backward-looking) 2023/24



Investment Strategy

- 5.1 Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2023/24 as central banks, including the Bank of England, continued to respond to inflationary pressures that were not transitory, and realised that tighter monetary policy was called for.
- 5.2 Starting April at 4.25%, Bank Rate moved up in stepped increases of either 0.25% or 0.5%, reaching 5.25% by August. By the end of the financial year, no further increases were anticipated.
- 5.3 The Council has mainly invested cash in liquid or in short term notice deposits over the year due to the liquid nature of the cash holdings.
- 5.4 Nonetheless, while the Council has taken a cautious approach to investing, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008/09. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.

Borrowing Strategy

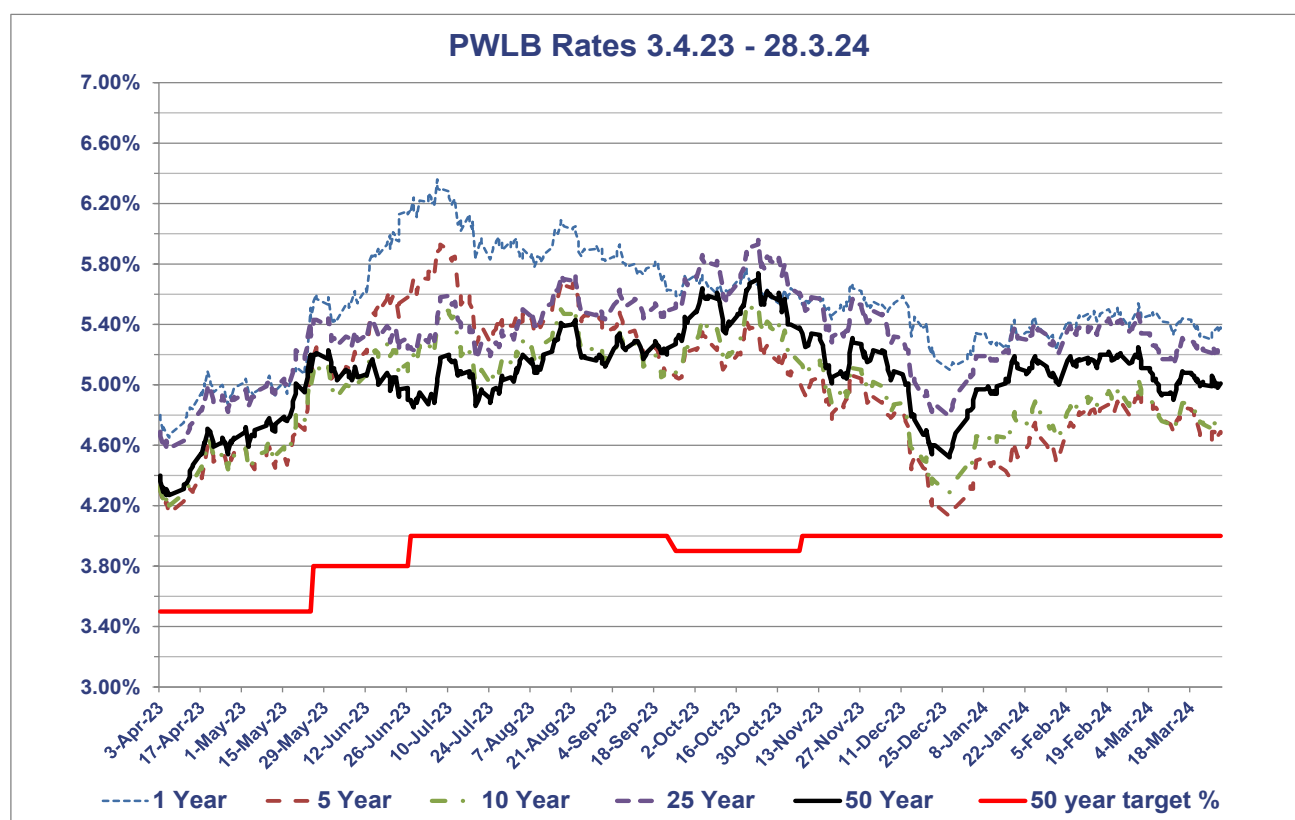
- 5.5 At 1 April 2023 the Council's Debt position comprised other long-term liabilities relating to finance leases of £23k and external borrowing of £7.8m. These loans were taken out at prevailing market rates between 1994 and 2004. The term of these loans is between 25 and 50 years. Following the transfer of the Council's Housing Stock in 2007, which generated a significant capital receipt for the Council, the Council has retained investment balances which exceed the amounts borrowed. However, changes in prevailing interest rates since the loans were taken out mean that a high premium would be payable by the Council if it were to seek to repay the PWLB loans (£4.5m) early. The premiums to be applied are considered to be prohibitively high for early redemption to be regarded as a reasonable treasury management decision. Repaying the Barclays market rate loan of £3.3m may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment. The Council continues to keep this situation under review with the support of its appointed treasury management advisors.
- 5.6 Therefore, as opposed to taking on additional loan debt to fund capital expenditure in 2023/24, the Council followed a strategy of using cash, supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2024 and 2025 as inflation concerns are dampened.
- 5.7 Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution was adopted with the treasury operations. The Chief Finance Officer therefore monitored interest rates in financial markets and adopted a pragmatic strategy based upon the following principles to manage interest rate risks:
 - if it had been felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in long and short-term rates, (e.g., due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then long term borrowings would have been postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing would have been considered.
 - if it had been felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in long and short-term rates than initially expected, perhaps arising from the stickiness of inflation in the major developed economies, then the portfolio position would have been re-

appraised. Most likely, fixed rate funding would have been drawn whilst interest rates were lower than they were projected to be in the next few years.

