

AGENDA

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2025

10.00 AM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL,
COUNTY ROAD, MARCH PE15 8NQ**

Committee Officer: Helen Moore
Tel: 01354 622424
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- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 10)

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of 14 July 2025.
- 3 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified
- 4 Members to declare any interests under the Local Code of Conduct in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting
- 5 Progress in Delivering the Economy Corporate Objective to include Planning 2024/25 (Pages 11 - 28)

To consider progress against the Economy priority including Planning.
- 6 Reporting - Use of Waiver Provisions (Pages 29 - 32)

To provide notice of decisions taken without the need for notice to be given on the Forward Plan and/or for the call-in procedures to be applied.
- 7 Update on previous actions (Pages 33 - 36)

To receive an update on the previous meeting's Action Plan.

8 Future Work Programme (Pages 37 - 42)

To consider the Draft Work Programme for Overview & Scrutiny Panel 2025/26.

9 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

Friday, 29 August 2025

Members: Councillor Mrs M Davis (Chairman), Councillor E Sennitt Clough (Vice-Chairman), Councillor B Barber, Councillor G Booth, Councillor J Carney, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor A Gowler, Councillor A Hay, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor D Roy and Councillor A Woollard

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 14 JULY 2025 - 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs M Davis (Chairman), Councillor E Sennitt Clough (Vice-Chairman), Councillor B Barber, Councillor G Booth, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor A Hay, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor D Roy and Councillor A Woollard.

APOLOGIES: Councillor J Carney and Councillor P Hicks.

Officers in attendance: Carol Pilson (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer), Amy Brown (Assistant Director), Anna Goodall (Assistant Director), Stephen Beacher (Head of ICT Digital & Resilience), Phil Hughes (Head of Leisure Services/SRO March Future High Street Project), David Wright (Policy & Communications Manager), Garry Edwards (Engineering Manager) and Helen Moore (Member Services and Governance Officer).

Guests in attendance: Councillors Boden, Mrs French, Tierney and Wallwork. Dan Palframan and Matt Wickham (Freedom Leisure).

OSC11/25 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 9 June 2025 were confirmed and signed.

OSC12/25 FREEDOM LEISURE

Members considered the Freedom Leisure Operating Contract Annual Report, which was shared in the form of a presentation, welcoming Dan Palframan, Matt Wickham, Carol Pilson, Phil Hughes and Councillor Wallwork to the meeting.

Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows.

- Councillor Barber referred to the figures shown in the presentation for the past year but there is nothing to base this on as there is no evidence of the previous year's figures. She asked for an explanation as to why the participation figures were down from last year as stated in the presentation. Dan Palframan responded that George Campbell has some competitors emerging locally, and in cases like this, if a low cost operator opens customers will tend to try it out and swap memberships, but then over time there is a turnaround and customers start to return and when looking quarter on quarter George Campbell is recovering in terms of numbers of participation on the gym and the fitness side. He continued in terms of the aquatics this is up year on year, however, there were some closures due to unplanned repairs that needed to take place.
- Councillor Barber stated two-thirds of the staff are female and only a third are male, is there a reason for this? Dan Palframan stated the reason for this is that there is a large learn to swim school scheme for swimming lessons and a high proportion of those employed are women, with it being a sector industry standard across the country, with a lot of the teachers being female. Matt Wickham added from a national perspective the statistics in Fenland are slightly skewed and there is an overall good mix to create a balance to the business, but locally this is a consistent trend.
- Councillor Barber stated that looking at the presentation she found it hard to read the small print around the pie charts. Dan Palframan agreed with the statement and noted it for future presentations.
- Councillor Barber stated that she had noticed that some of the customers had mentioned that there were not enough evening swim sessions and wondered if this was going to be

