

AGENDA

CABINET

FRIDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2024

10.00 AM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL,
COUNTY ROAD, MARCH**

Committee Officer: Linda Albon
Tel: 01354 622424
e-mail: memberservices@fenland.gov.uk

- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 5 - 10)

To confirm and sign the public minutes of 30 September 2024.
- 3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified
- 4 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
- 5 Property Purchase to support meeting the Council's Housing Duties (Pages 11 - 16)

For Cabinet to be appraised on a proposal to set up a fund up to £1.2 million to invest in 1-bed accommodation from the market to help support our housing duties.
- 6 Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025-28 (Pages 17 - 62)

This document has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS) and follows the first Strategic Refresh 2022-25. It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments

and public and private partners will continue to work together to support economic growth in Fenland.

7 Development of Playzone Projects (Pages 63 - 92)

This report presents the opportunity to apply for grant funding to the Football Foundation (FF) of approximately £375,000 to secure investment to construct two PlayZone small-sided multi-sport pitches in Whittlesey and Wisbech.

8 Taxi Tariff (Pages 93 - 104)

To review the deferred decision made during the previous Cabinet meeting on 30th September 2024 and consider the results following a further consultation with the Taxi trade.

9 Wisbech High Street Update (Pages 105 - 110)

To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, and progress regarding the options for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

10 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 111 - 112)

For information purposes.

11 Renewal of Operational Lease in Wisbech (with confidential appendix) (Pages 113 - 154)

To update members on the issues surrounding the current and continued occupation of the car park at Chapel Road, Wisbech following previous instructions given to officers at a Cabinet meeting on 15 July 2024 (Minute CAB10/24 refers) and subsequent negotiations with the National Trust and the receipt of enhanced legal advice.

(The Appendix to this report comprises exempt information – to exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: “that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated.”

12 Proposed use of Land at North Drive, March for Community Uses (with confidential appendix) (Pages 155 - 184)

To brief members on the options available in relation to the future use of the open space land located at North Drive, March and as edged red on the plan at Appendix 1, as a community facility.

(Appendix 2 to this report comprises exempt information – to exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: “that the public be excluded from the meeting

for Items which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated."

13 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

CONFIDENTIAL - ITEMS COMPRISING EXEMPT INFORMATION

To exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of a committee it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted: "that the public be excluded from the meeting for Items which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated."

14 Confidential Minutes (Pages 185 - 188)

To confirm and sign the confidential minutes of 30 September 2024.

Thursday, 7 November 2024

Members: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

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CABINET



MONDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 - 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

CAB11/24 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 15 July 2024 were agreed and signed.

CAB12/24 ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Members considered the Annual Report of the Council 2023/24 presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve the Annual Report of the Council 2023/24.

CAB13/24 REVIEW OF FIXED PENALTY NOTICE FINE LEVELS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME OFFENCES

Members considered the Review of Fixed Penalty Notice Fine Levels for Environmental Crime Offences report presented by Councillor Murphy.

Members commented as follows:

- Councillor Seaton said although he fully supports the proposal, he does not think the new fine is enough to deter fly tipping.
- Councillor Mrs French said that she also supports the proposal but agreed with Councillor Seaton that the fine should be greater.
- Councillor Miscandlon commented that whilst he agrees with the proposal, he also thinks the fine should be higher although he accepts it cannot be changed currently.
- Councillor Tierney said that he supports the proposal but the public wants to see strong action from the Council so there must be a proper deterrent. He is in support of higher fines, and they should be increased going forward.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve the proposed changes in fine levels as enabled by the Environmental Offences Regulations.

CAB14/24 PROPOSED INCREASE TO CURRENT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE - TABLE OF MAXIMUM FARES

Members considered the Proposed Increase to Current Hackney Carriage Vehicle - Table of Maximum Fares report presented by Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Boden said members would note the recommendations within the report stated that Council is being recommended to approve the proposals within Appendix A, however, for the avoidance of doubt, this recommendation should read that Cabinet approve the proposals. Quoting

relevant paragraphs within the constitution, Councillor Boden requested that the recommendation therefore be amended so the word 'Council' is replaced with the word 'Cabinet'. Members approved the recommendation.

Councillor Hoy said that along with the published report, members had been tabled some items. One was a letter that she presumed had been duplicated and circulated as multiple copies had been received signed by residents. Also, there was a similar letter from hackney carriage drivers and a written statement from Councillor Patrick. Councillor Hoy said that because the additional information had been received less than an hour ago, she felt compelled to address the issue of process.

Councillor Hoy pointed out the report recommendations were agreed at Licensing Committee, where Councillor Patrick's group are represented under political proportionality and had agreed with Conservative members on the recommendations. It was a shame that any concerns with the report were not raised by members of his group at that time, neither was she contacted directly by Councillor Patrick or any taxi drivers to make their complaints about the increase.

Councillor Hoy advised that it was the taxi trade themselves that requested the rise and Councillor Patrick also put in a proposal for a rise. In his proposal, she recalls he wanted the flag to go from £4 to £5, a 25% increase, whereas Licensing Committee's proposal of £4 to £4.40 was cheaper. She said that this leaves Cabinet in a bizarre situation where they have a request for a fee increase asked for by the taxi trade, which Councillor Patrick fed into whilst also requesting an increase, and now he is saying he does not want an increase.

Councillor Hoy pointed out that she is not a taxi driver, and she rarely uses them because if she needs one it tends to be in an evening when there are none available. The drivers she has spoken to suggest that one of the many reasons that people are not joining the trade is because it is too costly for them; this is something she understands as what driver would want to leave their home on a Friday evening for the sake of a £4.60 fare for example? She can understand the logic of increasing the fares to allow for that, but it must be remembered that Fenland District Council are not increasing the fares, they are increasing the maximum amount that can be charged by taxi drivers. When people are saying that this Council is increasing the fares, this is being done to make a political point and to try and stir up ammunition, therefore she would like to talk through the tabled items.

Councillor Hoy firstly addressed the generic letter from taxi-using members of the public. She said that nowhere in that letter does it mention that the increase is the maximum amount the driver could charge and would be allowed to charge. It is very carefully worded to make it seem like Fenland District Council will put those taxi fares up and the driver has no choice. Furthermore, there has been no time to verify the addresses having only received the letters in the last hour, but she had noted one contains a Norfolk address so is not from a Fenland resident.

Councillor Hoy then addressed the generic letter from hackney carriage drivers, saying the issue with this letter is that it mentions a rate per mile of £3.30 being an increase of 50% per mile. That has been an incorrect calculation used by Councillor Patrick many times online and on social media and now in this letter. A two-mile journey is 20% extra; it would have to be a journey of over 30 miles to be paying 50% more. Whilst people are being given incorrect information, scaremongering such as this letter will continue to put people off using taxis. Councillor Hoy continued that the letter goes on to say that "While it may be argued that the fare is the maximum that can be charged it would only need a small handful of drivers to charge the full amount to seriously damage the trade and put drivers out of work". Councillor Hoy stated that she believed the real issue here is that of an anti-competitive nature. She understood that if the increase is allowed, some drivers will want to increase their fares but will have to hold them down to remain competitive. It is human nature to want to protect your job, but she asked how does that impact Fenland residents if they cannot get taxis and what happens when those drivers retire and leave

the trade?

Finally, Councillor Hoy referred to the letter from Councillor Patrick where he said he had spoken to many service users and over 90% were against the rise in the tariff being considered. She asked 90% of how many people? Who did he ask? How many did he ask? Furthermore, the letter said that the Licensing Portfolio Holder has limited experience of the trade. Councillor Hoy said that if she was a taxi driver, then as the Portfolio Holder she would not be able to propose the paper anyway because she would have a disclosable pecuniary interest. For this reason, there can never be a Licensing Portfolio Holder that is a taxi driver setting fares.

Councillor Hoy wanted to make it clear that she is on the drivers' side but is also on the residents' side. She added that to a degree it does not matter how much the taxi fee is if there are no taxis available; it is important to get this right and therefore she would like to defer the report to the next Cabinet meeting so that she can personally consult with the hackney carriage drivers with correct information.

Councillor Hoy therefore formally proposed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of Cabinet. Before that meeting she will work with officers to provide a letter where she can consult directly with the hackney carriage drivers.

Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Hoy but suggested that, in case this process takes longer than expected, the proposal be changed that it be deferred to a future meeting of Cabinet if it is not possible to bring it back to the next one. Councillor Hoy agreed with the proposed change which was seconded by Councillor Miscandlon.

Councillor Boden said members will now have seen three tabled emails and three other documents as mentioned by Councillor Hoy. The documents are copies of almost 100 additional submissions presented by Councillor Patrick, along with his statement, just prior to the commencement of Cabinet. These relate to the proposed decision, but they were received outside of the formal consultation period. A decision therefore needs to be made whether these documents should be accepted for consideration or rejected as out of time. Councillor Boden proposed that all the documents be accepted in the interests of complete openness in the decision-making process. Members agreed unanimously.

Members commented as follows:

- Councillor Tierney said when he first saw this issue addressed by Councillor Patrick in social media and the documents in front of Cabinet today, his initial thought was of disgust at what he thought to be outright lying. However, having had a chance to think about it, he wonders if Councillor Patrick simply does not understand how the system works despite having been both a district councillor and taxi driver for a long time, but it is certainly misleading to the public. It is a shame because a policy like this needs thoughtful decision making. He is on the side of the taxi drivers, who need to make a fair living, feed their families and pay their bills, and also that of the taxi users, some of whom are very vulnerable, and need to be able to get around. He would like to see the best outcome for all, for taxi drivers to be able to make a living but to be able to deliver the best price they can to people who need low prices in these times. However, when people are being told that Fenland District Council sets the tariff that is being charged per mile that is not true. Repeatedly in the letter in front of us that mistake is made; it is certainly very unclear, and in other statements made elsewhere it is also unclear. It is also clear from the letters from other people that they have mistook it, presumably because Councillor Patrick told them so. Fenland District Council sets the maximum fee above which no taxi driver is allowed to charge but below that the taxi drivers set the fee. He absolutely supports them setting the most reasonable fee they can afford; they should compete with one another as that is how healthy free markets work. They should do their best to deliver a fantastic service that's affordable to people who need it. Most of them do, but it is a terrible shame that some of them

are allowing themselves to be misled and that some members of the public are being scare mongered and told absolute nonsense because it is simply not true. It is not true that the Council sets the actual tariff that taxi drivers charge; the taxi drivers set that, and he fully encourages them to set the best price that they can. That said he does not mind the outcome; if the taxi drivers were all to say they do not want any rise in the maximum tariff, then do not have it. If it does not encourage new drivers, if drivers cannot afford to pay their bills then blame Councillor Patrick. Councillor Tierney said he would personally prefer if the Council had no say in the maximum tariff at all, in a free-market drivers should set their maximum tariff and if too expensive they will be out of business because that is how markets work. He added that he found it awful that incorrect information has been given out to score cheap political points.

- Councillor Mrs French agreed that the item should be deferred in the interests of transparency and to be fair to both users and taxi drivers.

AGREED that the Proposed Increase to Current Hackney Carriage Vehicle - Table of Maximum Fares report be deferred and that the matter be considered at a future meeting of Cabinet.

CAB15/24 EMERGENCY INTERIM ACCOMMODATION PROCUREMENT FOR LOCAL HOMELESSNESS

Members considered the Emergency Interim Accommodation Procurement for Local Homelessness report presented by Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Mrs French said she agreed with the report but requested Councillor Hoy investigate the number of vacant properties owned by social landlords, as some have been empty for over a year. Councillor Hoy agreed, adding that although discussions were ongoing between officers and registered providers, much of the delay has been caused by housing associations reviewing the condition of their housing stock for damp and mould which has slowed down the process.

Proposed by Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve accepting 9 companies for the provision of emergency interim accommodation to place homeless households.

CAB16/24 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

Members considered the Wisbech High Street Update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED to note the monthly update relating to the works at 24 and 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

CAB17/24 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Members noted the draft 6-month Cabinet Forward Plan.

CAB18/24 PURCHASE OF A PROPERTY PORTFOLIO IN FENLAND AS A COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES)

Members considered the Purchase of a Property Portfolio in Fenland report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Hoy and AGREED to review the report, particularly the financial and legal implications as set out in confidential schedules 3 and 4 and:

- a) Authorise officers to purchase through the Council's Section 151 Officer the portfolio of

property available at Meadowcourt, Elm in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Housing and following satisfactory due diligence procedures.

- b) Authorise officers to proceed with a planning application for the conversion of the main house to provide additional accommodation as detailed with costs to be approved in advance in consultation with the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Finance.

CAB19/24 FUTURE SPACE REQUIREMENTS - ACCOMMODATION REVIEW (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX)

Members considered the Future Space Requirements Accommodation Review report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Benney and AGREED to:

- Note the content of the Outline Business Case.
- Progress Option 1B iv and subject to that decision being taken, to authorise the development of a Full Business Case (FBC) in relation to that preferred option.
- Delegate to the Corporate Director and S151 Officer in conjunction with the Leader of the Council the appointment of a consultant and associated allocation of funding necessary to complete the FBC.
- Delegate to the Corporate Director and S151 Officer, in conjunction with the Assistant Director and Head of Property, authority to negotiate the terms and pricing of the purchase as required.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the discussion on this item of business on the grounds that the appendix to the report involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated).

CAB20/24 OPTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL OF A LEASE OF OPERATIONAL LAND IN MARCH - CONFIDENTIAL

Members considered the Options for the Renewal of a Lease of Operational Land in March confidential report presented by Councillor Mrs French.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to note the contents of the confidential report and authorise officers to act accordingly to the recommendations suggested.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that the report involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated).


CAB21/24 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 15 July 2024 were approved and signed.

3.02 pm

Chairman

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Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 November 2024	
Report Title:	Purchase of property portfolio to support meeting Housing Duties	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 For Cabinet to be appraised on a proposal to set up a fund up to £1.2 million to invest in 1 bed accommodation from the market to help support our housing duties.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 On the 24 October 2024, the Council had 33 single / couple households in emergency interim accommodation as a result of homelessness.
- 2.2 The costs to the Council are placing pressure on the medium-term financial strategy
- 2.3 Members have previously approved plans to increase the supply of housing benefit subsidy compliant accommodation over the next 2 years and this work is now underway.
- 2.4 However, it is now felt financially prudent to increase the supply of accommodation in the short term that will increase the number of units that are housing benefit subsidy compliant.
- 2.5 Therefore, it is requested that a fund of up to £1.2 million to be made available to purchase:
- 1 bed properties
 - In Fenland and / or neighbouring districts
 - Condition to be ready to let except for fixtures and fittings
- 2.6 Each property over a year saves circa £15k revenue savings per annum from a comparison to placement in a bed and breakfast establishment.
- 2.7 Management and support to be provided by the Council with costs recovered from rent and an intensive housing management charge.
- 2.8 To review the assets once the new provision comes on stream over the next 2 years to either sell or retain.
- 2.9 Capital funding to be provided either from borrowing, which will incur an annual charge of £30k for MRP and £60k in interest, or by using the Horizons reserve which will incur no finance charges.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet are recommended to:
- 3.2 Set aside up to £1.2 million from reserves to purchase up to 10 x 1 bed properties from the market and to delegate to the Leader and Section 151 officer the funding of such purchases.
- 3.3 Consult with The Leader, Portfolio Holder for Assets and Portfolio Holder for Housing on any proposed purchase.
- 3.4 Any increase needed to the £1.2 million to be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader, Portfolio Holder for Assets and Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	<i>[Insert Reference No. From Forward Plan. (It is a legal requirement to include key executive decisions on the forward plan for 28 days before the decision requested in this report is taken).</i>
Portfolio Holder(s)	The Leader – Cllr Chris Boden Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr Sam Hoy Portfolio Holder for Assets – Cllr Ian Benney
Report Originator(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director
Contact Officer(s)	Dan Horn – Assistant Director Mark Greenwood – Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects Peter Catchpole – Corporate Director and Section 151 Carol Pilson – Corporate Director
Background Papers	

4 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

4.1 Since November 2023 the Council have developed an operational plan to reduce the impact of costs for managing the Council's housing duties in relation to Homelessness.

4.2 There are various active strands to the plan that include:

- Purchase of 33 family homes utilising FDC finance and Local Authority Housing Fund to reduce the length of time families are placed in B&B
- Increasing the number of leased family accommodation provided by Clarion from 9 to 15 properties
- Increasing the supply of new affordable housing:

Financial Year	Affordable Units delivered (or projected)
2023/24	244
2024/25	210
2025/26 & 2026/27	650

- Working with non-housing benefit subsidy compliant housing support providers to become compliant.

4.3 However, although there has been significant additional compliant accommodation provision for families there remains too many single and couple households in B&B.

4.4 On 24 October 2024, the Council had 33 single and couple households in B&B.

4.5 Plans are in progress to develop new provision of subsidy compliant accommodation for single and couple households.

4.6 However, the timescale for completion of these projects is likely to be around 2 years.

4.7 Therefore, this proposal helps provide an opportunity for increasing the supply of emergency accommodation in the short term whilst these longer-term proposals are completed.

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Section 4 sets out the reason for the recommendations. However, looking at the current housing market, it is felt there are opportunities to acquire 1 bed properties across the district and neighbouring districts at good value. These acquisitions will help create a portfolio of properties in the short term that are essentially ready to let on a license to place single households and couples where we have a duty to investigate the circumstances around them being homeless and find appropriate longer term solutions.

5.2 Therefore, a fund up to £1.2 million is to be made available to purchase:

- 1 bed properties
 - In Fenland and / or neighbouring districts
 - Condition to be ready and compliant to let except for fixtures and fittings
 - Each property over a year saves circa £15k revenue savings per annum from a comparison to placement in a bed and breakfast establishment.
 - Management and Support to be provided by the Council with costs recovered from rent and an intensive housing management charge
 - All lets to be let on a license to occupy rather than an AST
 - To review the assets once the new provision comes on stream over the next 2 years to either sell or retain.
- 5.3 For out of area properties, operationally there is an additional administrative burden linked to Section 208 notifications (see legal implications) which, when coupled with the practicalities of travel and productivity of the support and management required with our asset, needs to be considered in the investment decisions made.
- 5.4 However, urgency to purchase the appropriate type of property and at the right price is the key criteria for this proposal.
- 5.5 All properties must be with vacant possession.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 N/A

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Alongside purchasing these properties, the Council will also explore the leasing of 1 bed properties from a Registered Provider as a further short term solution whilst these longer term solutions are implemented.
- 7.2 Looking at the financial impacts of too many households in B&B, to not provide any alternative housing benefit subsidy compliant properties in the short term is seen as not financially prudent.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.2 The constitution:
- 8.3 Fenland District Council has a general power to acquire land and property under Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 and may also rely on Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 where the purchase relates to regeneration and economic/social benefits in the council's area.
- 8.4 Fenland District Council also has a general duty to act prudently when purchasing land. To that end, in addition to valuations, appropriate title checks

and searches will take place before any final commitment is made to purchase the properties.

- 8.5 Stamp Duty Land Tax will be payable on completion of the purchases and arrangements will need to be made to ensure that the properties meet minimum EPC requirements for rental properties which may require some additional expenditure between the time of purchase and 2028 when all such properties must achieve a rating of C.
- 8.6 We must ensure that the temporary accommodation provided meets the requirements set out in the Housing Act, particularly regarding suitability and the duty to provide temporary accommodation. S208 of the Housing Act specifies that, so far as reasonably practicable, the Local Housing Authority (LHA) should secure accommodation within its own district. If placing an applicant outside its area, the LHA must inform the receiving LHA.