- 5.8 Interest rate forecasts initially suggested further gradual rises in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2023/24. Bank Rate had initially been forecast to peak at 4.5% but it is now expected to have peaked at 5.25%.
- 5.9 By January it had become clear that inflation was moving down significantly from its 40-year double-digit highs, and the Bank of England signalled in March 2024 that the next move in Bank Rate would be down, so long as upcoming inflation and employment data underpinned that view. Currently the CPI measure of inflation stands at 2% and is expected to fall materially below 2% and to stay there in 2025 and 2026. Nonetheless, there remains significant risks to that central forecast, mainly in the form of a very tight labour market putting upward pressure on wages and continuing geo-political inflationary risks emanating from the prevailing Middle East crisis and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- 5.10 Forecasts at the time of approval of the treasury management strategy report for 2023/24 were as follows:

Link Group Interest Rate View	19.12.22												
	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25
BANK RATE	3.50	4.25	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.50	2.50
3 month ave earnings	3.60	4.30	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.00	3.80	3.30	3.00	3.00	2.80	2.50	2.50
6 month ave earnings	4.20	4.50	4.60	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.40	3.10	3.00	2.90	2.60	2.60
12 month ave earnings	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.20	4.00	3.50	3.20	3.10	3.00	2.70	2.70
5 yr PWLB	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.10
10 yr PWLB	4.30	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30
25 yr PWLB	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50
50 yr PWLB	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.30	3.20	3.20

PWLB Rates 2023/24



- 5.11 PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through H.M.Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields.

- 5.12 Gilt yields have been on a continual rise since the start of 2021, peaking in the autumn of 2023. Currently, yields are broadly in the range bound between 3.5% and 4.25%.
- 5.13 At the close of the day on 28 March 2024, all gilt yields from 1 to 50 years were between 3.81% and 4.56%, with the 1 year being the highest and 6-7 year being the lowest yield.
- 5.14 There is likely to be a fall in gilt yields and PWLB rates across the whole curve over the next one to two years as Bank Rate falls and inflation (on the Consumer Price Index measure) moves below the Bank of England's 2% target.

6 Borrowing Outturn

- 6.1 Due to the elevated cost of borrowing long term, no borrowing was taken during 2023/24. The approach during the year was to use cash balances to finance new capital expenditure, so as to run down cash balances and to minimise counterparty risk incurred on investments. Additionally, it is important to note that Council had abnormally high cash balances due to the receipt of significant funds from government in respect of funding received in advance to enable the Council to deliver grant-funded schemes included in its capital programme.
- 6.2 The Council has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.
- 6.3 No rescheduling was completed during the year as the average 1% differential between PWLB new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates and the penalty position which can arise from early repayment of debt, made rescheduling unviable.

7 Investment Outturn

- 7.1 The Council's investment policy is governed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by Council on 22 February 2023. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps and bank share prices etc).
- 7.2 The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.
- 7.3 The Council maintained an average balance of £19.125m of internally managed funds. The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 5% (£1,029,151). The comparable performance indicator is the average 7-day backward looking SONIA rate, which was 4.96%. The short average term maturity of investments during the year enabled increasing average yields on investments as opportunities improved following base rate rises.
- 7.4 £4m of the Council's investments are held in externally managed pooled property funds where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income (from quarterly cash distribution payments) and long-term price stability. The Council views these as a long-term investment that it has entered into for a minimum of five years as this manages the risk of fluctuations in the value of the investments.
- 7.5 It was another challenging year for UK real estate, an increase in the cost of capital, weaker investor sentiment and constrained liquidity led to a further fall in the pooled property funds valuation to £3.25m at 31.3.2024, (£3.45m, 31.03.2023). Distributions from the fund are not affected by the movement in capital value. The distributions payable for the year was £129,512 which is a 3.84% distribution return on the initial £4m investment.

8 Prudential and Treasury Indicators

- 8.1 During 2023/24 the Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The CFR slightly exceeded the budget mainly due to a higher requirement to fund the CIS expenditure in the year (LAHF property purchases and loan to Fenland Future Ltd) as detailed in Section 3 above.

Appendix A - Prudential Indicators

Prudential Indicators	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
	Actual £000	Revised Estimate £000	Actual £000
1 Capital Expenditure (including Commercial and Investment Strategy)	9,487	22,023	15,847
2 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	5.90%	5.94%	5.13%
3 Gross Borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement			
Gross Debt	7,823	13,430	7,800
CFR	8,052	13,296	13,505
<hr/>			
Treasury Management Indicators	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
	Actual £000	Revised Estimate £000	Actual £000
4 Authorised Limit for External Debt			
Borrowing	19,500	17,430	17,430
Other Long-Term Liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities	20,977	1,000	1,000
Total	41,477	19,430	19,430
5 Operational Boundary for External debt			
Borrowing	15,500	12,430	12,430
Other Long-Term Liabilities	1,000	1,000	1,000
Commercial Activities	20,977	1,000	1,000
Total	37,477	14,430	14,430
6 Actual External debt (as at 31 March)			
Borrowing	7,800	13,430	7,800
Other Long-Term Liabilities	23	0	0
Total	7,823	13,430	7,800