reviewed. Dan Palframan responded that a review on the pool programme takes place quarterly and the approach is that as long as there is a balanced programme across all the pools with the idea that the customer can swim at any pool at any one time. He continued the programme does get reviewed and changed based on user trends.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked what the plans are there to improve the cleanliness of the Leisure Centres and to improve the maintenance of the gym equipment? Dan Palframan responded that recruitment had been a struggle, especially at the Manor Leisure Centre, this has now been resolved with a new manager in place, and he is slowly building his team around him to improve the service. He continued in regard to the maintenance of the gym equipment, this remains to be an ongoing challenge, however, there are talks on going to bring back a maintenance package which will speed up improvement to services across the Leisure Centres. Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that when attending the gym she overheard a conversation about a piece of leg equipment and it was evident that the staff did not know how to answer the questions being asked, with them stating 'it was above us' and she feels that the information shared today needs to be transferred down to the staff so they are better equipped with being able to deal with customer queries. Matt Wickham thanked Councillor Sennitt Clough for the feedback and will take this back to the local team.
- Councillor Foice-Beard stated, with another new gym opening in Wisbech, are there any plans in place to maintain members and promote new joiners? Dan Palframan responded there are some national campaigns coming up, but it is also recognised that the core of the staff and the team are local and know what is going on in their local community, there is funding and with the help of Phil there will be a campaign promoting what the Hudson provides versus other organisations. Councillor Foice-Beard asked if there were any concerns around Snap Fitness coming to Wisbech? Matt Wickham responded that there was not because this has happened so many times in the past and members leave out of curiosity but Freedom Leisure have a different offer and can go head to head on price on these budget gyms, but as stated previously there needs to be an improvement on cleanliness and maintenance of the gyms and also investment in trained experts as budget gyms do not supply that service and it is important to get the right knowledge and motivation from a trained team of experts which the Freedom gyms offer.
- Councillor Booth asked when the promotions are happening is there a focus on the fact that Freedom Leisure has these trained professionals and is the advertising more personable to show who those people are? Dan Palframan responded that this is something that is currently being worked on, there are national campaigns coming up as well as localised ones which can be adapted to local community needs. Matt Wickham added that the way the company is recruiting has changed from just qualification based to more personality, with the interview technique questions having been changed to focus on the personality because that is what interacts with the customers rather than just based on a qualification. He continued if the employee is the right person this will be presented to the public through social media as part of the advertising.
- Councillor Roy made an observation that in the Fenland years in numbers section of the presentation it would be useful to have the comparative figures from previous years so the difference can be seen. He continued it has been mentioned that gas is burnt to produce electricity, and he would like to understand if this is sustainable and whether there are plans to change it? Matt Wickham responded that the numbers can be provided but were not added to this presentation on a comparable basis. He continued the Combined Heat Power Units (CHP) are very common because gas is cheaper than electricity and generally new Leisure Centres will be built without a CHP unit, they will have installed air or sea pumps and solar PV, using solar thermal to offset the cost of the air sea pump which run electricity. Matt Wicken stated that in the Fenland area the buildings used by Freedom are inherited facilities which is a concern and from a sustainability point of view all the buildings would need to be closed down and solar PV or even wind farms would be used, but the cost is prohibitive and to take out the CHP would be phenomenal so there needs to be a balance taken between Freedom Leisure and the Council as a whole and officers to understand exactly which way this needs to be taken. He continued there is Government funding and

Public Sector Decarbonization Scheme Funding, but it does remain a challenge to remain cost effective and reduce the carbon numbers.

- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that the sauna and steam facilities have been closed for some time and are there any plans to reintegrate them or are they going to be permanently closed? Councillor Wallwork responded that there are no plans to re-open them as the cost of the renovation would be astronomical and the evidence showed that the footfall was not great enough to warrant the work needed.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked what measurable incentives are there in place to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for the underrepresented and the lower paid? Dan Palframan responded Freedom Leisure have a concessionary pricing structure available to those who are eligible, funded through Cambridgeshire County Council, which allows children to enjoy an activity at the venue and Freedom provide food vouchers which can be taken to a supermarket or any retailer who is part of the scheme. He added that Freedom Leisure work closely with other governing bodies such as Sport England, Swim England and UK Active to allow as much access as possible.
- Councillor Booth asked for more information concerning the five MPS and issues stated in the report and mentioned the quantum seems to be missing, for example, how many people are raising these and how big an issue is it? He also mentioned the Net Promoter score and the fact that certain people have been excluded because of known issues. Matt Wickham responded the issues with the Net Promoter score is probably around the George Campbell pool, it was a known issue, it was being fixed but it was unfortunate the survey went out at the same time so that was the justification because there was a problem which everyone was aware of, which took longer because more issues were found, and it was being resolved and that was the only item that was retracted. Councillor Booth asked what impact this had on the Net Promoter score and reiterated the question asked about the quantum and the five issues with the numbers of complaints made against each issue found. Dan Palframan responded he could give an indicative number and could provide the physical numbers directly through Phil Hughes' team. He continued around 100 surveys were received for the bigger venues, which is a finite snapshot in terms of volume and in terms of the MPS score it will be neutralized, ranging from some venues which were slightly negative to some venues that were very strong positives, but excluding the known issues over 53% were promoters so were scoring as nine or ten out of ten, there is also another 30% of people who are neutral and 27% who did not share a view. Councillor Booth recommended that this information is shared within the presentation as this is what the public get to see and congratulated the organisation on a successful MPS score.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated there has been a lot of discussion around customers coming back to Freedom Leisure after a new gym has opened in the area and asked what happens if these customers fail to come back? Matt Wickham responded ultimately Freedom are in a contracted position, the contract is set and will be in place for as long as that contract runs, with the key strength being to keep working with the Council, and the community to deliver the service and Freedom is in a strong place to deliver that as a partnership.

Members noted the information reported.

OSC13/25 PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - ENVIRONMENT

Members considered the Progress of Corporate Priority – Environment, welcoming Councillors Boden, Mrs French and Tierney together with Carol Pilson and Garry Edwards to the meeting.

Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked how are the priorities decided generally and what impact will Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) have on overseeing and managing the priorities or what the predicted impact will be? Councillor Tierney responded that the priorities are decided through the Council's procedures, councillors and officers feed into the

process then it is shared with all the committees it needs to be shared with including O&S, and then the priorities are finalised and pushed forward. He continued how this will be affected by the LGR he could not comment on as there was not enough detail out yet and stated that the priorities will be decided on a year-by-year basis using any new information to adjust as and when necessary.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked considering the changes about to take place, the Corporate Priorities model of a one-year plan with three-year aspirations, i.e. a medium-term strategy, is no longer the most effective suitable model and how will the changes taking place affect the viewing process? Councillor Tierney stated that he thinks the model is right, the medium-term plan is a four-year plan which is reviewed every year allowing the team to feed in and adjust accordingly.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked for an update on the Fenland Inspire projects. Councillor Boden responded that at the last Cabinet meeting which took place on the 16 June a report was given on Fenland Inspire and where the Council is with the projects divided into two tranches. He stated that the first tranche will be going ahead this year within the capacity available and the second tranche will be going ahead, when the Council has reasonable confirmation that the LGR is going to go ahead, which is going to take place from the 1 April 2028. Councillor Boden continued the Council is expecting legislation to be laid before both Houses of Parliament as statutory instruments in the spring of 2026 and as and when this happens will unlock the remaining part of Fenland Inspire because without that certainty of termination of FDC there could be difficulty in financing what it is that is being suggested. He continued having said that, at the meeting of Cabinet last month, it was announced that one of the projects will not be going ahead and that is the Wisbech Chapel project, with the reason being on the preliminary examination of the project it was evident that it would not be sustainable so hence it was removed from the list.
- Councillor Foice-Beard asked why there are 40 plus street light units still awaiting inspection and is the inspection in relation to the low-level lighting bulbs or the columns, and what is the risk if these are structurally unsafe? Councillor Mrs French responded that the outstanding street light testing works related to both electrical and structural integrity testing with the assets themselves being a combination of columns, poles, brackets and ground mounted up lighters and the delays are associated with factors such as contractors unable to access due to excessive tree vegetation overgrowth, the contractor unable to find the assets on site or access the assets which are restricted by locked gates, parked cars etc. She continued that a handful of assets also require traffic management by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to obtain road space to access due to the asset's location with the highest structural risk being associated with columns that are cast iron or concrete, but ongoing work continues with the contractors. Garry Edwards added, in terms of street lighting, unfortunately there are some that are waiting to be structurally and electrically tested and it is hoped that they will be completed this week, but as stated earlier, parked cars and access to some of the streetlights can be difficult. He continued, in terms of the risk, any of the streetlights that the contractor comes across where there is immediate danger, they will remove the streetlights to make it safe for the public and so far, the total is 16 streetlights that are of the highest category.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked how many complaints have been received due to the new splay of lights from the new heads? Garry Edwards responded that complaints have been very low, but FDC only has responsibility for around 1,800 streetlights, and FDC do share the same road space as Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) assets who have more than 53,000 streetlights. He continued that CCC's luminaire specification is different to FDC's as in they seem dimmer, which is where the complaints have derived from and FDC have had a few complaints that the light is projected too far forward or too far rearwards, which is a quick fix by adding a small shield to prevent that light splay.
- Councillor Booth stated that there was a new contract in place for street lighting, and in Parson Drove there are some outstanding replacements, he is aware that UK Power Networks are to undertake the connections, but would like to know how the handover with the new contractors is going and what is the plan to get up to speed with all the outstanding