8.7 Financial Implications

- 8.8 If we utilise the Horizons reserve to purchase these properties, then no finance charges will be incurred. If we were to fund through borrowing, then the annual charges as set out in section 2.9 above will apply. It should be noted that at present the Horizons Reserve shows a projected balance of £1.75m at 31st March 2026 after agreed expenditure has been applied. This reserve would obviously reduce by £1.2m if this was used to finance these purchases.

8.9 Equality Implications

- 8.10 The proposal helps support meeting our obligations for housing as set out in the homelessness act.

9 SCHEDULES

- 9.1 N/A

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Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	November 15th 2024	
Report Title:	Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025-28	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This Strategic Refresh document has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS) and follows the first Strategic Refresh 2022-25. It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to support economic growth in Fenland.
- 1.2 This Strategic Refresh also sets out the outputs and outcomes delivered via the first Strategic Refresh.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Since the approval of the Council's EDS and the first Strategic Refresh much of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly for example EU-Exit, Covid-19, climate change and a new national government.
- 2.2 In addition, several strategies and plans have been produced by partners including the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's State of the Region and Shared Vision and the potential for a new reservoir in Fenland all which need to be reflected in the Strategic Refresh.
- 2.3 These factors all contribute to the need for a second strategic refresh of the EDS and hence this report.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider and recommend the Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025-28 for approval by Full Council.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Ian Benney
Report Originator(s)	Anna Goodall, Assistant Director Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager Ann Wardle, Business Engagement Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Background Papers	Economic Growth - Strategic Refresh 2025-2028

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The economy, supporting economic growth, is one of the Council's three outward facing Corporate Priorities.
- 1.2 This Second Strategic Refresh has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS) and follows the first Strategic Refresh 2022-25. It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in Fenland and ensure that we are known as being "open for all business".
- 1.3 Since the approval of the EDS and first Strategic Refresh some of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly for example through EU Exit and a new national government. In addition, partner strategies and services have also been created such as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's State of the Region and Shared Vision and Business Growth service. These changes in context and new strategies and services all contribute to the need for a second Strategic Refresh of the EDS and hence this document.
- 1.4 Economic growth is ultimately delivered by the people who own and/or run businesses. Those who are already in Fenland, those who relocate to Fenland and those who create a business in Fenland. One of the key roles of the Council is to support those owners, managers, and entrepreneurs in their growth decisions, location decisions and aspirations by for example enabling access to the high-quality business support that is available including any grant funding.
- 1.5 This second Strategic Refresh embodies this supportive role and is reflected in the refresh as follows:
 - 1.5.1 **Growing businesses** - Through engagement with existing local businesses the Council targets the support that is available to help enable each business to grow and assist them to overcome any barriers to growth or to develop opportunities. This includes ensuring that businesses are aware of and supported in applying for any financial support for which they are eligible.
 - 1.5.2 **More business start-ups** – Help ensure that the support is in place to enable local people to start a business and to stay in business including the possible availability of grant funding.
 - 1.5.3 **Attract new businesses** - Help attract new businesses into the district from supermarkets and fast-food brands to businesses seeking a European or UK base. The Council proactively engages with targeted new business

opportunities to ascertain each businesses plans and location requirements and puts together propositions with the aim of attracting them into Fenland.

- 1.5.4 **Available workforce** – Help ensure that supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Represent companies’ skills requirements for the development of skills support, funding and development of relevant courses.
- 1.5.5 **Available serviced land and premises** - Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites and premises to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. To bring together these and other similar requirements into a database of investment opportunities in Fenland.
- 1.6 The success of this Strategic Refresh will be demonstrated by the value each business places on their interaction with the Council and partners as demonstrated through case studies and feedback.
- 1.7 Economic growth can also provide opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or potentially via Fenland Future Limited and can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As one of the Council’s three outward facing Corporate Priorities it is important that how the Council supports economic growth is as effective as possible and this second Strategic Refresh updates the existing EDS and follows the first Strategic Refresh 2022-25 to ensure that this continues to be the case.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Engagement with partners on other strategies has enabled external views and policies to be incorporated into the Strategy Refresh.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 An alternative to actively and proactively supporting Fenland’s economic growth would be for the Council not to do so. However, there is clear evidence that the Council plays a vital role in the Economic Growth of the District including the attraction of significant external funding and investment, the provision of commercial property, attraction of new businesses into the district and expansion of businesses already in Fenland.
- 4.2 Moreover, all the other Districts and the Combined Authority in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough also recognise the importance of their Council supporting economic growth and the very competitive environment that exists for securing funding and investment.

- 4.3 This alternative option was considered and rejected as it would result in Fenland being significantly disadvantaged in securing economic growth and external funding.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no specific legal issues engaged by the recommendations contained in this Report.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 All financial implications have been reflected for in the Council's draft budget.

5.3 Equality Implications

- 5.3.1 All individual projects and services have been assessed to ensure equality of access, etc.

6 SCHEDULES

Schedule 1 – Draft Fenland Economic Growth Strategic Refresh, 2025-28

SCHEDULE 1
Fenland Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025-28



Fenland Economic Growth

Strategic Refresh 2025-2028

Delivering the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-
2031

November 2024

Foreword by Cllr Ian Benney Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth



Fenland is a great place to live, work or visit and as Cabinet Member for Economic Growth I want to ensure that the residents benefit from local economic growth. There are major opportunities for growth in Fenland and this Second Strategic Refresh sets out how the Council will help maximise these opportunities over the next three years.

Ultimately economic growth is delivered by local businesses and the key role the Council undertakes is to support entrepreneurs, owners and managers when making decisions about how and when to grow or start their business. This second refresh sets out how the Council will continue to contribute to the decisions made by businesses.

Since the first Strategic Refresh much has been achieved including providing over £1.4m of grant funding and establishing a Customer Relationship Management system to enable real engagement with local businesses. You'll find more detail on what has been delivered set out in the Refresh.

Finally, whilst having a regular Refresh is important what I always ask is that action follows and having meaningful impact on economic growth in Fenland. With that in mind, you will find this Second Refresh to be as concise as possible, with a focus on measurable action and demonstrating that Fenland is truly open for all businesses.

Cllr Ian Benney

Email: ibenney@fenland.gov.uk

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i. Executive Summary

This Second Strategic Refresh (hereafter referred to as Refresh) has been created to continue the delivery of the Councils Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 and follows the First Strategic Refresh 2022-25. It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in Fenland and ensure that we are open for all businesses

Economic growth is delivered by businesses, those who are already in Fenland and are growing, those who relocate to Fenland and those who create a business in Fenland. One of the key roles of the Council is to support those owners, managers, and entrepreneurs in their growth decisions and aspirations by for example enabling access to the high-quality business support that is available including grant funding. The Refresh embodies this role and is reflected as follows:

- 1. Growing businesses** - Through engagement with existing local businesses the Council will target the support that is available to help enable each business to grow and assist them to overcome any barriers to growth or to develop opportunities. This will include ensuring that businesses are aware of and supported in applying for any grant funding support for which they are eligible.
- 2. More business start-ups** – Help ensure that the support is in place to help enable local people to start a business and to stay in business including where possible the availability of grant funding.
- 3. Attract new businesses** - Help attract new businesses into the district from supermarkets and fast-food brands to businesses seeking a first UK base. The Council will proactively engage with targeted new business opportunities to ascertain each businesses plans and location requirements.
- 4. Available workforce** – Help ensure both the supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Represent businesses skills requirements into the development of skills support funding and development of relevant courses.
- 5. Available serviced land and premises** - Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites and premises to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. To bring together these and other similar requirements into an “Commercial Investment Land and Property Database” for Fenland.

The success of the Refresh will be based upon how well the Council and its partners interacts with business owners and managers who make the decisions as to whether the business expands, relocates, or starts. Measuring success therefore includes

mostly input measures, inputs into the business decision making process. The ultimate outcome of the Refresh economic growth is delivered by business supported where required by the Council and its partners.

Critically, therefore, the success of the Refresh will be demonstrated by the value each business places on their interaction with the Council and partners as demonstrated through case studies and feedback.

The Council helps enable businesses to secure grant and other funding to support the growth of their business and attracts funding to support the growth of the economy for example for infrastructure to make available land for commercial development.

Economic growth provides opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or via Fenland Future Limited and can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council.

1. Introduction

The economy is one of the Council’s three outward facing Corporate Priorities:

Quality Organisation Supporting effective delivery of our priorities and services	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support vulnerable members of our community • Promote health and wellbeing for all • Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service • Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene • Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland • Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland • Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

The Council created and approved its Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS), “Building a competitive vision for Fenland” that focuses on the most important outcomes and outputs required to ensure continued economic growth in Fenland.

In 2021 the First Strategic Refresh 2022-25 was approved to continue delivery of the EDS and set out how the Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners (hereafter referred to in this document as the “Team”) could continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in the district. This second Strategic Refresh 2025-28 follows on from the first considering changing circumstances.

Each Refresh is reviewed annually to ensure that the actions undertaken by the Team remain responsive, appropriate, up to date, deliver real impact and demonstrate how Fenland is open for all businesses.

Each Refresh utilises the five strategic ‘Model for Growth’ themes developed in the EDS designed to positively impact economic growth:

- Enterprise
- Workforce development
- Enabling infrastructure
- Business retention & growth

- Inward investment

Within each theme the Refresh sets out the projects and initiatives designed to have the most impact on each theme and includes:

- Action being undertaken
- Outcome expected
- Measurable outputs

2. Changing Context

Since the approval of the Council's EDS and the First Strategic Refresh, some of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly. This section sets out the most significant economic changes and the most recent strategic responses made by partners. These changes all contribute to the need for a regular strategic refresh of the EDS and hence this document.

Change in National Government

The national elections this year resulted in a change in government. The new Labour government pledged to introduce a new industrial strategy in their election manifesto, and the King's Speech included a commitment to establish an Industrial Strategy Council. Labour's new industrial strategy broadly will aim to achieve two main goals: economic growth and a green energy transition.

The Industrial Strategy will include government actions aimed at promoting the development and growth of specific industries or sectors that are considered strategically important. Essentially, the government will intervene to support certain businesses. Government support can take various forms, including providing financial assistance (subsidies), offering tax breaks, or purchasing goods and services from businesses for government use.

EU Exit

Since the referendum in June 2016, the Office for Budget Responsibility has conducted a range of analysis on the economic and fiscal implications of EU exit. The latest forecast was published in the March 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Overall trade intensity in the UK and the rest of the G7

Trade volumes in all advanced economies declined sharply at the height of the pandemic in 2020. However, UK trade intensity (exports plus imports as a share of GDP) has not recovered in line with other G7 countries since then. In the third quarter of 2023, UK trade intensity remained 1.7 per cent below its pre-pandemic level from 2019. By contrast, it had risen 1.7 per cent above pre-pandemic levels on average in the rest of the G7.

Composition of trade in the UK and the rest of the G7

Within UK trade, there has been a significant and growing divergence between the performance of goods and services since the pandemic.

Growth in UK goods trade (exports plus imports) has fallen well behind the rest of the G7. At the end of 2023, UK goods trade was around 10 per cent below 2019

levels, while it was around 5 higher on average for the rest of the G7 in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, UK services trade growth has been the strongest in the G7. It reached around 12 per cent above 2019 levels at the end of 2023, versus around 9 per cent above in the rest of the G7 in the third quarter.

The UK's differential performance between goods and services trade post-Brexit likely reflects several factors. First, global trade in services, where the UK has a relative comparative advantage, has grown faster than global goods trades since 2008. Second, post-Brexit trade barriers have created more significant frictions for goods than services. Third, the UK is less dependent on the EU for services exports than goods exports – around a third of UK service exports go to the EU, compared to roughly half for goods. Fourth, digitalisation makes trade in some services easier and less dependent on physical proximity than in the past.

What is driving the growth in UK services trade?

UK services trade has continued to grow strongly, including with the EU, despite the increase in trade barriers post-Brexit. Looking at its sectoral composition, around two thirds of the growth in services trade volumes since 2019 has been driven by the 'other business services' sector, which includes management consulting, research & development, and advertising. By contrast, exports of financial services and transport have lagged other sectors, declining 5.9 per cent and 2.0 per cent respectively. These are also sectors which are more likely to have been impacted by Brexit frictions.

The recent strong growth in the UK's exports in 'other business services' could reflect several factors. First, trade barriers with the EU may be lower for these kinds of services than goods or other, more highly regulated, services such as banking. Second, there has been particularly strong growth in service exports to the US, possibly capturing US firms outsourcing work to the UK, supported by the recent weakness in the pound. Finally, there is some evidence that services firms may have circumvented trade barriers by selling through foreign affiliates.

However, it remains hard to draw firm conclusions given the challenges of disentangling the simultaneous impacts of Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and other geopolitical developments affecting UK and global trade.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The UK economy has bounced back from the Covid-19 pandemic much faster than previously estimated, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Until relatively recently, the UK was thought to be the only G7 economy not to have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Recent figures give Britain a similar performance to

France and a stronger rebound than Germany, the eurozone's largest economy, but its recovery remains weaker than other countries.

Climate Change & Net Zero

Fenland is low-lying and vulnerable to unpredictable weather patterns and rising sea levels. Emissions-focused initiatives remain central to economic strategies across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

Meeting the new national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030 and transitioning to net zero by 2050 demands an even greater focus on measures that deliver economic growth through sustainable choices, business models and jobs.

Climate change is a business opportunity. The low-carbon transition creates opportunities for efficiency, innovation and growth that extend beyond high-carbon industries like energy and transport to all sectors. Companies can save energy and materials costs, serve new customer needs, enhance their reputations, and better attract and retain talent — all because of working to reduce their emissions and those of their customers and suppliers. Through their governance role, boards can help to ensure that climate opportunities are captured by reviewing corporate strategy and focusing on long-term value.

With the increased investment need throughout the housing sector in sustainable and net zero carbon products and services, there is an urgent need to support the growth of existing and diversification of new entrants into the marketplace.

Strategies and Plans

Fenland Emerging New Local Plan

The Council is preparing a new Local Plan. This important document will determine what the district will look like in the future and how it will become an even better place to live, work and visit. Once adopted, the new Local Plan will replace the current Fenland Local Plan (May 2014). The plan will cater for the growth of the District to 2040 and seek to allocate enough land in a variety of locations to meet the Council's growth ambition and the demands of business.

CPCA Shared Ambition, June 2024

The purpose of the CPCA Shared Ambition is to create a framework to:

- Give focus to a common set of outcomes - articulating what we want for our future
- Support us in building from existing strategies, plans and initiatives, recognising the work already being advanced across the region

- Help drive increased integration, engagement, joined up thinking and action across stakeholders to deliver our shared outcomes

CPCA: State of the Region, September 2024

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (C&P) State of the Region 2024 provides a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of C&P's current economic, social, and environmental landscape. By analysing the most up-to-date data and insights from across the region, the report serves as a resource and evidence base for stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders to understand the area's opportunities, priorities, and pathways for sustainable growth and prosperity.

Eight key themes are categorised into five core themes and three cross-cutting themes. The five core themes include Business and Enterprise; Health & Wellbeing; Workforce, Jobs & Skills; Wildlife & Nature; and Net Zero & Climate Resilience. These are fundamental to understanding the region's economic, social, and environmental health. The three cross-cutting themes, Tackling Inequality; Place; and Connectivity, transcend individual categories, addressing issues that permeate multiple aspects of regional development.

1. Place identifies key facts regarding urbanisation and land use, such as 90% of the population residing in Built Up Areas, despite only 8% of the land being classified as such. Meanwhile, the significance of high-grade agricultural land is also highlighted to underscore the region's diverse assets.

2. Business & Enterprise investigates the thriving economy, responsible for £31 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) annually and highlights areas of strength, such as Life Science and Healthcare sectors, and provides up-to-date analysis of areas such as the knowledge economy and global competitiveness.

3. Workforce, Jobs & Skills highlights data from across the employment landscape, covering 256,000 jobs. This considers the growth in knowledge-intensive sectors, particularly in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, as well as the quality of work and inequalities between local districts.

4. The Health & Wellbeing indicators start to reveal further geographic disparities, for example, differences in mortality rates and health indicators across the region. Yet, positive trends are also observed, such as declining levels of smoking prevalence.

5. Environmental stewardship is evident in the Wildlife & Nature theme, with a range of indicators discussed to support the region's commitment to preserving and enhancing natural assets.

7. Net Zero & Climate Resilience covers the tangible emissions reductions made across the region to date, whilst setting out challenges such as the decarbonisation of buildings and increasing environmental risks.

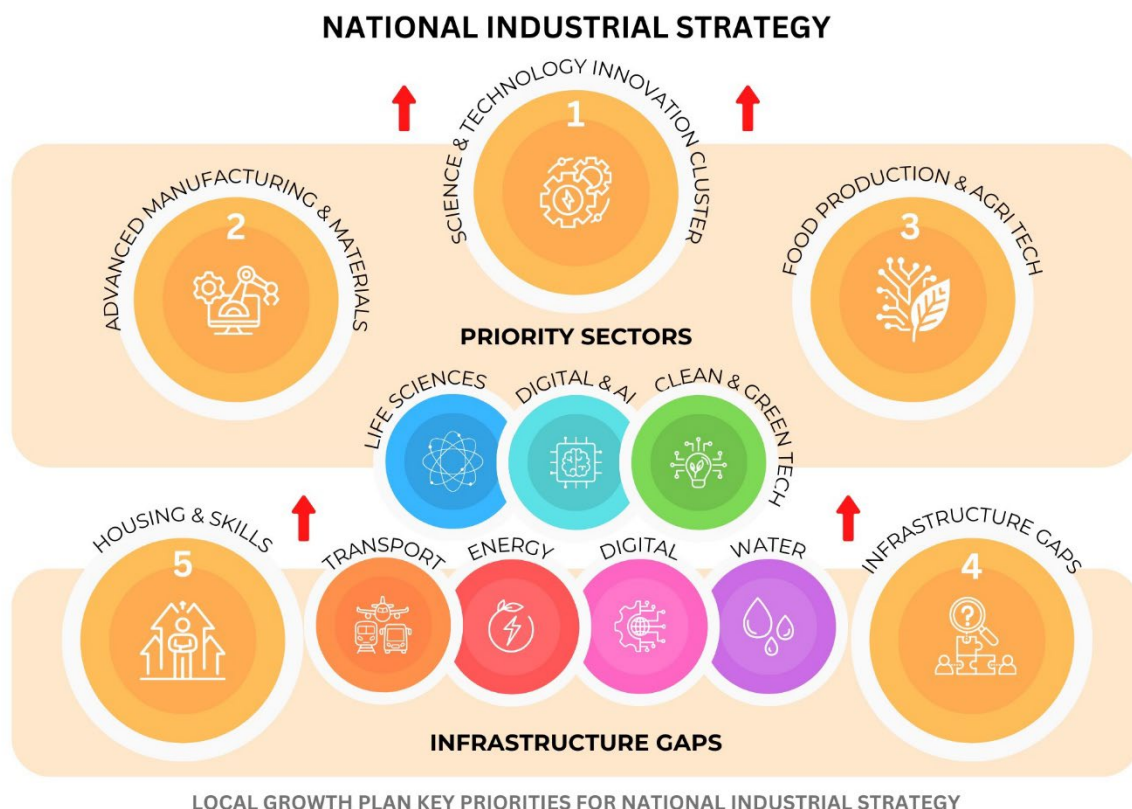
8. In addressing Tackling Inequality, the report unveils key disparities in incomes, employment gaps, and a range of other metrics underscoring the need for targeted intervention.

9. And finally, Connectivity reveals varying digital and transportation needs, at local, regional and interregional levels, presenting the need for investment to bring the region's digital and transport connectivity up to that of some of its peers.

CPCA: Emerging Key Growth Priorities for a Local Growth Plan Feeding into the National Industrial Strategy, October 2024

A new 10-year Local Growth Plan required by the new Government guided by outputs from the Shared Ambitions and State of Region.

Set out below is a key diagram setting out five emerging key local growth priorities for the National Industrial Strategy, October 2024. The key theme underpinning sector strengths is the overall contribution to innovation and the globally significant science and technology innovation cluster. Two of the priorities reflect binding constraints and unlocking these has a direct causal relationship with the intensification, expansion and diffusion of the cluster (and the potential sector growth that sits within it) and the two other priority sectors that are nationally significant and through specific additional intervention can make a major contribution to the National Industrial Strategy.



CPCA: Single Assurance Framework, August 2024

As part of the overall CPCA Improvement Programme, a Single Assurance Framework (SAF) was developed. The aim of the SAF is to:

- To ensure there is focused investment for projects that support the delivery of the CPCA Strategy
- To ensure our projects & programmes are consistently delivering the required outcomes & driving impact
- To provide robust governance across all projects and programmes, at all stages of lifecycle
- To foster new collaborative ways of working between all areas delivering change

CPCA: Employment & Skills Strategy, 2022

This strategy builds on the ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough set out in the 2019 Skills Strategy. The updated vision is for: A successful, globally competitive economy offering high-skilled, well-paid, good quality jobs, delivering increased productivity and prosperity to support strong, sustainable and healthy communities and enabled by an inclusive, world-class local skills system that matches the needs of our employers, learners and communities

Infrastructure Delivery Framework

The Combined Authority commissioned Stantec Ltd to take forward the Infrastructure Delivery Framework project. Data on development sites was sourced from councils and utility stakeholders contacted. This work has identified the major barriers to delivering sustainable growth as set out in Local Plans. The outputs have raised awareness of the extent of investment and sustainable growth being held back due to infrastructure constraints or costs linked to specific sites, or the cumulative impact of growth on strategic issues, such as water and energy supply.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER 2), 2024

Developing a single strategic position to underpin the case for greater fiscal devolution and powers to unlock the delivery of major infrastructure, following earlier CPIER 1.

CPIER 1 produced a review of all the available economic evidence for the area chaired by an experienced and expert panel, bringing in new research on business clusters and growth. The set out a series of key recommendations, many of which were reiterated and developed by the subsequent Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy.

The review segmented Cambridgeshire and Peterborough into three key economic areas with boundaries described as “fuzzy” – Cambridge, Peterborough (includes Whittlesey) & The Fens (broadly comprises most of the District of Fenland, and parts of the Districts of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire).

The key points with regards to The Fens were:

- The Fens is the most challenged economically of the three
- Market towns have lost their former glory and struggle to attract or retain young people
- Rural communities struggling to maintain high value industries
- Brexit poses a challenge to provide low-cost labour – “a concern that at all skill levels, from highly skilled workers to unskilled workers, businesses rely on foreign labour”.
- Businesses need to tackle low labour productivity by investing in the skills of their workers
- Immense potential for the Fens as the apex of British agricultural production & an attractive way of life in thriving Market Towns

Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership

The pan-Regional Partnership strategy, discussed at the most recent Board meeting on 19 September 2024, will form an important element of the forthcoming mid-year review. The Board has now signalled that it wishes to embark on a new phase for the Partnership and to develop a more ambitious strategy that places greater emphasis and alignment to delivering the government’s missions, and in response to this new government’s proposed policy changes around devolution, strategic planning, and infrastructure, including the Government’s position on East West Rail. Work will shortly commence to develop this new Strategy, helping to provide a focus for a future programme of work post-March 2025.

3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the Fenland Economy

The EDS identified several strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats (SWOT) for the Fenland economy and a number remain the same in 2024. The table below updates the original EDS SWOT:

	Fenland economy
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong demand from expanding businesses and relocators • Super-fast broadband i.e., >95% premises now access at least 24Mbps rising to >97% over the next 12 months • Proposed housing growth • Entrepreneurial culture • Low-cost base • Vibrant engineering and food processing sectors • Supportive and flexible planning • University of Peterborough & College of West Anglia • North Cambridgeshire Training Centre
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of serviced land or available industrial units • Mobile and mobile broadband coverage in rural areas • Pockets of high levels of deprivation • Poor transport links both into and within the District • Image of the area • Limited arts, culture and night-time economies • Recruitment issues – actual recruits and skill levels
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fens Reservoir • Potentially available land for development • New government Industrial Strategy • Climate change, low carbon & net zero i.e., market opportunities • Strategic employment sites i.e., Stainless Metalcraft Phase II Advanced Manufacturing Park & Peterborough Science & Technology Park • Location for Cambridge overspill
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing workforce vacancy rates • Climate change i.e., flooding risk • Growth of neighbouring centres • National and international economic and political issues

4. Actions

Responsibility for delivery of the Refresh rests mostly with the Economic Growth Team comprising the Economic Growth Manager, Business Engagement Manger and My Fenland Technical Support Officer. The Economic Growth Team will either deliver projects directly or through working with others such as other departments within the Council, the CPCA and partners to ensure delivery of the Refresh.

The Refresh utilises the strategic 'Model for Growth' themes developed in the EDS; Enterprise, Workforce development, Enabling infrastructure, Business retention and growth and Inward investment.

The Refresh highlights the individual actions being undertaken, the expected outcome resulting from taking these actions and measurable outputs. All the actions help ensure that Fenland is seen as both supportive of and open for all businesses.

The actions respond to the changes in context as set out previously and reflected in the SWOT analysis for example the continuing issue of lack of serviced land and available commercial property and in particular light industrial premises and the significant new opportunities including Stainless Metalcraft Phase II Advanced Manufacturing Park and Peterborough Science & Technology Park.

Enterprise

Objective

Maintain and build a thriving enterprise and entrepreneurial culture that encourages businesses to start up and grow.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables 2025-28	Delivered 2022-25
<p>Economic Growth Team Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote available employment sites and premises via for example the Fenland for Business website, including: Boathouse Business Centre South Fens Business Centre and Enterprise Park Council owned land & industrial units Private commercial property and land 	<p>Enabling businesses to access to employment sites and development land to support business growth</p>	<p>15 enquiries per year converting to 3 businesses per year finding new premises/site</p>	<p>65 enquiries</p> <p>10 company expansions</p> <p>1 business consolidated into their premises in March from other premises outside the district.</p> <p>Currently working with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robotics company looking to expand due to an increase in exports to Ireland. 5 Medium business new site or existing site expansion 6 small businesses looking for new premises <p>Inward Investors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 businesses considering locating in Fenland

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of Peruvian agrifood company to create a manufacturing facility in 2025
Maintain regular meetings with the business community, including the Fenland Chamber of Commerce (FCC) & The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)	More developed and coordinated approach to business intelligence to support business growth and competitiveness.	One new service to support businesses per year	<p>Quarterly meeting with FCC.</p> <p>Worked closely with Chair of FCC to re-establish the Chamber in Fenland.</p> <p>Quarterly meeting with FSB.</p>
Develop the Fenland for Business website to support businesses with signposting to advice and guidance and information	More businesses accessing the support and guidance available for example Growth Works that increases survival rates and job growth	<p>5% increase year on year of visitors to the Fenland for Business website.</p> <p>Increase the number of Fenland for Business followers on X by 5% year on year.</p> <p>We will add video content via YouTube, case studies showing how the Growth Team have supported local businesses and create a presence on LinkedIn.</p>	<p>Working with the Council's Communications Team have completely redesigned the Fenland for Business website with a customer focus on Start Ups, Growing Businesses and Inward Investors.</p> <p>Delivered 5% increase year on year of visitors to the Fenland for Business website and the number of followers on X.</p>
<p>Annual business start-up leaflet – targeting the hard to reach home based businesses and those considering starting a business.</p> <p>Signposting to the Fenland for Business website “Start” section of the website and encouraging new and existing businesses to register to receive regular e-</p>	Enabling more business start-ups and increasing the number of businesses registered on the Council's business database	<p>Every household paying Council Tax to receive a leaflet.</p> <p>Feeder for the Start & Grow programme.</p> <p>Additional 10% increase in new businesses registered on the Council's Fenland for Business website in the month post- delivery of the leaflet</p>	An insert with link to the Fenland for Business website was included in Council Tax bills providing information on the assistance provided to businesses by the Economic Growth Team and partner organisations.

newsletter updates. Delivered with the annual council tax bills.			
Partner business support introductions	Smart Manufacturing Association (SMA) regarding Industry 4.0 adoption and grants		<p>25 companies referred to the SMA and a joint event held at The Boathouse, Wisbech with 21 companies attending. The SMA closed in March 2023.</p> <p>Business and Intellectual Property Centre (March) regarding Start Up support and grants</p> <p>An officer sat on the judging panel for the BIPC start up grant awards, judging entries from across Cambridgeshire.</p>
Memberships and Events			<p>The team worked with partners to benefit Fenland businesses, including CPCA, Shoestring – a member of the East of England board of the Institute for Manufacturing scheme, Committee members of Fenland Chamber of Commerce and judging the BITP grant scheme for startup businesses in Cambridgeshire</p> <p>Innovate Edge event – held at NCTC to inform Fenland companies of the support available for innovation.</p> <p>StocksAG - Innovate UK Edge Event, David Hampton, manufacturing and operations director at Wisbech firm StocksAG, said: 'I found it to be very informative as we had no idea of the</p>

			help and support that was out there to help support our journey. Several of the topics discussed were exactly the things we are underway with here at StocksAG."
<p>Community Renewal Fund (CRF) "Start & Grow" programme ends in June 2022</p> <p>To aid Start and Grow to engage individuals and early-stage/micro businesses in an intensive enterprise programme. It will bring skills development and business investment together in one scheme through a 'pre-qualification' process for grant awards.</p>	<p>Increases start-up success through investment in local businesses; it equips new and existing enterprises with the business skills they need for sustainable growth and through this will safeguard jobs and increase employment.</p>	N/A	<p>(7 months period to end June 2022)</p> <p>Programme delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 supported enterprises • 8 jobs safeguarded • 25 new businesses • 25 new products • £150k investment attracted • £500k grants paid <p>Value for money: outputs require approximately £10k investment per business compared to the expected investment of £32k via other funded programmes.</p>

Workforce development

Objective

Help ensure that current supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Improved access to employment, training, and skills for balanced economic participation.

The Team will act as a key intermediary between business and key training and skills providers including the CPCA, colleges, developing North Cambs Training Centre and University of Peterborough.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables 2025-28	Delivered 2022-25
<p>Work collaboratively with Jobcentre Plus to help raise awareness to businesses of enterprise opportunities and work placements.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings with Jobcentre Plus and proactive marketing of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes and initiatives</p>	<p>Improved awareness businesses of enterprise opportunities, apprenticeships, and work placements</p>	<p>4 meetings per annum with Jobcentre Plus</p> <p>3 listings per annum of DWP programmes in the Team's e-newsletter</p>	<p>4 meetings per annum with Jobcentre Plus.</p> <p>3 listings per annum of DWP in programmes in the Team's e-newsletter.</p> <p>DWP had a stand at the redundancy event, which was arranged by FDC officers for IPL, Westry staff.</p> <p>EG Team attended the DWP Jobs fair in Wisbech</p>
<p>Work collaboratively with College of West Anglia (COWA), North Cambridgeshire Training Centre</p>	<p>A more supportive environment for private sector involvement and</p>	<p>4 meetings per annum with COWA</p>	<p>4 meetings per annum with COWA & COWA presented their skills offer at an FDC online event to</p>

<p>(NCTC) and ARU Peterborough to deliver programmes that meet the needs of local business including quarterly collaboration meetings</p>	<p>improved opportunities for employment growth.</p> <p>NCTC provides training across a range of vocational subjects for between 80 and 130 apprentices each year. The apprentices are equipped to find good careers in the local economy and help businesses meet their skills needs.</p>	<p>4 meetings per annum with ARU Peterborough</p> <p>4 meetings per annum with NCTC</p>	<p>share lessons learnt from the retrofit program run by FDC and Clarion Housing</p> <p>4 meetings per annum with ARU Peterborough</p> <p>4 meetings per annum with North Cambridgeshire Training Centre.</p>
<p>To engage with CA Growth Works with Skills - demand-led skills service connecting learners and employers with opportunities that enable growth.</p>	<p>Deliver a fair and inclusive economy by empowering local people to access the education and skills needed to meet the needs of the local economy and business, both now and in the future.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Number of referrals per annum – 20 to end Dec 2023 when the service was ended by CPCA. A new Skills service was established in April 2024.</p>

Enabling infrastructure

Objective

The provision of excellent underpinning infrastructure, which, as well as providing serviced land and available premises, to include road and transport linkages and the provision of superfast broadband.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables 2025-28	Delivered 2022-2025
<p>Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. The sites include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stainless Metalcraft, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Launchpad & Manufacturing Technology Centre Peterborough Science & Technology Park, 50 acres-built area 70 acres green space, carbon zero Development of light industrial units adjacent to the ex-Bartletts site 	<p>Enable progress to be maintained to ultimately deliver sites and premises.</p> <p>Enable funding to be sought to support delivery.</p> <p>Business rate revenue forecast created.</p>	<p>12 key employment locations assessed, delivery plans and forecast business rate revenue projections in place.</p> <p>Delivery commenced on 3 key employment sites.</p>	<p>Internal FDC team created, and objectives agreed. Assessment of which sites to focus on within the project undertaken.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites around the location of Fenton Way Chatteris <p>These sites and others to be combined into a key sites database capable of generating Investment Prospectus, completion of funding bids, etc</p>			
Work with partners to encourage and promote sustainable low carbon green infrastructure.	A more tailored sustainable environment to support green infrastructure, environmental and renewable supply chains.	Ongoing dialogue.	Ongoing dialogue.
Support the development of sustainable and enhanced broadband infrastructure including completing the delivery of the Fenland component within the Connecting Cambridgeshire project	Widespread access to enhanced broadband speeds and infrastructure that provide greater business competitiveness and viability.	Engaging with partners including the private sector e.g. CityFibre to help them deliver by 2022-23 >97% premises (homes and businesses) having access to broadband speeds of at least 24mbps.	Meetings undertaken with City Fibre and UPP regarding fibre installation in Wisbech and March during the search for cabinet sites. Now operating as BAU.
Fens Reservoir	The new c£3billion reservoir is at the heart of a whole new water supply project to provide homes and businesses with a reliable water supply.	The Economic Growth Team is working to help ensure that the opportunities of both the construction phase and the completed reservoir are fully exploited for Fenland residents and businesses.	The Economic Growth Team is working to help ensure that the opportunities of both the construction phase and the completed reservoir are fully exploited for Fenland residents and businesses.
Discretionary Business Rates Scheme	Cabinet & Council approved a new discretionary business rates scheme	Ongoing.	Ongoing.

	aimed at encouraging developers to build new business units with the potential of not having to pay business rates for up to 12 months until the unit is occupied.		
Medworth Employment and Skills Strategy	Ensure the strategy benefits the local community.	Feedback on the proposed strategy and engagement with Medworth on its delivery.	N/A

Business retention & growth

Objective

The District is seen as an exciting place to seek to start or grow a business. This objective recognises the importance of proactively targeting and supporting growth-oriented employers in Fenland; helping them to grow through enhanced access to finance, expert advice, suitable premises, and locations.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables 2025-28	Delivered 2022-25
Undertake a proactive account management business engagement programme with larger employers and potential growth companies	Better informed intelligence to enable support and guidance to be delivered in a more coordinated way. Business issues identified and mitigated, growth opportunities identified and supported	18 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team. Group of 40 businesses receive 1:2:1 “account management” service with 40 businesses visited per annum	15 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team. Group of 40 businesses receive 1:2:1 “account management” service with 40 businesses visited per annum 42 company meetings completed resulting in the identification of 9 active expansion projects involving the support of the EG Team.
Undertake a proactive business engagement programme with all known employers and business owners	Significant proportion of businesses aware of the Team and the business support opportunities available to them.	2,500 businesses receive a minimum of 6 e-newsletter communications from the Team per annum.	2,500 businesses have so far received 25 e-newsletters communications from the Team.

Reactive follow up to engagement with Team from businesses	Business issues identified and mitigated, growth opportunities identified and supported.	4 case studies produced annually featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team.	10 case studies have been produced evidencing how these businesses have benefitted from the support provided by the Team.
CPCA Sector Advisors	Ensuring that Fenland businesses gain maximum benefit from the CPCA sector support available.	Team to refer a minimum of 20 businesses for 1:2:1 support per annum.	The team will engage with the new CPCA team of sector advisors when they are in position in Sept 2024
CA Growth Works Business Coaching & Skills Service – 1:2:1 consultancy, masterclasses, grant funding	Providing support packages tailored to a business's specific needs, growth objectives and timeline. Enabling business growth.	N/A Growth Works contract ended December 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 385 Jobs (Committed) • 40 Apprenticeships created • 183 Additional training and learning outcomes • 240 Business Supported with growth Diagnostic • 63 Business starting Coaching Assignments • 63 Business starting a Coaching Journey • 63 Business completing a Coaching Journey • £956,724 awarded in Capital Growth Funding in local Small Businesses
Work with agents and developers to bring forward employment land provision,	An enhanced district wide office and commercial accommodation that	10 1:2:1 meeting with agents and developers per annum.	20 1:2:1 meeting with agents and developers held.

<p>encourage investment in 'move on' opportunities through:</p> <p>Quarterly Agents and Developer Forum meetings, 1:2:1 engagement with agents and developers.</p> <p>The Team will work closely with the Council and Fenland Future to assess investment opportunities.</p>	<p>supports growth and diversity in the emerging sectors.</p>	<p>2 agents and developers forum meetings per annum.</p>	<p>6 agents and developers forums held.</p>
<p>Develop joint Business events with partners to encourage networking, share business issues, etc</p>	<p>Enabling more businesses to expand</p>	<p>2 joint partner business events per annum</p>	<p>6 joint partner business events have been delivered.</p> <p>Smart Manufacturing Alliance on - Digitalisation for the Pathway to Net Zero - Boat House - 30th November 2023.</p> <p>Decarbonising Dissemination event. Worked with Clarion to develop an event to share with the construction sector the lessons learnt from updating and retrofitting social housing (net zero). COWA had a speaking slot. Jan 24.</p> <p>Event with Innovate UK Edge in March 2023 regarding support for research and development.</p>

<p>Services for Business</p> <p>All businesses registered for business rates receive a communication advising them of the services available to them from the Council and its partners such as Growth Works.</p>	<p>Enabling more businesses to expand</p>	<p>Every business registered for business rates receives a communication.</p>	<p>Every business registered for business rates received communication from the Economic Growth Team with their Business Rates Bills.</p>
<p>Adopt a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data management</p>	<p>Improved understanding of businesses and their requirements, issues, etc enabling enhanced support to be provided.</p> <p>Data extracted from the database for inclusion in funding submissions, etc.</p>	<p>Increase the number of businesses listed in the CRM database by 1% per annum (c25 businesses).</p>	<p>A CRM system branded Evolutive provided by Alcium Ltd was acquired in April 2024. All data held by the Economic Growth Team on local business is now held in the system and the number of businesses is targeted to grow annually. The CRM delivers significant benefits including enabling reports and analysis to be created efficiently, a joined-up service provided for businesses, targeted communications and the end-to-end management via the CRM of business grant schemes. The CRM has also enabled the hosting of a commercial land and property database to be created on the Fenland for Business website.</p>
<p>Housing sector sustainable and net zero carbon products and services</p>	<p>A webinar event primarily designed to target local supply chain that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. already working in Net Zero Carbon arena 	<p>Growth in the supply chain both locally and nationally.</p>	<p>Growth in the supply chain both locally and nationally.</p>

	<p>2. working in construction but not specifically NZC, and</p> <p>3. existing business and/or start-up's that see this as a growth area and would like to diversify existing activities.</p>		
South Fens Enterprise Park additional light industrial units Phase I and Phase II (additional funding will be required to deliver Phase II)	Enabling more businesses to expand and locate in Fenland	N/A	The project was put on hold due to a substantial increase in construction costs.
Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)	SPF funding of £1.25m over three years has been secured by the by the Growth Team. Case studies will be made available via the Fenland for Business website.	N/A SPF ends March 2025	The programme is on time and funding will be utilised by February 2025. A full programme evaluation report will be produced by August 2025.
Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)	REPF funding of £436k over two years has been secured by the Growth Team. Case studies will be made available via the Fenland for Business website.	N/A REPF ends March 2025	The programme is on time and funding will be utilised by February 2025. A full programme evaluation report will be produced by August 2025.