pieces of work? Garry Edwards confirmed that the handover with the new contractors has gone well but is slower than anticipated because of the different management systems of streetlights in place which has made the transition slow. He continued, in terms of the legacy schemes, every effort has been made to complete as much work as possible with the former contractor but unfortunately this has caused a three-way triangle between FDC, CCC and UK Power Network because of road space permits etc but what is sometimes undertaken is that FDC can fit a temporary supply so the streetlights are working.

- Councillor Mrs French referred to the TTRO's and the traffic management which has to be carried out through CCC, which has got to be booked for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- Councillor Roy stated he would like to raise the issue of bulky waste collection as since the increase in cost there has been evidence of constant fly tipping and wanted to know if this can be revisited or the possibility investigated of a discretionary scheme or even a bulky waste amnesty for the low-income community? Councillor Tierney responded that he did not feel there was any evidence that shows the small increase in bulky waste collection has increased the amount of fly tipping. He continued he felt the service is great value for money and is the cheapest other than Peterborough out of other local authorities and he was pleased to report that the service has been growing year on year. Councillor Tierney continued in regard to the amnesty he was aware that this has been tried in other authorities where people are given the opportunity to get rid of loads of waste but then as soon as this is over the rubbish starts to accumulate again so this encourages ongoing amnesties which costs a lot of money and he feels that most people accept that there is a cost to removing bulky waste and FDC is cheaper than most private companies and is doing it legally.
- Councillor Hay stated should there be clarification that LGR is definitely going ahead and FDC will be abolished, how will that affect the Council's ambition to introduce civil parking enforcement in the area? Councillor Boden responded that it should make no difference because civil parking enforcement is one of those projects that is going ahead anyway regardless of whether or not there is LGR, but in the likelihood of LGR taking place this will make it easier to overcome some of the obstacles that there has been up to now.
- Councillor Booth wished to come back to the point made by Councillor Tierney regarding bulky waste and that the Director has got the ability to provide an exemption, but there is not an option for this through the online form so practically there are no means to enact that service. He continued that Peterborough City Council tried an amnesty, but they did drop this idea due to the cost and suggested speaking to colleagues at Peterborough to research the results from this exercise. Councillor Booth also added that his biggest concern was the rogue traders that undercut the Council to collect bulky waste and then fly tip in the countryside and feels enforcement needs to be considered. Councillor Tierney agreed with this statement and questioned if the cost of an amnesty is going to be worth it from any environmental benefits that are gained but is happy to explore the options available.
- Councillor Barber stated in light of how much money the Council generates from the blue recycling, and how much is now not used because it is not recycled properly, it was noted from the report that FDC will continue to support customers to maximize their recycling efforts and she was curious on how this will be put in place? Councillor Tierney responded that FDC support customers all the time by providing a good service, alongside this FDC constantly promote recycling constantly on all the available channels, like Council communications, the website, libraries and community groups. He continued there are also the group called 'Getting it Sorted' which is a volunteer service which is being worked on presently and will be relaunched very soon. Councillor Tierney added that alongside this there is an encouragement to ask local councillors to keep spreading the word when out and about and reminding customers that by recycling they can save money at the same time. Councillor Barber commented that she did not feel that residents realise that they are generating savings within their Council Tax by recycling and feels this should be promoted more. She added that local WI groups and other coffee morning groups would also be a good place to promote recycling. Councillor Tierney took on board the feedback and added that this is more an area for councillors to spread the word in the local communities through their daily duties rather than officers visiting local coffee mornings, etc.

- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that from April there is an Extender Producer Responsibility payment and asked would this be worth looking into as the more tonnage the more money Fenland can make. Councillor Tierney responded that the Extender Producer Responsibility acts as a tax, for example manufacturers who use packaging now have to pay for the packaging that they use and the more environmentally difficult it is to get rid of the more expensive that charge is which encourages manufacturers to use less packaging or to use different packaging that is more environmentally friendly, and conveying this to the public more is a good idea.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated from the report there has only been 9 penalties issued from 790 fly tips, she asked is there a gap in the evidence and what makes it so difficult for these people to be caught? Councillor Tierney responded the reason it is so hard to prosecute these offenders is because people know if they fly tip they could get caught and these people know not to dump literature with address detail on it into the rubbish pile. He continued that officers do go out and visit sites and check for evidence as part of their job, and occasionally there will be some evidence found that can lead to a conviction but often the evidence is not found that is needed to prosecute. Councillor Mrs Davis asked if there were any plans to carry out the project that was trialled in New Road? Councillor Tierney commented that this was being looked at for the hotspot areas in Fenland but despite it being effective it was also expensive and there must be a balance between the cost to the Council versus the benefit.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked how will the Council measure carbon savings from the net zero village funding? Councillor Tierney stated that when the proposals were presented the carbon benefit and the saving had to be built into the planning which generally meant that less power was going to be used from sustainable power that benefited the net zero situation, this has been checked, the work has already been done and the benefits should already be there.
- Councillor Barber asked what the progress was concerning the food waste collection? Councillor Tierney stated that the reason this has not been spoken about is because it is a bit too early. He continued the Government has imposed new regulations regarding food waste and each Council has been given a little bit of leeway on how they will introduce that, FDC's plans are in place, the caddies have been ordered for inside and outside the house, it has been through Cabinet to order the vehicles and later on in the year the Council will be looking at the staffing ready for next year. Councillor Tierney added that around Autumn time the publicity will start to roll out so that everyone knows everything that is going on and answer all the questions. Councillor Barber asked if there were going to be bags to put inside the containers and will street vendors be included? Councillor Tierney responded in regard to the bags the answer is yes but some of this is still being worked on and in regard to traders, trade waste has to be arranged by the traders and can be provided through the Council. Carol Pilson added that all traders will need to familiarise themselves with the trade rules to find out whether they are covered or not at this stage.
- Councillor Booth stated that last year it was suggested that when the new regulations come in that officers take a look and see what opportunities there were to improve recycling, the food waste has been mandated by the Government, but what other opportunities are there to improve the recycling in this area? Councillor Tierney responded there is a report going through RECAP in the Autumn which will provide some more answers and a better understanding. Councillor Booth asked if the tax on the brown bins would be removed as a result of the new regulations or will there still be a charge? Councillor Tierney responded that at this present time there are no plans to remove the brown bin tax.