Inward investment

Objective

To maintain and increase the level of employment in the district and improve the quality of employment locally to provide all ages of the community with the opportunities that match their skills and aspirations. This will require the district to secure new inward investment to compliment current local employers.

The district has clear advantages to offer investors in key sectors, in particular Agri/food, precision engineering and manufacturing, professional and business support services, and the environmental and renewable sectors.

The Team will proactively target and engage with different business sectors from supermarkets and fast-food brands to international businesses looking for a UK base. The engagement with individual businesses will help the Team understand the plans and location requirements of these businesses and where appropriate put forward propositions that seek to attract them to locate in Fenland. Even where a business does not currently have expansion plans the Team will have started a relationship with that business which in the longer term may result in investment into the district.

In addition to the Council, Fenland is promoted as an investment destination through the CPCA Inward Investment Team, Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, commercial agents and developed relationships with strategic employers.

Encourage additional investment from parent companies of existing international investors to bring in new products or technologies leading to the expansion or retention of their Fenland facilities.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables 2025-28	Delivered 2022-25
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<p>Work closely with and respond to information enquiries from CPCA Inward Investment Team</p>	<p>Delivering economic growth through the attraction of inward investment.</p>	<p>Working with the CPCA Inward Investment Team:</p> <p>10 inward investment enquiries per annum</p> <p>1 inward investment per annum</p>	<p>Working with the Growth Works (GW) (2022-2023) and CPCA (2024-25) Inward Investment Teams:</p> <p>20 inward investment enquiries</p> <p>8 GW enquiries received</p> <p>5 inward investments</p> <p>1 GW inward investment at negotiation stage</p>
<p>Economic Growth Team inward investment service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying suitable land or commercial premises • Helping to facilitate planning applications • Identifying suitable funding streams • Working with businesses to source suitable workforce • Arrange business development meetings with local supply chains, • For large scale investment, facilitating on-going high quality business support to help nurture business growth 	<p>Delivering economic growth through the attraction of inward investment.</p>	<p>2 inward investment enquiries per annum</p> <p>1 inward investment per annum</p>	<p>There was engagement with 59 companies that were considering Fenland as an inward investment or expansion location, with 3 successful inward investments, 1 foreign direct investment from Peru and 4 expansions.</p>

<p>Continue to market Fenland propositions to target growth sectors, individual businesses and locations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarkets, fast-food brands, hotels, etc • Inward Investor Pack • Targeted Business Exhibitions • Programme of strategic marketing 	<p>Positive coverage of Fenland as a location of choice for business</p>	<p>Attendance at a targeted business exhibition per annum and generation of 3 quality leads.</p>	<p>Email and telephone contact undertaken with major hotels, fast food companies and supermarkets</p> <p>Creation of Inward Investor Pack developed for UKREiif</p> <p>Attendance at the UKREiif exhibition and conference held in May Royal Armouries Leeds bringing together an array of key decision-makers from every area of the built environment: the public sector – with every core UK city and regions involved – alongside government, investors, funders, developers, housebuilders, and more.</p>
<p>Deliver ‘soft landing’ tools that support an aftercare programme for new and recently established investors, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings • Free office accommodation • Priority planning applications 	<p>Effective message of Fenland being ‘Open for Business’ delivered to businesses and potential investors</p>	<p>Continued marketing of package to potential investors, intermediaries i.e., agents, lawyers, banks and partners i.e., Growth Works Inward Investment.</p>	<p>Marketing of package to potential investors, intermediaries i.e., agents, lawyers, banks and partners</p> <p>Intermediaries identified. Meetings to take place, pack produced and marketed.</p>
<p>Collate Insight/data – targeted market research to include opportunities for attracting an hotel into Fenland, high quality manufacturing and engineering, research institutions, etc</p>	<p>Enabling propositions to be communicated to key sectors such as high-quality engineering to market Fenland as an effective location for their business.</p>	<p>1 research project undertaken per annum.</p> <p>1 proposition created for a target market per annum.</p>	<p>1 research project undertaken</p> <p>1 proposition created for a target market per annum. Initial Agrifood proposition created. Research organisation to deliver project</p>

			<p>identified and discussed with potential providers</p> <p>Initial Advanced Manufacturing/Precision Engineering proposition also created and will be delivered by research providers</p> <p>Discussion underway with CPCA to request funding for the research.</p>
<p>Consider Discretionary Business Rate Relief to incentivise businesses to locate in Fenland and commercial developments to be brought forward. Any relief is totally discretionary and only considered where it acts as a real incentive to business.</p>	<p>Attraction of inward investment, expansion projects and development of commercial space for example light industrial units.</p>	<p>1 business per annum considered for discretionary business rate relief.</p>	<p>1 business provided with discretionary business rate relief.</p>

5. Measuring the success of the Refresh

The Refresh seeks to help continue the delivery the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-31 with the overall aim of achieving economic growth in Fenland. What does economic growth look like?

- More business start-ups
- More businesses relocating into the district
- More expansions of existing businesses
- More local well-paid jobs for local people
- Thriving town and village centres
- More home-based businesses

The delivery of economic growth is substantially in the hands of businesses and specifically the people who run or create them. People make the decisions about whether to expand, relocate, start and so on. Given this, the role of the Team is to:

- support owners/senior managers with their decision making through account management, signposting and so on
- ensure that there are opportunities for businesses to acquire suitable premises and/or serviced land on which to expand or locate
- ensure that the message that Fenland is "open for all businesses" and what that means practically for businesses is understood across Fenland and outside of Fenland by targeted businesses, targeted sectors and those making enquiries about relocating into Fenland

Demonstrating the success of the Refresh is therefore based upon how well the Team interacts with these decision makers that ultimately lead to the business expanding, relocating, or starting. The resultant outcomes being more businesses, more jobs, higher paid jobs, more apprenticeships, etc

Examples of feedback received from Fenland businesses:

Vita Nova Solutions, Chatteris

Vita-Nova Solutions has been enjoying support from Fenland for Business for several years and has benefited from advice, signposting and grant funding.

Director Paul Millard said: "It has been key to everything we have done. I can't overstate how valuable the Fenland for Business team has been to us.

"If they are not supplying us a grant they are supporting us in other ways. They have been vital in what we have been doing.

"If I don't know what to do, my contact at Fenland for Business points me in the right direction."

Suncrop Produce Ltd, Chatteris

Richard Hall, of Chatteris firm Suncrop Produce Ltd, a salad supplier to major retailers that employs up to 170 people in peak seasons said: "I've recommended Fenland for Business to so many other businesses already.

"I had no idea this service was out there, within the public sector - and it's free! For me it has opened the door massively.

"We now have serious potential of getting grants from the Government. It has enabled us as a business to deal with adversity in the marketplace, turn a corner on energy costs and to get help where it was needed."

Agrimech, Manea

Belinda Smith, finance director of Agrimech, a leading UK manufacturer of end of line weighing, bagging, placing and palletising systems, based in Manea, said: "The teams at Fenland for Business and Growth Works have been invaluable to our business, introducing us to a business support network within Fenland and nationally, including contacts and information that we would never have found without their help and support.

"Our ongoing relationship with the teams ensures that we are made aware of and can take advantage of new opportunities that become available to businesses that we would often never have otherwise heard about. It's a fantastic service for Fenland and I would encourage businesses to get in touch."

StocksAG, Wisbech

Following a Fenland for Business information event, David Hampton, manufacturing and operations director at Wisbech firm StocksAG, said: "I found it to be very informative as we had no idea of the help and support that was out there to support our journey. A number of the topics discussed were exactly the things we are underway with here at StocksAG."

Rai and Rai Bathrooms, Whittlesey

Rai and Rai Bathrooms was supported to secure a Rural England Prosperity Fund grant.

Firm director Raivis Tidemanis said: "The grant has made us feel 'seen' and supported by Fenland District Council and Whittlesey Town Council.

"It was an absolute pleasure having the grand opening with them and gave us an extra boost of confidence to want to do well and we really felt part of the community that day!"

Ruth Godden, of Rai and Rai Bathrooms, said: "If you want support, ask Fenland for Business. The team is so helpful and so knowledgeable. Getting that advice is great."

A4 Plus Limited, March

James Blayney, head of business operations, said: "We applied for a grant to update some of our equipment, and allow us to support our customers in even more ways. As a business, that utilises the latest CAD Technologies it is important for us to continue to move with the times.

"We found the support and guidance from the Fenland for Business to be excellent and the opportunities they offer to be great for local business.

"The grant has an obvious financial benefit to the business. But it also allowed us to improve in key areas, and review where best to spend the money available. This was exciting for our team, as they can see the growth plan for the business coming to life!

"Upgrading our office equipment allows us to enhance our service offerings to customers. We can work more quickly and efficiently which benefits our staff as well as our clients. The main use of the grant for us was to upgrade a key piece of software, which directly affects our customer experience and attracts new business. This will not only generate more revenue for us but will benefit our local suppliers as well."

Joe Perry's Snooker & Pool Palace, Chatteris

Director Joe Perry said: "We were recently supported in opening our new business by Fenland for Business which was very much appreciated and very, very helpful.

"The team helped us considerably from start to finish during the whole process.

"I would encourage any other businesses in the area thinking of contacting Fenland for Business to definitely go for it as they will no doubt benefit from the experience.

"Our grant was used to purchase five brand new pool tables which gave us a great first impression when we opened our doors to potential new members and clients.

"Our business has provided a safe fun space for all ages and abilities to enjoy in the Chatteris area as well as providing jobs for the locals. As the business grows we will provide more opportunity and jobs for local people.

"Getting this grant was obviously a help financially but more than that really boosted the morale of myself and fellow staff as it indicated we had great support from the Fenland area and local council. It gave us extra belief to push on and make the project and business as good as we possibly could."

G & CA Lombardo, March

Helen Lombardo, Office Manager, said: "We were unaware of any grants for small business until we received a newsletter. This was a great opportunity to follow this up. The support from the team made this process a lot easier than was expected.

"Even if you aren't sure on what you are able to apply for the team will help. Sign up to the Fenland for Business newsletter as this is very informative."

The Secret Garden Touring Park, Wisbech

Stephen Pollington, who is co - owner of The Secret Garden Touring Park with his wife Lesley, was awarded a Rural England Prosperity Fund grant, which enabled early completion of a sound attenuation (management) project for its events venue.

Stephen said: "We have invested a great deal into this important project over 2023, but to receive this significant boost from the government rural prosperity fund now completes our much-needed technology, which has made the project come to fruition a year ahead of schedule.

"The technical equipment will not only ensure our whole site is comfortable for our touring park customers but will also provide a much-needed boost to the quality of sound within the events area for all to enjoy.

With a great number of professional touring acts visiting us in 2024, it also ensures that the quality of technology in our venue is matched to that they would be familiar with in most UK theatre touring venues.

Enviornmental Services Group

Sam Awolesi, managing director, said: "The grants application process is user-friendly and fully supported by the Fenland for Business team. The time taken and the efforts required to complete the application were worth it.

"The support received from Fenland District Council and the professional approach by the staff are very much appreciated and we encourage other businesses who are thinking about grant funding to apply and benefit from the initiatives as we have."

Eco-Pak and Suncrop Produce Ltd

Richard Hall, operations director, said: "We would like to convey a heartfelt thanks to the Fenland District Council. This money will help us stay competitive within the marketplace, which means we can look to take on more work and hopefully employ more local people. We will definitely be keeping an eye on future grants as we have many other cost / energy saving ideas for us and potentially the wider community which with a little help could become reality."

Qualitetch Components

Chris Garner, Finance Manager, said: "We would strongly encourage other local businesses to apply for the next round of funding. The process, in our experience, has been straightforward and incredibly worthwhile, with the support and guidance received from Fenland for Business being thorough and appreciated. We have found the team to be extremely helpful and understanding throughout the grant process, as well as being very open and approachable at any of the local events we have attended. If any Fenland company is contemplating engaging with Fenland for Business whether it be for potential grant funding or for support elsewhere then you should not hesitate to do so."

R-Tec Services & Innovation, Wisbech

Lee Wilmot, managing director said: "Having the grant will enable us to continue investing in the very best equipment and in turn add additional employees to cope with new product demand.

"The application in general is quite straightforward and assistance has always been offered, so the benefits of not over burdening my company with finance or debt while trying to grow is very important. This grant enables us to balance the costs of investment so would advocate this to all businesses.

"I would like to personally thank the Fenland Council for their support and guidance with the application."

Cobra engineering

Kim French, financial controller, said: "The team at Fenland District council were extremely helpful throughout the duration of the application process. We discussed, in detail, Cobra's plans for expansion and growth over the next five years. Their guidance and advice has been invaluable - making it a seamless process."

Vita-Nova Solutions

Paul Millard, director/owner, said: "As a result of the grant we will be looking at bringing in at least two new employees over the next 12 months. It's a great award for us but also for the local economy.

"I'd encourage other businesses to take a look at the second round of funding and to make contact with Fenland for Business. This type of funding can make a lot of difference to how quickly you can get a project up and running and develop your business.

"Fenland For Business have been absolutely fantastic. The enthusiasm from them has been incredible. They instilled me with confidence that applying for the grant wasn't wasting my time and the process was really easy."

Volmary

Wayne Eady, Managing Director, said: "While the process of application requires some technical input and a bit of time, the team at FDC are very helpful and we'll certainly be keen to apply again if more opportunities arise to create more energy saving systems and grow our local team further."

FRP Group Holdings

Nick Osborn said: "As an established but ambitious Fens-based business we are absolutely delighted that Fenland District Council are able to continue supporting our growth with this essential grant from their Fenland for Business programme. This will enable us to boost employment within our team and increase the range of services we offer to our customers.

"I would actively encourage other local SMEs to apply for the next round of funding as the process is really straightforward and Dawn was really helpful at every stage. It is fantastic that we have been able to access this grant support to continue our growth as a business - without the comprehensive support from the Fenland for Business team it wouldn't have happened - it's as simple as that!"

6. Bidding for external funding & resources

The Team helps enable businesses to secure grant and other funding to support the growth of their business and attracts funding to support the growth of the economy for example for infrastructure.

The Team helped secure £1.2m Shared Prosperity Funding and £436k Rural England Prosperity Funding. The Team will continue to work closely with partners including the CPCA to secure any future funding for Fenland.

Working closely with the CPCA's Growth Works programme the Team helped secure in the three-year period from 2012 in Fenland:

- 385 Jobs (Committed)
- 40 Apprenticeships created
- 183 Additional training and learning outcomes
- 240 Business Supported with growth Diagnostic
- 63 Business starting Coaching Assignments
- 63 Business starting a Coaching Journey
- 63 Business completing a Coaching Journey
- £956,724 awarded in Capital Growth Funding in local Small Businesses

Working closely with the CPCA's Growth HUB in 2023-24 the Team helped secure:


- 62 businesses across the region received 1 hour session with Growth Hub business advisors (including, mentoring, signposting, guidance on national programmes)
- 12 businesses across the region have had 3-hour workshop delivery (business planning and Financial Overview)
- Role in helping the FDC UKSPF Start-Up Programme, including support to run Workshops and Mentoring

7. Income generation

Economic growth can provide opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or potentially via Fenland Future Limited (FFL) and its Business Plan. Such opportunities include investment in existing commercial property both occupied and unoccupied, design and build commercial property for committed end users, speculative design and build of commercial property and so on.

The Team works with existing Fenland businesses that require new premises and businesses that are considering locating in Fenland. The Council or potentially FFL can provide solutions to a business's property requirements and where appropriate the Team will advise businesses of these options. The Team will collect the necessary information from a business to enable both the Council and potentially FFL to make an initial assessment of the opportunity.

Economic growth can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council. The Refresh includes an action to produce a forecast in the growth in business rate revenue generated by the development of key commercial sites in the District.

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 November 2024	
Report Title:	Football Foundation Playzones opportunities in Fenland	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the opportunity to apply for grant funding to the Football Foundation (FF) of approximately £375,000 to secure investment to construct two PlayZone small-sided multi-sport pitches in Whittlesey and Wisbech.
- 1.2 The report seeks Cabinet approval to apply for the grant funding with an expectation of support from grants from FCC COMMUNITY ACTION FUND and Wisbech Town Board. However, it should be noted that if the additional supporting grants were not available then the project would require alternative capital funding of up to £62,500 per facility.
- 1.3 If the funding applications for either or both sites were successful, the report asks Cabinet to approve all necessary construction and operator procurement activity to deliver the PlayZone sites.
- 1.4 This report highlights what a PlayZone is, the positive impacts they can have on local communities and the opportunity that Fenland has to develop PlayZones within the District with significant Football Foundation financial and organisational support.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Working together with the Football Foundation, community consultation has taken place in 4 locations, with a further location identified also by the Football Foundation. This has led to a two-tranche approach, suggested by the Football Foundation, of developing two facilities initially – this report – to be delivered by summer 2025.
- 2.2 Potentially a further two facilities (Wisbech Park and Estover Park) will follow shortly afterwards. The Estover project would be managed by the Community Interest Company running Estover Park, with the potential project at Wisbech Park being subject to a further Cabinet report regarding approval to progress an application.
- 2.3 The Football Foundation grant will cover £375,000 of the expected capital cost. Match funding of £62,500 per facility is also required. In the first instance, if the projects are approved to move forwards, funding will be applied for from [FCC Community Action Fund](#) for the Manor facility and Wisbech Town Board, Long Term Plan for Town Project (still subject to Government clarification regarding funding and initial documentation submission deadlines). Should the match funding sources decline to support the projects then capital support to move forwards would be required from elsewhere or the projects cancelled.

- 2.4 Development of each project will follow the FF PlayZone Framework Process. This involves 6 stages from Project Brief through to Handover. Comprehensive information regarding this process is included in Schedule 2 highlighting the considerable support that the Framework approach will provide to FDC meaning that FDC input to the development and build process will be light.
- 2.5 Should the projects move forwards the management of the facilities is expected to reside with Freedom (at Manor Field) and Wisbech Acorns Football Club (Barton Road) with formal contracts in place. Both organisations are currently responsible for these spaces.
- 2.6 Fees for use of the facilities will ensure day to day running costs are covered and that the ongoing longer term financial viability of the facilities is in place. Fees would cover a 'sinking-fund' for the replacement of the surface at years 10 – 15. Should the third-party operator default on the management of these assets, the responsibility would reside with FDC as they would be FDC assets on FDC land.
- 2.7 Fee levels are expected to be decided locally and will form part of the grant application process to Football Foundation. Fees will be variable; cheaper rates during the day, more expensive in the evenings. This will ensure equitable access to the facilities. Target groups, as discussed in the report below, may receive preferential rates to encourage use.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the report and the benefits that PlayZone development in Fenland will have, namely;
- Increasing community physical activity levels and subsequently community health
 - Encouraging under-represented groups such as women and girls, disabled people and older people to become more physically active
 - Supporting a reduction in anti-social behaviour
 - Supporting community cohesion
- 3.2 That Cabinet approves the submission of a grant funding application to the Football Foundation to develop PlayZone sites with the initial tranche of two PlayZone project applications based at the Manor Field in Whittlesey and Barton Road in Wisbech.
- 3.3 That Cabinet notes that the necessary alternative sources of match funding will be pursued.
- 3.4 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Leisure to commence a procurement exercise to engage a contractor to deliver the PlayZone sites and thereafter, subject to full funding having been secured, award, mobilise and implement such proposal with further authority to take all reasonable ancillary actions to ensure implementation.
- 3.5 Authorises the Monitoring Officer to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above.

Wards Affected	All						
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/15OCT24/02						
Portfolio Holders	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Cllr Peter Murphy</td> <td>Portfolio Holder for Environment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Alex Miscandlon</td> <td>Portfolio Holder for Leisure</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Chris Boden</td> <td>Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance</td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Peter Murphy	Portfolio Holder for Environment	Cllr Alex Miscandlon	Portfolio Holder for Leisure	Cllr Chris Boden	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Cllr Peter Murphy	Portfolio Holder for Environment						
Cllr Alex Miscandlon	Portfolio Holder for Leisure						
Cllr Chris Boden	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance						
Report Originators	Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services						
Contact Officers	Carol Pilson, Corporate Director Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services						
Background Papers	Playzones consultation report (in appendix)						

4 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

4.1 In 2022 the Football Foundation funded the Fenland Local Football Facilities Plan. This assessed football facilities within the District and identified opportunities for development. The report's summary reads as follows;

The key strengths of local football in Fenland include traditional football/league provision and it is recommended that this is sustained and also encouraged to grow further. However, gaps in provision do exist, these include a lack of Just Play provision, and a need to develop additional opportunities for the female game.

It is therefore recommended that the future football development priorities for Fenland are:

- *Establish Just Play opportunities; including vets provision, and a Disability Just Play Centre.*
- *Provide additional programme support for growth in the female game.*
- *Provision of recreational football opportunities in Wisbech.*
- *Facility development to support high levels of participation in March and Wisbech.*

4.2 Development of PlayZones will help to address the first three bullet points.

4.3 The PlayZone Programme is the Football Foundation's exciting new investment programme aimed at tackling inequalities in physical activity and access to facilities by funding community-led spaces. The Football Foundation (FF) Playzones project is a collaborative initiative aimed at engaging with local communities across the country to create outstanding sports and activity spaces and tackle inequalities in participation. The FF aims to deliver up to 240 playzones in England in 2025. This is an ambitious target.

4.4 The programme is targeted at specific geographies targeted due to need and Fenland has been selected as a District that will benefit from this significant

investment. The project is funded by the Premier League, The FA, the Government, and Sport England, and is delivered by the Football Foundation.

4.5 The FF aims to focus investment and resource into communities with the greatest need. This will deliver new or refurbished outdoor mini pitches designed for football and other sports and activities that will allow priority groups to be more active.

4.6 Understanding a playzone is far easier if you see one in use.

- Here is a [Football Foundation video regarding](#) the programme.
- This is a [video regarding a facility](#) that is already open in Derby.

4.7 PlayZones provide an inspiring and inclusive space for the community to gather, play sport and be active. The spaces need to be inspiring, accessible, engaging and welcoming for all priority groups. As such PlayZones have been designed to be attractive, modern, and safe spaces that communities want to use, with branding and colour schemes to support that. The design below has been produced for illustrative purposes only, and further detail on site branding, signage etc. will be shared if the project proceeds to design stage:



4.8 Size – All PlayZones have been designed with 30m x 20m pitch dimensions.

4.9 Fencing – For both site security and ball flight / retention purposes, all PlayZones should be fenced in high quality, robust steel fencing that will last long into the future. The fence height requirements are set out in each design and differ between 3 – 4 metres dependent upon the sports being played, and the positioning behind goals, hoops etc.

4.10 Surface Type – Community engagement is critical to the identification of the right location and design, ensuring that surface type works for the sports and activities identified by the local community. The type of sports being played on a PlayZone will determine the type of sports surface that will be installed.

- 4.11 Floodlights – Good quality lighting is essential to making PlayZones safe, allowing a variety of sports to be played and encouraging access in the evenings, all year round.
- 4.12 Equipment – Where possible, PlayZone designs have accounted for sports fixtures being built into the fencing e.g., goalposts, basketball & netball hoops, and fixed fence cricket wickets. Where that is not possible e.g., the cricket wickets needed to activate the centre strip, or more ad-hoc loose equipment, each PlayZone has been designed with a built-in storage solution where such equipment can be held securely.
- 4.13 The Football Foundation has learned that the most successful community sport and physical activity spaces are designed and delivered in partnership with local people. Communities are more likely to take part in activities and use facilities if they've been included in their planning and development.

4.14 Consultation sites in Fenland

Local consultation has taken place in four locations;

- a. Barton Road football pitch in Wisbech
- b. Manor Field, Whittlesey
- c. Estover Field, March
- d. Lime Avenue, Whittlesey

These locations were selected as they have infrastructure to support the PlayZones and the addition of the PlayZone will enhance what is already in place.

- 4.15 Following community consultation a report has been developed – please see the Schedule for a copy.

4.16 Lime Avenue

The Football Foundation assessed the sites in question and identified that Lime Avenue would not be suitable. The site is in a dense housing area, with limited parking and no ancillary facilities. Adding a PlayZone facility, with floodlighting and the additional traffic it would bring is likely to be unpopular with the local community once set up, will be less likely to satisfy Planning Committee and would prove difficult to manage and attract users due to the lack of additional facilities.

The Football Foundation suggests that Clarion Future applies for a grant to refurbish the current pitch on the site.

4.17 Estover Park

Estover Park is developing very well with a group effectively managing the space and use ramping up. The 2022 Local Football Facility Plan, developed by the Football Foundation identifies that a full sized 3G pitch is a priority for March and is the Cambs FA's key priority in the County. The Football Foundation Local Football Facility Plan states;

This leaves a shortfall of 2.3 full sized 3G FTPs, however, club consultation has highlighted concentrations of clubs currently unable to

access sufficient 3G FTP space to meet their training and matchplay needs.

With the geographic spread of existing facilities being uneven - with the 3G FTPs located in the settlements of Wisbech (Thomas Clarkson Academy), Leverington (Leverington Sports and Social Club) and Chatteris (Cromwell College) - and connectivity/accessibility across the authority being identified as a challenge - it is crucial to address geographical gaps in provision.

There is a key provision gap in March which, alongside Wisbech, is one of the two principal market towns in Fenland. Consultation also reveals significant unmet demand in the Whittlesey area. Due to high team numbers in each area who don't currently access 3G FTPs, it is recommended that these shortfalls are addressed via full-sized provision.

With the gap in provision of a full sized 3G synthetic turf pitch in March, the Football Foundation proposes to move this project forwards and at the same time add a PlayZone into the same project. This will ensure that both facilities are delivered as financially efficiently as possible, with sporting provision in March increased significantly. It is expected that the PlayZone at this site will enhance facilities for the local netball club that is flourishing at the Estover facility amongst other sports.

- 4.18 The Football Foundation is satisfied that a PlayZone facility at both Barton Road and the Manor Field would be successful projects. Infrastructure is located on the sites and local communities are familiar with the facilities, so uptake should be strong.

4.19 Manor Field

There remains a dilapidated synthetic pitch at the Manor Field. Its current location is tucked away from people (natural surveillance) and CCTV coverage and has leant itself to vandalism over the past decade. With the future of the leisure centre uncertain at this time, it would be unwise to propose a new PlayZone adjacent to the current buildings. It is proposed that a PlayZone developed at the site sits close to the existing tennis and netball courts (already floodlit). Locations will be dependent on underground utilities meaning putting the facility next to the existing play area is not possible. Adding a PlayZone into this location in Whittlesey will further enhance the central hub-like nature of the Manor Field and leisure facilities for the local community.

4.20 Wisbech Park

Whilst Wisbech Park was not on the consultation plan, the Football Foundation visited the park whilst in the area. As there is already a hub for sports in the park, the FF has identified that enhancing this with a PlayZone, linked to a re-vitalised changing facility (currently dilapidated) and the local pavilion is a project that is viable.

- 4.21 Following consultation responses and the Football Foundation feedback above, the PlayZone programme will be split into two tranches;

- i. Delivery of Manor Field and Barton Road PlayZones (this report)
- ii. Delivery of Wisbech Park PlayZone
(to be considered by Cabinet in a subsequent report in mid-2025)

4.22 Development of the 3G pitch and PlayZone at Estover Park in March will be a separate project managed between the Community Interest Company managing Estover Park, Cambs FA and the Football Foundation.

4.23 Engagement is key to a successful PlayZone application. Insight demonstrates that recreational formats of football and other sports are popular with our priority groups and provide great opportunities to become more active.

Research shows that:

- Priority groups want safe and welcoming spaces
- Activation plans and booking facilities are essential
- Well-lit sites with natural surveillance are more likely to be used

4.24 PlayZones will be available for the community use day and night, all year round and will all be floodlit. Access will be controlled by a simple to use app. This will mean groups will be able to book slots on the pitches and will know when they turn up that it will be available to them. Bookings will also attract a fee. This will ensure that the facility remains financially sustainable throughout its life and will allow replacement of the playing surface after 10 years. It should be noted that the playing fee will be determined locally. For instance, an after-school kick-about or a pick-up netball game will attract a lower fee than perhaps a football club wishing to book a block of sessions at peak time in the evenings across a 10 week period. A fitness instructor wishing to run a session for 20 people would attract a different fee again.

4.25 Project Goals

The playzone project has several goals and offers local communities significant benefits:

- Increase participation in football and other sport and activities: By providing accessible and safe spaces to play, the project aims to encourage more children and young people to participate in football.
- Improve health and well-being: Regular physical activity, such as playing football, can help to improve children's physical and mental health.
- Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour: By providing positive activities for young people, the project can help to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in local communities.
- Regenerate communities: The construction and development of Playzones can help to regenerate local communities and provide a focal point for residents.

- Promote social inclusion: Playzones are designed to be inclusive and welcoming to children and young people from all backgrounds.

4.26 Who are the priority groups?

There are four main groups facing the greatest inequalities. The FF wants engagement with these groups prioritised to provide opportunity and access to safe, inclusive and welcoming facilities.

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Women and girls
- Disabled people and people with long term conditions
- Ethnically diverse communities

Priority groups across the country face stubborn inequalities in activity levels and access to sports facilities. As a result of the Covid-19 impact, this inequalities gap has widened further. We aim to offer safe and inclusive facilities that will help local communities overcome these challenges. To ensure these projects target these priority groups, community engagement is critical. Consultation within local communities has already taken place with the Council listening to people of all ages who have fewer opportunities to be active.

4.27 Multi-sport

Although FF investment is football-led, it is important that other sports and activities benefit from the new facilities. PlayZones are designed not only for recreational football, including Premier League Kicks, FA Weetabix Wildcats and walking football programmes, but a whole host of other sports and activities, from basketball to netball, rugby, hockey, cricket and more. Sport can bring communities together and the FF encourages projects to ensure the spaces are used beyond just football.

The FF has also developed a series of design principles and produced multi-sport guidance and policies to help ensure new PlayZones can accommodate a range of sports and activities.

4.28 Summary

The Football Foundation Playzones project is an initiative that has delivered significant benefits to local communities across England. The project has helped to increase participation in football, improve health and well-being, reduce crime, regenerate communities, and promote social inclusion. The project is a valuable asset to local communities and is helping to create a healthier, safer, and more inclusive society.

The latest iteration of the project is ambitious and is expected to add a further

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 To enable the Council to submit a grant application to the Football Foundation to secure significant external funding and subject to the application being successful, implement the delivery of PlayZone sites.

- 5.2 The opportunity to deliver these impressive PlayZone facilities in Fenland is a once in a decade opportunity with significant funding being provided by the Football Foundation.
- 5.3 These facilities are needed by our local communities. The benefits are significant and with Fenland identified as a priority area for the funding it is an opportunity to support our local communities with their health and physical activity, reduce anti-social behaviour, increase community cohesion and support under served groups with enjoyable opportunities to be active.

6 CONSULTATION

Please see the Schedule at the foot of this report.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Given the funding from the Football Foundation there is no alternative approach to this programme, other than doing nothing.
- 7.2 With regard to delivery locations of PlayZones, locations within towns was the only real possibility for this programme. In order for the facilities to be used regularly and generate the necessary income to ensure they remain viable on a year to year basis, a town setting, close to larger communities is necessary.
- 7.3 Chatteris already has several multi-use games areas within the town's open spaces, as well as significant synthetic turf pitch provision open to the community at Cromwell Community College. Given current provision in the town it was considered that other locations would offer more members of the community opportunities to be active that already exist in Chatteris.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal Implications

- 8.2 The procurement of a contractor to deliver the proposed PlayZone sites is consistent with the stated aims and objectives of the Council, specifically;
- Communities; Promoting health and wellbeing for all
 - Economy; Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the District

- 8.3 The procurement exercises will be conducted to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Procedure Regulations and the Public Contracts Regulations and supported by relevant officers.

8.4 Financial Implications

- 8.5 The total value of the funding application to the FF is for grant funding of approx. £375,000 to support the development of the two PlayZone sites. The Football Foundation will pay for 75% of the facility costs, leaving the authority to find the remainder. Each facility will cost approximately £250,000. With two facilities in tranche one, this would leave a capital sum of £125,000 to find in partnership funding.

- 8.6 It is important to note that if the grant were unsuccessful then the scheme would not be able to progress.
- 8.7 A bid will be made to the FCC COMMUNITY ACTION FUND grant scheme for the proposed Whittlesey Manor project. FDC has been successful in the past with this funding scheme and with the 75% partnership funding from Football Foundation, this project will look positive to other funders such as FCC COMMUNITY ACTION FUND. If that application was unsuccessful then the £62,500 would need to be found elsewhere.
- 8.8 The project at Barton Road in Wisbech will add a significant additional opportunity for local people to be active. This scheme fits precisely into the Government's Long Term Plans for Town (LTPT) programme as it delivers significant match funding levered in by the LTPT fund and offers opportunities for reducing anti-social behaviour through positive distraction activities. The Town Board has previously stated their commitment to reducing anti-social behaviour in Wisbech and this is an ideal project for the Board to support. As well as the capital element, the Board could also utilise the new facility to run sessions to engage people away from anti-social activity. It should be noted that the Government has yet to confirm the process for continued work on the LTPT's initiative, and any support from Wisbech Town Board is dependent on both the Board's approval to support, as well as Government continuing to move the LTPT initiative forwards.

If the Wisbech Town Board did not support the programme, or the Government did not continue the planned LTPT initiative, development of the facility in Barton Road would then require alternative capital support of approximately £62,500.

8.9 Equality Implications

This programme seeks to reduce health inequalities by providing more opportunities to be physically active and will positively target underserved groups in the community.

9 SCHEDULES

PlayZone consultation report.

SCHEDULE 1
PlayZone Community Consultation Report

PLAYZONE FRAMEWORK – APPLICANT GUIDE

2023 - 2027





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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to introduce the Football Foundation Framework for delivering PlayZones. This document explains what the Framework is and the process of using it.

The Football Foundation has developed the Framework as a 'turnkey' package that ensures best value for the level of quality required of grant funded projects. The Foundation has procured three roles, to support the national delivery of PlayZones between 2023 - 2027:

- PlayZone Framework Management Consultant (PFMC) services.
- Specialist Testing Consultant (STC); and
- PlayZone Provider (PZP) for the supply & Installation of facilities.

Each lot of the Framework Alliance was procured through a fully compliant open-procurement process through the United Kingdom's Find a Tender procurement rules.



PLAYZONE CONCEPT (FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY)

The Framework Alliance will provide end-to-end services for the Applicant which includes the management, design, manufacture, supply and installation of the PlayZone as well as other site-wide construction works in connection with the provision of the facility. It will also provide contract administration, cost management, Health & Safety compliance and independent testing to meet the framework quality standards.

Each PlayZone will be allocated into a regional Lot. The FMC and STC will be provided by the same company across each region. However, there is a different contractor for each of the three regional lots. The regions are as follows:

- Northwest and Midlands
- Northeast and Yorkshire
- East of England, London, and South

This is the first iteration of this Framework but has adopted many of the lessons learned from our AGP Framework which is in its third iteration, having first been established in 2011. The Framework adopts Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) to



provide you with the best solution, through first class customer support and innovative design. It is a provider-led framework, with one point of responsibility placed with the provider for the delivery of your PlayZone, including associated items such as, floodlights, fencing and sports and maintenance equipment.

Applicants will also benefit from a robust warranty for the completed PlayZone from the PlayZone Providers.



2. THE FRAMEWORK PROCESS

Stage 1 - Project Brief

The Football Foundation's Delivery Manager or PlayZone Officer will undertake an initial meeting(s) to discuss the project brief which will then form the basis of the Project Information Form (PIF) and determine if your project is suitable to progress to the next step in the application process. They will also discuss with you:

- The principal terms and conditions of any funding arrangements.
- The full scope of your requirements and the requirements of a Framework project.
- Potential site constraints.
- The terms of reference for the Framework Managing Consultant (FMC) and the Specialist Testing Consultant (STC) including duties and form of appointment.
- The standard contractual arrangements and processes to be followed.
- An understanding of what makes up the total project costs.
- The high-level programme / likely delivery timescales.

In addition to the above you will also be provided with access to a suite of information about the Framework as well as the opportunity if required to discuss in more detail via an online meeting with our Framework Manager (FM) to allow you to make an informed decision that the process is right for you.

The information you can access will include a copy of the Framework Alliance Contract (FAC-1). The FAC-1 is a contract based on collaboration and all parties sign up to it as Alliance Members. It is important to note that within the contract the Football Foundation is referred to as "The Client" and you will join the contract for the duration of the project as an "Additional Client". You will do this by signing a "Joining Agreement (JA)" which will enable you to award a contract to the PZP.

The JA will be issued by the TPE for your execution at the same time the TPE will undertake a review of your security of tenure for the site and also instruct the Specialist Survey Company (SC) to carry out a desktop review and utility search of the site. Once you have signed the JA and entered the Framework the project can then move to Stage 2.



Stage 2 – Feasibility

On completion of Stage 1 and provided no concerns site issues/constraint have been identified on the completion of the desktop review and utility search of the site. The TPE will then be in a position to instruct the SC to undertake an initial set of standard site surveys based on rates pre-agreed with the Foundation. The cost of these as well as the desktop review and utility search of the site will be covered by the Football Foundation. These will typically include:

- Intrusive Ground Investigation (such as trial pitting or driven tube sampling)
- Drainage capacity survey
- Laboratory testing
- Topographical survey
- Electrical capacity survey
- For refurbishment projects a specialist survey that determines the make-up of the existing pitch and its base construction.

You will be provided with a copy of all of the standard site surveys and reports for your records which will also be sent to the PFMC by the TPE including an instruction to proceed to Stage 3.

It is important to note that further surveys may be required dependant on the outcome of the initial standard site surveys or at the request of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and will form part of the PZP's Pre-Contract Services Agreement (PCSA).



Stage 3 – Appointment of PFMC and Instruction of PZP

The appointment of the PlayZone Framework Managing Consultant (FMC) is a very important part of the process as they provide a unique mix of independent services that are consistent, cost effective and removes the need for you to appoint any other consultant.

The fees for the FMC will be paid for directly by the Football Foundation and you will contract with the FMC through a Collateral Warranty. A Collateral Warranty is a contract between the consultant (warrantor) and its client (beneficiary). Essentially, they are a 'workaround' to create a direct contractual link which may not otherwise exist.

Who is the FMC?

The FMC is EDGE - a national construction and property consultant which has a dedicated PlayZones Framework team based across their regional offices. During Stage 3 The FMC will:

- Ensure the brief and feasibility is robust.
- Produce a budget estimate for your project.
- Notify the PZP
- Arrange the 'Kick Off' meeting with the Applicant/AC, PZP and FF
- Produce the Employers Requirements document.
- Gather and review Health & Safety information.
- Compile the 1st Stage tender documents.
- Formalise the appointment of the Supplier based on the PCSA.
- Perform the role of Employer's Agent, Cost manager and CDM Advisor during the Construction phase.

A "Two Stage Design and Build" Direct Award Approach

The PZPs are within a "Multiple Provider" framework with a single provider in each region (lot). The method of awarding works to the PZP will be by the use of the "Direct Award Procedure" this approach was procured through a fully compliant open-procurement process and under the procurement rules of the United Kingdom's Public Procurement using the Find a Tender Service.

As the name suggests there is no competitive process to be undertaken in the award of a contract to the PZP. However, it is a requirement that the appointed PZP demonstrates value for money through competition. This is achieved in two ways:- Original Tendered Rates and Supply Chain Tendering which will all be reviewed by the PFMC to ensure compliance and best value is achieved before agreement of the Contract Sum.

Who are the PlayZone Providers?

The Foundation has procured three specialist sports pitch contractors as part of the PlayZones Framework. These are Contractors who embody the values of the



Foundation and will work as part of an integrated project team to deliver mutual objectives for successful project outcomes. The three contractors are:

- Cleveland Land Services (CLS)
- Support in Sport (SIS Pitches)
- McArdle Sport

Each Provider procured is part and has signed up to the Framework Alliance, as an Alliance Member and are expected to work collaboratively with each other, in achieving several Framework Objectives, those being:

- Environmental Considerations
- Training & Employment
- Local Supply Chain Engagement
- Commitment to Framework Initiatives
- Commitment to Framework Collaboration

As mentioned above the PZPs are within a “Multiple Provider” framework with a single provider in each region (lot) as per the below:

- Lot 1 – Cleveland Land Services (CLS) - Northeast and Yorkshire
- Lot 2 – Support in Sport (SIS Pitches) - Northwest and Midlands
- Lot 3 – McArdle Sport - East of England, London, and South

The relevant PZP will be notified of the project based on its geographical location and provided with all of the project information gathered to date ahead on the “Kick Off” meeting which will be arranged by the PFMC and attended by the Applicant/AC, PZP and Foundation.



Stage 4 – Design Development, Planning and Contract Sum

Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA)

On award of the PCSA contract, the PZP shall then work collaboratively with the Project Team to develop its detailed design proposals and prepare and submit a full planning application to the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

The PZP is entitled to a fee for the PCSA works and as the Additional Client, you will be responsible for the payment of this. This is a fixed fee with slight variance across the PZP's but will no more than £13k exc VAT however, should further surveys be required these would attract additional cost. It should be noted that this is an eligible project cost which can be included as part of your partnership funding towards the project.

What can I expect from the PFMC in this stage?

During this stage the FMC will complete the following tasks:

- Draft the contract documentation incorporating the PCSA
- Agree the project programme
- Work collaboratively with the PZP to ensure the project will deliver Best Value and agree the final Contract Sum
- Check and challenge the detailed design process
- Complete duties under Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

The PCSA includes three key workstreams and an overview of these is as follows:

Planning

The PZP once any additional surveys and the detailed design has been completed will submit a planning application to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on your behalf. The PZP will be responsible for responding to any queries from the LPA and for discharging any conditions of award. Depending on the approach taken by the LPA, your project will either require:

- No planning application (likely only applicable for some refurbishment projects)
- A minor application
- A full application

If a minor application is required, then it is expected that the application will be decided within 8 weeks of the validation date. However, if the LPA decides that a full application will be required, then the statutory period for determining the application is 13 weeks. Should the approval from the LPA be awarded with any pre-commencement conditions then this will need to be discharged and can potentially add a further ten weeks to the programme this process seeks to avoid this where possible due to the early involvement of the PZP.



On submission of the planning application to the LPA the PZP will raise an invoice for payment by you as the Additional Client for works completed to date under the PCSA.

Tender / Pricing

Once the planning application has been submitted the FMC and PZP will commence the process for agreeing the "Contract Sum". The FMC will collate all project information along with finalising the Employer's Requirements, call-off contracts, warranties and any other information. It is then issued to the PZP for pricing and once returned to the FMC, their role is to ensure that the submission is compliant with the tendered Framework rates and ensure best value this is also referred to as Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP 1).

At the same time the project will be moving through the planning process where additional surveys maybe be requested by the LPA during the planning consultation period which will be undertaken by the PZP in order to achieve a successful decision. Once planning permission is obtained and the design finalised all project costs are therefore identified resulting in an agreed "Contract Sum" also referred to as Guaranteed Maxim Price (GMP 2) which is then fixed for the duration of the Project. (Subject to any agreed provisional sum allowances or client changes).

On receipt of the planning permission the PZP will raise an invoice for payment by you as the Additional Client for the final balance of the works completed under the PCSA or they may choose to incorporate this within the Contract Sum.

Contract

The conclusion of this process results in an agreed contract that is ready for execution subject to a successful grant award from the Foundation. The PFMC will manage the execution process between the Applicant/AC and the PZP.

During this stage you will submit your grant application to the Football Foundation.



Stage 5 – Grant Award / Construction

Grant Award

Should you receive an offer of a grant from the Football Foundation the project is then in position to move forward, and the construction phase can begin once any conditions of grant award or planning pre-commencement have been discharged.

At the start of this stage the FMC will prepare an "instruction to proceed" based on the previously agreed JCT Design and Build (2016) contract and ensure that all parties have executed the contract, which will enable the mobilisation period of the PZP to commence for the delivery of the PlayZone.

Construction

During this stage the PZP takes responsibility for the successful delivery of your PlayZone. This stage will begin with a pre-start meeting at your site. The meeting will be chaired by the PFMC and you will be invited to attend, along with the Foundation and the PZP. It is an opportunity to:

- Clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of communication.
- Handover outstanding documents and issue outstanding information
- Discuss the programme and agree start and completion dates.
- Agree procedures for dealing with queries and issuing instructions.
- Agree site access procedures and issues.
- Agree meeting schedules, meeting structures and attendees.

Once the project commences on site, the PFMC will undertake regular site visits and will provide updates which cover the following items:

- Health & Safety
- Project progress
- Commercial update
- Risks

The PZP, FMC and STC are all bound by the terms of the Framework agreement which dictates the processes that they must follow and the quality standards that they must meet.

Who is the Specialist Testing Consultant?

Sports Labs are leading international experts in sports surface development and testing. They are fully accredited and certify hundreds of products for FIFA, World Rugby, and Fédération Internationale de Hockey in addition to countless other quality control tests.

During construction the STC will visit your site and complete Key Stage Inspections (KSI) to ensure the construction of your pitch is to a high standard and meets the Framework requirements. The PZP cannot move on to the next stage of construction



until it has successfully passed the KSI. Ultimately the STC will test and certify your pitch to the required standards of PlayZones.

The fees for the STC's services which are under the umbrella of the PFMC will again be paid directly by the Football Foundation and you will be provided with a Collateral Warranty.



Stage 6 - Handover

This is the really exciting stage when your new pitch is handed over to you and play can begin on the PlayZone.

At or just prior to the Handover date the STC will undertake the all-important quality tests and certify that the pitch has been completed in line with the Framework Quality Standards. They will also undertake final checks to ensure that the Floodlight installation meets the required performance standards, and they will do their own initial snagging inspection.

On hand-over day the PFMC will arrange a site meeting which the Project Team will attend. The PFMC and STC will both inspect the PlayZone and list any 'snagging' items that will need to be rectified under the terms of the contract.

During the meeting the Operation and Maintenance Manual and Health & Safety File will be provided to you for future reference on all the construction, product and maintenance details. You will also be shown how to maintain your PlayZone as well as the use of the new maintenance equipment (if applicable) that is provided as part of the Framework.

At the end of the meeting the PFMC will ask you for feedback on the framework process so that any lessons learned can be fed back to the Framework Alliance members for the purposes of continuous improvement of the Framework. You will also be asked to provide a score against various success measures which will form part of the PZP performance management process.

Once all the tests and checks are complete, the PFMC will issue a Practical Completion Certificate which brings the construction phase of the project to an end and possession of the site will pass back into your control and the PlayZone can then be used.

You will then be able to plan your opening event to showcase your fantastic new facility.



Stage 7 - Defects Period

This stage lasts for 12 months following hand-over and is known as the 'Defects Period'. During this time should your new pitch show any defects you should notify the PFMC, who will record each issue and create a defects list. If the issue needs early / urgent attention, the PFMC will arrange for the PZP to attend site and correct said defect, otherwise the list of issues will be addressed at the end of the defects period. You will retain 3% of the Contract Sum for this 12-month period to ensure the PZP returns to remedy any defects promptly. At the end of this stage the PFMC will return to site, carry out a final inspection and issue the final making good of defects completion certificate. At this time the PFMC will also certify that the retention sum should be released, and you will receive a final PZP invoice for this amount.



3. General

The Construction Contract

The overall approach to project delivery is “Two-Stage Design & Build”. The articles of Agreement and Conditions of Contract will be the JCT Minor Works Design and Build Contract (2016) (incorporating Pre-Construction Services).

The main objective of using a two-stage design & build approach to the Framework is to secure the early involvement of the PZP and to establish relationships between you and the team that will be designing and delivering your project.

By coming on board at an early stage and knowing that they will eventually be appointed to build the new or refurbished PlayZone, the PZP will be more willing and able to commit its resources to the project.

Using the PZPs expertise will enable the Project Team to determine the best approach to the individual project in terms of buildability and efficiency to deliver the most optimal technical and economical design solution.

By developing the detailed design and preparing the planning application, the PZP will gain an early and detailed understanding of your project and any opportunities or constraints that need to be addressed. It will also enable a more proactive approach to dealing with any planning conditions as these can be identified and addressed at a much earlier stage.

Mitigation of risks

All forms of procurement have an element of risk but different approaches will place the burden of risk on different parties to the contract. The proposed approach to the Framework through the combination of the Framework Alliance Contract and the two stage D&B contract seeks to share and manage risk within a controlled environment.



FAQs

Before being awarded a grant what is my risk?

The Foundation requires a good level of certainty that a project can be delivered before it commits to awarding a grant. Each project requires cost certainty and planning approval and there are obviously costs involved in getting to this stage. To share the risk of this the Foundation has committed to covering the costs of the base surveys and the consultancy services. Your share of the risk is the cost of the PZP's Pre-Construction Services (PCSA). The Foundation has negotiated a fixed fee for this work which incorporates the development of the design and the planning application stage. However, this stage may require further surveys at the request of the LPA, for example these could include Traffic Impact Assessments, Ecology or Noise Impact surveys and are very much site dependent. The cost for such surveys does not form part of the fixed fee and would be an additional cost to you.

What happens if I decide not to continue with the project pre-contract?

If, through circumstances within your control, you decide not to continue with the project prior to the construction contract having been signed, the Foundation reserves the right to seek payment for any costs it has incurred. Should it be for circumstances beyond your control the Foundation will not seek recompense.

How do we guarantee Best Value?

In order to provide you with a facility that represents high quality for the best value, the Framework has been procured via a fully compliant open-procurement process and under the procurement rules of the United Kingdom's Public Procurement using the Find a Tender Service. This means:

- The PFMC and STC are single provider Lots that were procured based on an "all market" compliant tender process and the resulting fee levels are fixed at very competitive levels which are far lower than would be the case if procuring individual consultants for each project.
- The PZP Lot was also procured via an "all market" competitive tender process and this has fixed the PZPs preliminary costs, at rates that are lower than they would be if each site was procured individually.
- During the tender/pricing stage the PFMC will work closely with the preferred supplier to identify value for money within supply chain quotations and ensure they inline with the "Framework Rates".

What if there is a disagreement with the PZP?

In the spirit and ethos of the Framework any contractual matters such as delays, variations or claims will be dealt with via discussion and agreement between the parties and a formal contractual approach will only be taken in the unlikely event that a formal dispute arises.



Glossary of Terms

Design & Build (D&B) – This form of procurement works on the basis that the main contractor is responsible for undertaking both the design and construction work on a project, for an agreed lump-sum price.

Early Contractor Environment (ECI) - ECI allows the PZP to be appointed under a two-stage contract before details of what is to be constructed have been fully developed. This enables the PZP to take part in the design development and construction planning stage of a project. This approach supports improved team working, innovation and planning.

Employer's Agent - In construction the term 'employer's agent' is used to describe an agent acting on behalf of the client as the contract administrator for design and build contracts.

Framework - A general phrase for agreements with providers that set out terms and conditions under which agreements for specific purchases (known as call-off contracts) can be made throughout the term of the agreement - in particular regarding price, quality and the quantity envisaged.

PlayZone Framework Management Consultant (PFMC) - Acts in the role of Employer's Agent and cost consultant as part of an integrated team with the appointed PZP to deliver the pitch to standards set-out in the Framework.

Find a Tender Service - The United Kingdom's public procurement rules which apply to any public purchases above the defined thresholds.

Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) - A guaranteed maximum price contract sets a limit, or maximum price, that the Additional Client will have to pay their PZP, regardless of the actual costs incurred. In its simplest form, a guaranteed maximum price contract simply puts a cap on the contract price that can't be exceeded.

Pre-Contract Services Agreement (PCSA) - A method for appointing a PZP to carry out pre-construction services under a two-stage tender process. A PCSA enables the contractor to collaborate with the client or their team of consultants to develop detailed designs and buildability as well as preparing for the construction phase, such as the programme.

PlayZone - A safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor facility that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports.

PlayZone Provider – A specialist sports pitch/facility contractor that will carry out the detailed and technical designs, obtains statutory consents and supplies and installs the PlayZone including any associated works and services.



Project Brief - A high- level document that clearly sets out the overarching goals and requirements for the project and any special requirements or constraints that may impact on the design and management of the facility.


Project Team - You, the Foundation, FMC, STC and the PZP make up the Project Team.

Specialist Testing Consultant (STC) - Independent organisation that tests the construction of the PlayZone at key stages throughout the project.

**For more information, please email:
sam.jones@footballfoundation.org.uk**



Agenda Item 8

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 November 2024	
Report Title:	PROPOSED INCREASE TO CURRENT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE TABLE OF FARES	

1 Summary

- 1.1 To review the deferred decision made during the previous Cabinet meeting on 30th September 2024 and consider the results following a further consultation with the Taxi trade.

2 Key issues

- 2.1 The current review was instigated following a request with support by others from the taxi trade for an increase to the Table of Fares.
- 2.2 An increase in the Taxi tariff, is subject to a 14-day notice period in the newspaper whereby we can receive objections and/or comments.
- 2.3 Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976 gives Local Authorities power to determine maximum rates and fares charged by Hackney Carriages.
- 2.4 The last table of fares were amended in 2022.
- 2.5 To be clear the Taxi trade can charge less than this amount if they would like to do so as the proposed charges are discretionary.
- 2.6 The table of fares applies only to Hackney Carriage vehicles. Private Hire Operators can agree their hiring charges in advance with their customers at the time of booking the journey
- 2.7 It is at the discretion of the Council as the Licensing Authority to set a Table of Fares for licensed Hackney Carriages operating within the district if it chooses to do so

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 For Cabinet to decide whether to support the recommendation from the Licensing Committee and implement the previously proposed fee increase or to take no action at this time and to instead determine whether and when a further review should take place as a result of this process.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Sam Hoy, Portfolio holder with responsibilities for licensing shoy@fenland.gov.uk
Report Originator(s)	Michelle Bishop - Licensing Manager, mbishop@fenland.gov.uk
Contact Officer(s)	Amy Brown, Assistant Director abrown@fenland.gov.uk Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director, 01354 654321, pcatchpole@fenland.gov.uk
Background Paper(s)	Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 Part Two

Report:

1 Background and Intended Outcomes

- 1.1** On the 10 July 2024, Licensing Committee met to review and consider the responses received to the proposed increase in the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares. All information relating to the request and the Committee discussion can be found at [Agenda for Licensing Committee on Wednesday, 10th July, 2024, 1.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)
- 1.2** This decision was then referred to Cabinet on 30 September 2024. During this meeting, the decision was deferred, all information relating to this meeting, including the agenda and decision can be found at [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 30th September, 2024, 2.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)
- 1.3** Following the Cabinet meeting a further consultation was held with the Taxi trade only, the purpose of this consultation was to ensure all queries were clear on the proposed tariff and subsequent % increase.
- 1.4** The consultation was emailed out and then followed up with any non-responses. During the time period for consultation, we received a total of 62 responses. 17 of these were in favour of the increase and 44 opposed with 1 unclear. A further objection letter was received outside the consultation period but as an exception was included for consideration. There were 16 signatories to the letter however 10 of the signatories had already submitted individual responses so only 6 additional responses were added to the total figure.
- A copy of the results including comments can be found at **APPENDIX A**
- 1.5** The Council has 133 Licensed Vehicles, they are split into 76 Hackney Carriage and 57 Private Hire.
- 1.6** The Private Hire and Taxi Monthly (PHTM), a national taxi trade publication, produces a monthly league table of all UK Council hackney carriage fares. This league table shows that Fenland District Council's current fare tariff, for a 2-mile journey, sits in 283rd place out of 341 licencing authorities listed. The standard measure for the purpose of making comparisons is a 2-mile journey and this is why that measure has been used for the purpose of compiling this and previous reports. The percentage and ranking does vary for longer journeys.

2 Legal Considerations

- 2.1** Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976 gives Local Authorities power to determine maximum rates and fares charged by Hackney Carriages.
- 2.2** Article 7, paragraph 1.1 of the Council's Constitution specifies that Cabinet will carry out all of the Council's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council, whether by law or under this Constitution. Paragraph 2.4 of Article 4 of the Constitution specifies the functions which are reserved to Full Council, of which tariff setting is not one. Similarly, neither has this function been otherwise delegated nor does it come within the functions which must not be the responsibility of a local authority's executive by law. It was therefore advised that Cabinet would be the correct forum via which the decision in relation to the tariff setting could be made.

3 Equality Implications

- 3.1** We will ensure the Council has regard to the desirability of exercising its functions with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to increase equality of opportunity.

4 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

- 4.1** Any decision to increase taxi fares would have a positive impact on the taxi trade, primarily economically.
- 4.2** In addition, the report has identified the balance that is required to be struck by supporting our taxi trade and not exposing users of taxis to such an increase in fares, that would lead to journeys becoming too expensive, thus having social implications linked to a lack of social mobility, and economic implications by additional money having to be spent on transport.
- 4.3** Members should note that the tariff is the maximum permitted fare that can be charged, and that vehicle proprietors can choose to charge less should they wish. The tariff is only applicable to Hackney Carriages, and not Private Hire Vehicles.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1** For Cabinet to decide whether to support the recommendation from Licensing Committee to implement the proposed fee increase or take no action at this time and instead, having regard to the representations received, consider whether and when a further review should take place as a result of this process.

6 Schedules

- 6.1** Appendix A - Consultation Responses
- 6.2** Appendix B - Consultation response letter

APPENDIX A

Response No.	Date responded	HC/PH Driver	HC/PH Vehicle	In agreement with new tariff - Y/N	Comments
1	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Why do we need this change I personally think the charges are fine as they are as I personally would not pay the rates for the new proposed changes. Why do we need this change I personally think the charges are fine as they are as I personally would not pay the rates for the new proposed changes. Gd morning as previous email I don't agree with the price increase so I have amended a copy of the tariff to which I believe is a reasonable fare to charge.
2	11/10/24	HC	HCV	Yes	Yes, I agree with proposed new tariff.
3	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	I do not agree in the proposed new tariff. It will be dangerous for the trade to have some drivers charging the new proposed rate.
4	11/10/24	PH	PHV	No	Disagree, we are already losing school contracts because we are undercut. No I disagree with proposed tariff, I don't understand if you do not have to charge it why change it ?
5	11/10/24	N/A	Op	No	1) Increase too steep. 2) Disagree with 8pm as family time/factory workers hometime. Will attract illegal taxis and taxis from out of the district. See email for more.
6	11/10/2024	Operator	Op	No	Hi, I disagree with the new proposed Tariff.
7	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	No
8	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Totally disagree with all proposed changes especially the 20.00 price increase as it's not an unsociable hour to increase the charges
9	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Totally disagree with the changes. It's a dying business in a dying town.
10	11/10/24	HC	HCV	No	No strongly disagree with the increase please advise me if this goes through do I have to update my meter or can I leave it at the old rate .
11	11/10/24	HC	PHV	No	No I strongly disagree with this tariff increase
12	11/10/24	HC	PHV	No	Please note that both of us object in the strongest terms to the new tariff proposed by Fenland District Council. While you state that this would take us to number 112 in the ranking table it should be noted that this is based only on a 2 mile journey. Thereafter we would become one of the highest tariffs in the country per mile travelled after the first 2 miles. We cannot understand why Fenland District Council would even consider setting such a high tariff in an area of high deprivation
13	11/10/24	HC	N/A	No	Further to my email I would like to add the following. I believe my statement is totally correct after the 1st mile has been travelled the amount per mile rises from £2.20 per mile to £3.30 per mile and as stated that represents an increase of 50% on the chargeable amount allowed following the first mile.
14	12/10/24	HC	HCV	Yes	Yes I am in agreement with the new proposed tariff
15	13/10/24	HC	N/A	Yes	Thanks for your email Yes I agree with the proposed Tariff changes
16	14/10/24	HC	HCV	No	No disagree with the proposed NEW increase
17	14/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Against the proposed rise.

18	14/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Good morning i am opposing the fare increase reasons are as follows; we as traders in march need time for the public to get used to the new taxis rank/ranks as we have been hit very hard by the regen work an any increase would do more harm than good. It would be nice to regain the publics confidence in taxis an taxi rank which will take a while specially for the old folk as a lot of then dont do online. Then when town is back up an running an the public get used to the rank being in diff parts of town, the situation could be reassessed thanks
19	14/10/24	HC	HCV	Yes	Yes in agreement with the proposed NEW tariff
20	14/10/24	HC	HCV	No	I wish to object to the proposal of the new taxi price fare increase.
21	14/10/24	HC	HCV	No	This shows how complicated the process is for the general public to understand. I am totally opposed to this new fare increase. There are also two options available - choose "yes" or choose "no" , in my opinion there should have been a third option for annual reviews. which have been asked for in the past, that should be directly discussed by a working panel to include officers and drivers/operators. Then to "agree" a new tariff that should be put forward to full council. I am also opposed to the decision being purely made by Cabinet.
22	14/10/24	HC	N/A	Yes	Yes we agree to the proposed changes
23	14/10/24	HC	N/A	No	Hi when my taxi licence runs out in December I am not going to renew it as the work around wisbech is not there any more was having to work up yo 15hours to make it pay and now the rates are to be going up again it only gonna get worse as people not going to be able to afford a cab any more a a 4 mile trip for an oap to go shopping is gonna cost them £14+ I think it is crazy I'm not out to rob people
24	15/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Hi ...as for the taxi consultation as i replied previously I am against this increase at the present time and think the current tarrif is ok thanks you
25	15/10/24	HC		Yes	Yes. In agreement with this proposal
26	15/10/24	HC		yes	That would be very good idea if the council can implement it to relieve stress from the drivers I support this proposal
27	15/10/24	HC		yes	Yes
28	15/10/24	HC		yes	Yes I agree with the proposed new tariff. I do think that this would've been a good opportunity to add a fair 6/8seater tariff, as that does need to be looked at.
29	15/10/24	HC		yes	Hi , yes we agree to the new tariff.
30	15/10/24	HC		No	I disagree
31	15/10/24	HC		No	No disagree with the proposed NEW increase
32	15/10/24	HC		yes	Yes agree with new tariff.

33	15/10/24	HC		No	<p>You already know if you change the mileage rate by such a huge amount it will kill the Hackney carriage trade when we are already struggling due to the private hires perhaps if you made private hires operate from installed meters and are on the same footing and tariff as Hackney carriages then their wouldn't be such an issue with these proposed changes . Despite you saying it's the maximum a Hackney cab can charge most of us rely on our meter to charge the customers correctly all this will make us struggle even more perhaps if you clamped down on the amount of private hires that aren't licensed in fenland from operating in this area working for certain companies with their app system that might be a good place to start before bringing in any changes! Whilst I agree Hackney carriages should have a rise in fares perhaps in line with inflation the 45 percent mileage increase is ludicrous ! When I was licensed in Poole Dorset all the taxis and private hires operated from the same rates it was all</p> <p>Done via meters all set to the same tariff why can't it be the same here ?</p> <p>Also surely a mainly private hire company with a meter on its app</p> <p>Is surely against the current legislation.or aren't we supposed to state this ?</p> <p>Yours currently very disgruntled.. Ps it also might help if you actually put a Hackney rank in March along broad street or in the town itself as the current one on station road is not fit for purpose and at least 90 percent of the time a taxi can't even use it as the general public use it for parking</p>
34	15/10/24	HC		yes	Yes
35	15/10/24	HC		No	<p>I am happy with 11pm, if it changes to 8pm people will be unhappy and not book taxis. I do not want to change the tarif.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
36	15/10/24	HC		yes	Yes
37	15/10/24	HC		No	<p>To whom it may concern</p> <p>Regards the proposed change to the increase in Hackney Carriage Fares.</p> <p>No I disagree with the proposed new increase.</p>
38	15/10/24	HC		No	No to the new tariff
39	15/10/24	PH		No	No
40	15/10/24	HC		No	No
41	15/10/24	HC		No	No
42	15/10/24	HC		No	No
43	15/10/24	HC		No	No need to stay the same
44	15/10/24	HC	HCV	No	To Whom It May Concern, No I disagree with the proposed increase in the Hackney Carriage Fares. Best Regards
45	15/10/24	HC		yes	Thank you, Hope it will be implemented soon as possible. Thank you. All Good, waiting for implementation
46	15/10/24	HC		No	I'm totally against any increases , they are not needed and not wanted
47	15/10/24	HC		No	Hi , I would still like to say no to this proposal. I don't think it's the right time for this sue peoples financial situation. This may kill the trade more than help it.
48	15/10/24	HC		No	No I disagree

49	15/10/24	N/A		No	I do not think the price increases are viable. Putting the prices up to the proposed rates would kill the trade. Business is hard enough without losing the regular customers we already have. I am not adverse to a slight increase as people paying by card cost the drivers money with card machine charges but to increase by the amount proposed would simply force drivers out of the trade because we would have no work. It certainly would not encourage new drivers and the public already complain about the lack of taxis. The problem isn't the fares it is that people looking into getting into the trade cannot afford it and the amount of hoops they have to jump though are unrealistic to the job. Routes they will never drive. Maybe making getting into the trade easier would increase custom and then a price increase wouldn't be such an issue. The cost of living has risen so a slight increase is realistic but not to the point the public cannot afford it and kills the trade. We pay alot every year to with the charges associated with being in the trade so i feel we should have some sort of imput in these decisions that will be acknowledged
50	15/10/24	HC		No	Hi , I not accept this new changes . I would like that this night rate still start from 11pm , not from 8pm .
51	15/10/24	HC		No	No disagree with the proposed NEW increase
52	16/10/24	HC		No	No i dont feel they need to be increased.
53	17/10/24	HC	HCV	Unsure	Good afternoon, First of all to the new meter prices lam unsure so won't be answering a yes or no thank you.
54	17/10/24	HC	HCV	No	No I think the new charges will be counter productive as people are struggling with the cost of living
55	17/10/24	HC	HCV	yes	Agree with new tariff
56	17/10/24	HC	HCV	No	Good morning, I completely disagree to the proposed new rates. I do agree there should be a slight increase as most customers pay by card and so the card reader companies take a percentage. The customers are struggling to afford Taxis and to increase by that much would kill the taxi trade.

57	17/10/24				<p>I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed increases in Hackney tariff charges. I believe these changes will significantly harm the residents of Fenland, who depend on local taxis for essential transportation, especially amid the ongoing cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Many residents rely on taxis for shopping and commuting, and any fare increases could lead to them seeking alternative, less reliable transportation options. This shift would further impact the local taxi trade negatively.</p> <p>Moreover, the local economy in Fenland, particularly in March, has not recovered to pre-COVID levels. With fewer people dining and socializing out, the proposed tariff changes, especially the adjustment of peak charges starting at 20:00 instead of 23:00, will deter even more residents from using taxis during the evenings. The removal of the taxi rank in the town center has already frustrated residents and reduced the number of available fares, exacerbating the situation.</p> <p>Additionally, claims that fare increases will attract more Hackney carriage drivers lack substantiation. The substantial startup costs—meter installation, badges, and vehicle acquisition—far outweigh any potential revenue from higher fares. These barriers, coupled with a declining local economy and inadequate taxi infrastructure, will deter both new and existing drivers from remaining in the trade.</p> <p>Furthermore, the proposed changes impose additional costs on current drivers for meter recalibrations and lost revenue during these transitions. The mention of a forthcoming “tidy-up” of tariffs will only add to the financial burden if done separately.</p> <p>Finally, I am concerned that these changes primarily serve the interests of private hire companies at the expense of Hackney carriage drivers. This shift could unfairly disadvantage local operators who are already struggling.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.</p>
58	17/10/24	HC		No	No I disagree with the proposed new increase
59	18/10/24	HC		No	<p>Please be advised I do not agree to the proposed tariffs.</p> <p>I think the prices do need to go up but not by much. Just enough to cover rising expenses but not too much that we lose custom.</p>

					<p>I would like to strongly disagree with the proposed NEW increase.</p> <p>In the current financial climate the proposed increases will ensure further decline in our trade.</p> <p>Increasing the rate, will reduce the amount of customer able to use Taxi's, making online Grocery shopping more appealing for example.</p> <p>This will in turn reduce the work available, resulting in a reduced income for all driver.</p> <p>How, I see it, it will then result in some drivers being unable to continue to keep their license,</p> <p>Which will mean you will then have a decline in number of Fenland taxi drivers, therefore hours covered will be reduced and fenland citizens not able to get a taxi for their important doctors, hospital or general weekly social visits.</p> <p>I feel confident to voice the above, regarding the decline in customers, because as I am sure you can appreciate Wisbech is a small town, and customers are already fearing the increase, hoping it will not happen. However, as you can imagine, I have spoken to many other drivers who feel as strongly as myself, so I hope they have expressed their worries and concerns.</p> <p>Also moving to the 2nd tariff at 8pm will again put another reason customers cannot afford to use a taxi on a night out.</p> <p>working a two tariff systems; some using some not is not a workable option</p> <p>Although we all want more money naturally, personally I feel this is not the time to be implementing such an increase.</p> <p>you are welcome to give me a call to discuss further.</p>
60	20/10/24	HC		No	
61	20/10/24	HC		yes	Yes, in agreement with the proposed new charges.
62	20/10/24	HC		yes	Would just like to say I am in agreement with the proposed new tariffs thank you
63	22/10/24	HC		No	Please see attached document - appendix B

Subject: Formal Objection to the Proposed Hackney Carriage Tariff Increase**22nd October 2024****Dear licencing**

We believe its wholly unreasonable and suspicious that we've been given only two options: either accept the proposed unprecedented tariff increase or nothing at all. Weve been told this increase would place us 6th out of 9 neighbouring authorities.

However, a simple fact-check of council tariff rates suggests otherwise. Below is a comparison of fares from neighbouring councils (Cambridge South not included due to unavailable data):

BOLD = Highest price

	Fenland	South Holland	King Lynn & WN	East Cambs	Huntingdon -shire	Peterborough	Cambridge City
2 miles	7.50	6.15	7.00	6.80	8.01	6.00	8.35
5 miles	17.40	11.55	13.00	13.40	15.93	12.00	15.40
10 miles	33.90	20.55	23.00	24.40	29.13	22.00	27.15
20 miles	66.90	38.55	43.00	46.40	55.53	42.00	50.65
30 miles	99.99	56.55	63.00	68.40	81.93	62.00	74.15

Apart from the 2-mile journey, the proposed FDC tariff is significantly higher than *all* neighbouring councils. Averaging the bordering rates highlights the true extent of this disparity:

	Ave	FDC % +
2 miles	£7.05	+ 6.4%
5 miles	£13.54	+ 28%
10 miles	£24.37	+ 39%
20 miles	£46.02	+ 45%
30 miles	£67.67	+ 48%
	Average %	+ 42%*

(*Ave% = difference in value of total fares / by total value of Ave neighbouring fares)

This raises a crucial question: why is FDC proposing a tariff increase that averages 42% higher than neighbouring councils, while misleading us to believe we would only rank 6th locally?

The council claims this increase will attract more drivers, but where is the evidence? In March, drivers have faced significant challenges, from COVID-19 to town regeneration efforts leading to a decrease in business and market saturation. There seems to have been no consultation with the trade, and no data presented to suggest a significant unmet demand. Whose advice is the council acting on?

Cllr Hoy, the portfolio holder for licensing, reportedly said, "if I ever need a taxi... they are not available." Assuming this includes both taxis and Private Hire (PH) vehicles, why is there a shortage of PH drivers? They face no restrictions and can set their own fares. If an unrestricted PH system hasn't attracted more drivers, how will increasing the maximum Hackney Carriage (HC) tariff help?

Subject: Formal Objection to the Proposed Hackney Carriage Tariff Increase

Therefore, many of us believe this tariff increase is designed to benefit PH firms favoured by the council, making them appear more competitive. PH drivers often charge more than the legally capped taxi fares, leaving them looking uncompetitive. Then, without clear reasoning, the council suddenly proposes an unprecedented increase to our maximum tariff.

And yes, we know taxi drivers don't need to charge the full rate; however, without adjusting their fares this still allows private hire companies to market themselves as the cheaper option, even when that may not be true. Our concerns about this process are therefore amplified by:

1. The excessive nature of the proposed increase.
2. The lack of data supporting its stated purpose.
3. The misleading claim that we'd rank 6th locally.
4. The absence of a more moderate third option.
5. The shift from a full council vote to a cabinet decision.
6. The council's refusal to disclose who proposed this level of increase and why.

We must, therefore, demand the immediate halt of this flawed process and a more reasonable increase be proposed.

The letter of objection was signed by 16 individuals, 10 of whom had already submitted individual responses. This letter has therefore been counted as comprising 6 new objections.

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Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 November 2024	
Report Title:	Wisbech High Street Update	

1 Purpose / Summary

1.1 To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:

- Ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
- Progress regarding the options for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

2 Key Issues

2.1 24 High Street Construction Progress

2.2 Etec, FDC's main contractor, continues with the construction work on 24 High Street, Wisbech. Significant progress as at the time of writing (23 October) is as follows;

2.3 Second floor brick and blockwork are complete with front portion and façade complete to third floor level.

2.4 Floor joist installation to third floor complete and approx. 50% of third floor boarding complete.

2.5 First and second floor shell complete except timber partitions which are still to be started.

2.6 Brick pier repair to rear of number 23 level with blockwork walls however will need to all be replaced with reclaimed bricks and lime mortar, as signed off by the Conservation Officer.

Description of ongoing works being carried out:

- Blockwork and brickwork being laid.
- DPM ongoing.
- Scaffolding installed.
- Steel installation complete
- Further props removed as progression upwards continues – currently at third floor.
- Insulation installation ongoing.
- Cavity barrier installation ongoing
- Lintel installation ongoing.
- Brick repair to corner of number 23 ongoing.
- Windows delivered to site compound ready for installation

2.7 The expected completion date is currently March 2025 and that remains subject to negotiation with the contractor. The contractor has asked for an extension of time due to the laying of the slab and an additional slab

extension being required. This issue remains subject to discussion between the client and contractor, with no resolution expected in the short term.

2.8 The contractor also submitted a variation in cost due to the volume of bricks required for the build compared with those detailed in the original bill of quantities for the building. The issue of materials is now resolved with the cost to FDC less than half of the contractor's original claim.

2.9 As highlighted last month we anticipate a contractor claim for time incurred due to the differing frontages either side of 24 High Street. No claim has been received as yet to assess and respond to.

2.10 Images highlighting progress:



Front of site



Rear of site



Third floor blockwork progressing



First floor rear flat bedroom, looking back towards flat entrance door

2.11 11-12 High Street

2.12 The cost of developing a meaningful building in the space where 11-12 High Street formally stood remains considerable. Various options have been considered following the private developer pulling out due to affordability issues some 2 ½ years ago. It should be remembered that the private developer was buying the plot for £1 and would have received £1m in National Lottery Heritage Funding – and still could not make the project viable. Following discussions with Members, another option is being assessed for the space in terms of its cost.

2.13 Once a design has been settled on, the project will take several years to complete. Steps will include;

- Affordability; The cost of FDC's far smaller project at 24 High Street is around £3m. 11-12 is a space that is far larger – if this were built out the cost will exceed 24 High Street's significantly. Even a building on part of the plot will match – or exceed (given inflation in the past 18 months) the cost of 24 High Street. Potential funding partners such as the Wisbech Town Board, CPCA and National Lottery Heritage Fund will require an application process, associated governance and the time such processes take – with no guarantee of funding success.
- Designing the building.

- Planning permission – and the building is in a conservation area.
- Development of the specification for the building and the procurement pack for tender
- Tender, appointment of contractor, pre-contract period and the build itself. 24 High Street will take 2 years to construct due to the site difficulties and complexities, as well as the location of a compound away from the site and the High Street, meaning no road closures (unless very brief) are allowed.

Wards Affected	Medworth ward	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY21APR22/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Seaton Cllr Ian Benney Cllr Chris Boden	Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Originators	Phil Hughes Mark Greenwood	Head of Service Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects
Contact Officers	Phil Hughes Mark Greenwood Paul Medd Peter Catchpole	Head of Service Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects Chief Executive Corporate Director and S151 Officer
Background Papers		

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:
- Ongoing building work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
 - Progress regarding the viable options for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 This paper is for regular information regarding 2 key Council projects and does not require a Cabinet decision.

3 CONSULTATION

3.1 N/A

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Several options have been considered for 11-12 High Street. Revisions have taken place to try and deliver a project that is affordable, works with necessary consideration of the historic nature of the High Street in Wisbech and delivers a building that provides value to the town centre in terms of a shop and residential accommodation.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

None at this time.

5.2 Financial Implications

5.3 24 High Street; As highlighted in the report above, there will be a cost implication to the Council regarding original estimates of construction materials, their deployment and the associated prelim's and management costs for an extended period of work.

5.4 In addition, the issues regarding the building slab has caused a delay. This remains a key point of discussion between the contractor and FDC's project team. This will be resolved this month with a firm cost available at that time.

5.5 Equality Implications

N/A

6 SCHEDULES

N/A

**DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN –
Updated 7 November 2024**




(For any queries, please refer to the published forward plan)

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
16 Dec 2024	1. Draft Business Plan 2025/26	Cllr Boden
	2. Draft Budget & Mid-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26	Cllr Boden
	3. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	4. Wisbech Town Board, 10-Year Vision Document and 3-Year Investment Plan	Cllr Boden Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney Cllr Wallwork
	5. Leisure Facility Strategy – Initial Assessment Phase	Cllr Miscandlon
	6. Options for the disposal of a land and buildings in March	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Seaton Cllr French
	7. Declaration of Surplus Land within the District	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney
	8. Grounds Maintenance Contract – Future Options	Cllr Murphy
	9. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
	10. Port Operations (CONFIDENTIAL)	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney
	11. Disposal of Surplus Land in Doddington (CONFIDENTIAL)	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney
27 Jan 2025	1. Fees and Charges 2025/26	Cllr Boden
	2. Grounds Maintenance Contract – Specific Discussion	Cllr Murphy
	3. RECAP Partnership Waste Strategy Review	Cllr Tierney
	4. Investment Board Update	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Tierney
	5. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	6. Wisbech Air Quality Area	Cllr Wallwork

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
	7. Engagement of company to undertake Void cleaning of temporary housing stock	Cllr Hoy
	8. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
24 Feb 2025	1. Business Plan 2025/26	Cllr Boden
	2. Budget & Mid-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26	Cllr Boden
	3. Fenland Transport Study	Cllr Seaton
	4. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	5. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
24 Mar 2025	1. Investment Board Update & Review of the Commercial & Investment Strategy	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Tierney
	2. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	3. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden
28 Apr 2025	1. Wisbech High Street Update	Cllr Seaton Cllr Hoy Cllr Tierney
	2. Cabinet Draft Forward Plan	Cllr Boden

TBC = To be confirmed

Agenda Item No:	11	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 th November 2024	
Report Title:	Potential Lease Renewal - Chapel Road Car Park, Wisbech	

This item comprises EXEMPT INFORMATION which is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To update members on the issues surrounding the current and continued occupation of the car park at Chapel Road, Wisbech following previous instructions given to officers at a Cabinet meeting on 15 July 2024 (Minute CAB10/24 refers) and subsequent negotiations with the National Trust and the receipt of enhanced legal advice.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Fenland District Council (FDC) occupies the car park under the terms of a lease from the National Trust (NT) for a term commencing on the 25th March 1964 and which expired on the 24th March 2024. As a result, FDC now occupy the site by way of a tenancy at will.
- 2.2 Protracted negotiations with the National Trust have failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion as defined by Cabinet.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the update on lease negotiations as reported herein.
- 3.2 Members are asked to approve the lease terms as now reported and authorise the Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects in consultation with the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Revenues, Benefits and CPE to complete the required legal documentation.
- 3.3 Members are requested to give a steer on the capital works referred to in section 2 for inclusion in the draft budget for 2025-26.

Wards Affected	All Wisbech Wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	<p>Cllr French - Portfolio Holder Revenues & Benefits and CPE</p> <p>Cllr Benney - Portfolio Holder, Economic Growth and Skills</p>
Report Originator(s)	Mark Greenwood – Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects
Contact Officer(s)	<p>Garry Edwards – Engineering Manager</p> <p>Bill Tilah – Principal Estates Surveyor</p> <p>Layna Warren - Streetscene & Markets Team Leader</p>
Background Papers	Confidential Cabinet Paper 15 July 2024 – Copy attached at Appendix 1

REPORT

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will recall that in a previous report presented on the 15 July 2024 (Copy attached as Schedule 1) the history of the current occupation was detailed, however, in summary the current lease from the National Trust was for a term of 60 years and this came to an end on the 24th March 2024.
- 1.2 Members will recall that they previously instructed officers to proceed with negotiations with a view to seeking a minimum 40-year term with ongoing consent for the fairs. The red line position was to be a lease of 30 years without the fairs the extended term being required due to the level of capital investment required at the site.
- 1.3 Failure to reach agreement as detailed above was to result in FDC issuing a notice under s26 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 by which if no agreement were reached would result in a court being asked to determine the lease terms.

2 CURRENT ISSUES

- 2.1 Following a protracted start to discussions requiring the intervention of the Chairman of the Trust substantive progress has now been made and the terms now presented are reflective of this.
- 2.2 As previously reported in many respects the car park has reached the end of its design life and regular repairs are undertaken year on year to patch repair, reline or replace damaged fencing and will require substantial capital investment in the medium term to preserve the facility in a safe condition.

2.3 Legal Issues

- 2.4 The National Trust have presented us with draft Heads of Terms for a new lease for the car park and in summary these are:

Term:	30 years from 25 th March 2024
Break Date:	24 th March 2039 – mutual break on 12 months' notice
Rent:	£5,000 pa
Rent Review:	3 yearly linked to RPI.
Use:	The parking of motor vehicles only. Camping, overnight stays and holding any fairs on the premises are strictly prohibited. Changes to the permitted use during the Term will only be permitted with prior landlord consent. All other changes of permitted use are prohibited
Repair:	The Tenant must keep the Property in good repair and condition.

- 2.5 The issues that arise are the term at only 15 years and the proposed absolute ban on the use of the Car Park for the annual fairs that we currently host.
- 2.6 Officers held initial discussions with NT estate officers and whilst they have agreed to the longer than originally offered term to allow us to programme required improvement works, they remain adamant that the ban on the use for fairs will remain.
- 2.7 Due to the age and construction of the current car park it is to be noted that a refurbishment programme will be required during the term to maintain the integrity of the asset.
- 2.8 The cost of the full refurbishment is estimated by FDC Engineering colleagues to be circa £750k.
- 2.9 Given capital restrictions this work will need to be undertaken on a piecemeal basis over a number of years, as and when required or when capital availability permits.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This paper has been prepared in order to update Cabinet on the negotiations that have taken place subsequent to the previous meeting and instructions to officers thereafter.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultations have taken place with FDC including within the Estate's Team, Engineers and Markets and Events liaison staff. In addition, these discussions have extended to neighbouring occupiers and the NT as landlord.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 As detailed the current lease terminated on the 24th March 2024 and we now occupy by way of a tenancy at will. Initial discussions with the NT were slow due to the NT not actively engaging whilst issues of anti-social behaviour were being addressed. FDC officers believe these issues have been addressed however the NT have failed to amend their position subsequently.
- 5.2 With the apparent status of negotiations three options now present themselves for member consideration:
- 5.3 Accept the proposed NT Terms
- 5.4 Officers are of the opinion that the terms detailed at point 2.4 whilst not providing all that was requested do represent an equitable and workable solution to the lease renewal issues previously faced.
- 5.5 The minimum guaranteed term at 15 years is longer than could be achieved via a court application under the provision of S26 of the landlord and tenant Act 1954 and therefore the previous option of serving such a notice has been discounted.

- 5.6 NT have consistently maintained their stance that they will impose a ban on the use of the site for the twice-yearly fair visits. This position has been maintained throughout the negotiations and they have made clear their view that this is non-negotiable
- 5.7 We believe from discussions with officers that the Showman's Guild are taking independent legal advice on the legality of the use ban and will pursue this matter on their own accord.
- 5.8 Should the Guild be successful in their legal challenge then FDC would be able to approach the Trust for a variation of the lease terms to re-instate the fairs use in the lease at that time.
- 5.9 Terminate Negotiations
- 5.10 The final option to be considered is that FDC decide they no longer wish to retain the car park in the light of the proposed restrictions and significant capital expenditure required. If this was to be the course of action agreed, we would advise the NT of this and vacate the site on a date to be agreed between the parties.
- 5.11 The lease end would be subject to potential dilapidations claim from NT for any failure on the part of FDC in relation to original construction defects and maintenance liabilities under the current lease. Officers however believe this claim will be risky for the NT as they have received rent for 60 years, and therefore to raise concerns now would be problematical for them and thus officers would seek to defend this position robustly.
- 5.12 The NT would be able to assess the current condition and seek to recover costs for failure to perform ongoing maintenance however the definitions within the lease lead us to believe a challenge would be difficult to sustain.

6 ALTERNATIVE FAIR LOCATIONS

- 6.1 Officers from the Estates, Engineering and Markets and Events teams have met on site to start analysis of suitable alternative locations within Wisbech that could be used as alternative locations for the fair.
- 6.2 Sites currently under consideration include:
- Somers Road car park
 - Church Terrace car park
 - Wisbech Park
- 6.3 Whilst the Showman's Guild initially dismissed the suggestion of alternative sites further discussions have resulted in an agreement to assess other

options in full. This may mean a different fair offering, for example fewer or different rides

- 6.4 Engineering colleagues are preparing detailed plans of the sites outlining available areas and clearly delineating protected access rights, emergency access routes and other protected assets. These plans will be shared with the Showman's Guild so they can assess the suitability of each site for their use.
- 6.5 A separate report will be presented to members detailing this piece of work once a suitable solution is arrived at.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The cost of the lease (£5k p.a.) has been included elsewhere in this report and the costs of full refurbishment (circa £750k) are mentioned in section 2.8. It should further be noted that this amount is not yet included in the approved capital expenditure and a more piecemeal approach could be adopted as described in section 2.9. A more detailed capital projection should be included in the budget papers for 2025-26 for approval at a future Cabinet meeting.

8 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific equality implications associated with the proposals set out in this report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The legal obligations are as set out in this and the previous Cabinet Report.


10 APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Confidential Cabinet Paper – 15 July 2024

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item No:	12	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	15 th November 2024	
Report Title:	Potential Use of Open Space Land at North Drive, March	

This item comprises EXEMPT INFORMATION which is not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) in that it contains information relating to individuals and which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. In particular, the confidential annex contains the names and signatures of persons who signed the petition referred to in the report. It is not clear whether the signatories of the petition have given permission for their names and signatures to be shared in a public forum such as this. Consequently, and in accordance with the Council's wider information governance obligations under the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act, it is advised that the petition is considered by Cabinet Members but that the names of the individuals are not more widely published

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To brief members on the options available in relation to the future use of the open space land located at North Drive, March ("North Drive") and as edged red on the plan at Appendix 1, as a community facility.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 FDC have received 3 expressions of interest in relation to the future use of the open space land at North Drive.
- 2.2 Officers are now seeking a decision from members as to the preferred use of North Drive. The potential options being:
 - Pursue the use of land for the establishment of a Community Orchard to be operated by either March Organic Community Orchard Group (MOCO) or F.A.C.T;
 - Reserve the site for the future development of a skate park;
 - To retain the land as open space with no further proposed development.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the report now presented.
- 3.2 Members are asked to consider the options now presented and provide officers with instructions as to how they wish the use of the land to be taken forward.

- 3.3 If members are desirous to see the land utilised for a Community Orchard then officers would need to be authorised to engage with the interested parties to establish and agree operating models and lease terms prior to seeking the approval of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure's approval to commit to the successful operator.

Wards Affected	All March Wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Peter Murphy – Portfolio Holder for Environment
Report Originator(s)	Mark Greenwood – Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects
Contact Officer(s)	Mark Greenwood – Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects Phil Hughes – Head of Leisure and Open Spaces
Background Papers	

REPORT

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 North Drive was transferred to the then March Urban District Council (now vested in FDC) as Public Open Space (POS) by Frederick Donald Grounds on the 11th October 1950.
- 1.2 The site extends to approximately 2.33 ha (5.76 acres) and is shaded mauve on the attached plan at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The area of the site in the northwest corner (edged red on the land ownership plan at Appendix 1) has, been in use as public open space since it was acquired by the former March Urban District Council.
- 1.4 The land is maintained as part of the overall FDC grounds maintenance contract by our appointed contractor Tivoli and, whilst no separate cost is specified in the contract, the overall rate per sq.m suggests the cost for this area is a de minimus sum and as such would not result in reduction in the main contract value.
- 1.5 In October 2023, FDC Estates and Leisure Services teams were approached by a local community group, March Organic Community Orchard Group, ("MOCO") seeking consent to lease the land at North Drive, for use as a community orchard.
- 1.6 As the Council had not specifically invited expressions of interest in relation to the future use of North Drive and because there were other potential options available, MOCO's proposal was initially declined. This has however prompted further consideration as to the future use for North Drive and the options set out in this report.

2 OPTIONS FOR NORTH DRIVE, MARCH

2.1 Use as a Community Orchard

- 2.2 Since the initial approach by MOCO, Fenland District Council have also received an expression of interest on behalf of FACT who also wish to utilise an area of the North Drive open space to develop a community orchard.
- 2.3 In addition, members of the planning committee at its meeting of the 22 August 2024 approved the outline application for the erection of 425 dwellings on land south of Barkers Lane (F/YR23/0696/O refers). Whilst it is acknowledged that this remains an outline consent and will be subject to further detailed applications, the overall site plans do include for an area to be designated as a community orchard and it may therefore be that an alternative provision will be available in future.
- 2.4 There is a level of public support for a community orchard with a Petition having been submitted by a representative of MOCO on 1st October 2024 (see Confidential Appendix 2). The Petition seeks the following outcome:

“We are a group of volunteers who have come together with the shared vision to create an organic community orchard in March (Fenland) for the benefit and our community and its wildlife.

We have been awarded a grant from Healthy Fenland and have spoken with FDC regarding a license or lease of land.

We need your support to convince town council and Fenland District Council this is a worthwhile project.”

- 2.5 Across both electronic and paper platforms, the petition has 208 verified signatures.
- 2.6 As members requested officers review and report all options at an early-stage, active pursuit of detailed options / plans has not been undertaken.
- 2.7 Due to the early emergence of competing uses, no work has been undertaken in terms of the proposed model of ownership or detailed business case for either organisation. However, in keeping with other community garden ventures in the March area it is proposed that a leasehold model at a peppercorn rent would be the preferred operating model, thus FDC retain the land and control the use.
- 2.8 Both organisations therefore are proposing similar community uses for the same area of land.

3 Alternative Uses

- 3.1 In the event that Cabinet does not wish to progress with the proposal for a community orchard, possible alternative options are set out below.

3.2 Skate Park

- 3.3 Local members for the March ward have expressed a desire to see the additional provision of facilities to include a further skate park within the North Drive area of open space. It should be noted that any facility such as a skate park would need to be positioned away from residential housing due to noise and people congregating. It is unlikely that the area highlighted in this report would be suitable for such a purpose.
- 3.4 Members will be aware that a new BMX pump track is presently being commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council in West End Park to compliment the skate park and skate bowl already existing in that park.
- 3.5 Should members wish to investigate the additional provision as suggested, officers would undertake further detailed assessments to include:
 - Design / cost overview, to include pathways, lighting and CCTV
 - Community consultation and demand analysis
- 3.6 Following completion of this work, a further report would be presented to members. However, it should be noted that the cost of such a facility together with appropriate lighting and security is expected to be significant and is not included in any present capital budget. The funding source therefore, be it FDC capital or via S106 or other such contributions, will need to be identified early in the process. With the planned expansion of the town of March, an

alternative approach might be to ask for a skate facility to be built - by developers - within the open space required as part of one of the more significant developments that has outline planning permission.

3.7 Maintain the Status Quo

3.8 Alternatively, the area was transferred as open space and is presently used as such with the site managed by FDC's open spaces contractor. The site can continue in this use without further development or investment over and above the ongoing maintenance which is currently within budget.

3.9 3.8 The general maintenance of Open Space across the district is structured in such a way that the removal of a relatively small area for alternative use would not impact on the overall open space maintenance contract value.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Officers are conscious of competing uses, all of which would appear to satisfy the open space requirements for the land and provide additional facilities to the local community. It is on this basis therefore that member guidance is sought to determine their views as to the most appropriate use given local community need.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 There are no statutory consultation requirements connected with the recommendations comprised within this report. However detailed discussions have taken place with colleagues in the estates function and Leisure Services Dept to formulate the contents of this report.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 The main options as currently identified are as set out in this report. No further options have been requested or considered.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Implications

7.2 There are no specific legal implications connected with the recommendations set out in this report. However, should members decide to progress any of the alternative uses set out in this report, there will be legal processes connected with the leasehold arrangements and the governance surrounding the decision making which will be adhered to as required.

7.3 Financial Implications

7.4 N/A

7.5 Equality Implications

7.6 N/A

7.7 Any Other Relevant Implications

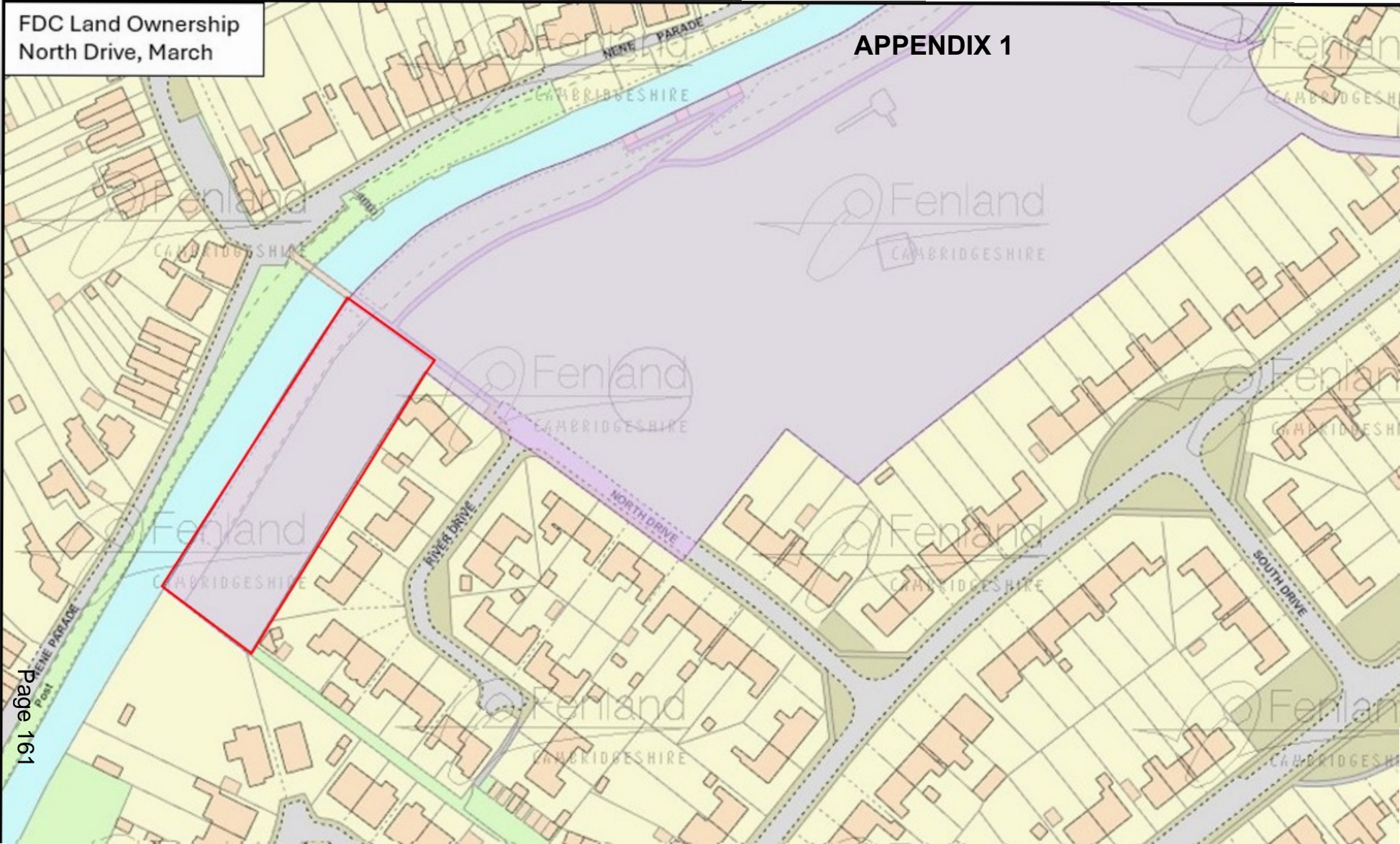
7.8 N/A

8 APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Site Location Plan

Confidential Appendix

Appendix 2 – Petition in support of MOCO application



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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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