Members noted the information reported.

OSC14/25 PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Members considered the Progress of Corporate Priority – Transformation and Communications, welcoming Councillors Boden and Tierney together with Anna Goodall, Stephen Beacher and David Wright to the meeting.

Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Roy stated that he would like to understand the real time cost savings regarding the digital switch over to the Council and has there been any significant impact on staffing levels? Councillor Tierney responded this has been a smooth transition with no costs or savings and no significant changes to staffing levels.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked since the move over to the Cloud infrastructure and the Team technology, what is the contingency plans for data loss, cyber-attacks and service interruptions? Councillor Tierney stated that there is sufficient cover for data loss, with Cloud backup in place with on and off-site backup and this system is regularly tested. Stephen Beacher confirmed that there is regular patching, fire walls and network segmentation in place to protect from any cyber-attack.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked how can the service-level improvements be quantified resulting from the £214k in cashable savings and 7,000 officer hours saved and specifically how have these gains transferred into better outcomes for residents and what governance or audit mechanism are in place to independently validate self-reported achievements and figures? Councillor Tierney stated that this is quantified through the Council's procedures, data and analysis are measured, tested and recorded, once the figures have been checked through the various departments the results are reported back to the committees, who can then question individual things if they feel there has been a mistake.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked how the Council is ensuring that consultations are reaching underrepresented or digitally excluded groups in Fenland and how is it ensured that the automation of services does not negatively impact those with complex needs or low digital literacy? Councillor Tierney stated that lots of people are ready to go digital and the more that can be encouraged the better it is because that frees up resources for those who cannot be supported. He continued with underrepresented people they are approached in lots of ways such as the Golden Age Fairs, press releases and the website alongside a variety of other actions within each community and in regard to others who are not digitally represented there are other methods like phone calls and the library. Councillor Mrs Davis asked if there are any information leaflets that can be shared at local coffee morning and events that councillors attend to spread the word? Councillor Tierney responded there was not but there is a hard copy of the information available which councillors could take with them with all the information inside.
- Councillor Mrs Davis referred to the Transformation Agenda (TA2) and asked how are the objectives aligned with the Council's long-term strategic goals especially in light of the LGR and Fenland Inspire Programme? Councillor Boden responded that it has changed, TA2 considerably especially around how FDC performs its services without harming the services which are provided, this has provided an opportunity to look at all the services provided to see how each service can be made more efficient and more effective, all of this demands an upfront cost in terms of the time it takes for officers to examine the system and put forward the changes, and the way transformation works is that the savings made following that initial cost outweighs that initial cost, and that is the justification for the transformation. He stated that the problem with LGR is that in many cases if looking at services provided by FDC, there will not be that trail of savings to be made because once LGR takes place, the overwhelming majority of the services provided will be provided in different ways and in ways at the moment that cannot be anticipated so to some extent TA2 has been truncated and the opportunity for FDC to make even more savings than FDC otherwise would have done.

Members noted the information reported.

OSC15/25 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Councillor Mrs Davis presented the Annual Report to be submitted to the next Council meeting.

Members approved the draft Annual Report for forwarding to Council.

OSC16/25 UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTIONS

Members considered and noted the update on previous actions.

OSC17/25 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered and noted the Future Work Programme.

12.10 pm

Chairman



Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Progress Against the Economy Priorities & Planning

14 July 2025

**For performance from
1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025**

Cabinet Members



Cllr Chris Boden
Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance, Governance &
Business Rates



Cllr Gary Christy
Portfolio Holder for Housing,
Licensing & Environmental
Health Enforcement, Port,
SHA, Transport and Yacht
Harbour



Cllr Steve Count
Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth, Land
Charges and Fenland
Inspire! Leisure Centre
Projects



Cllr Dee Laws
Portfolio Holder for
Building Control, Flooding,
IDBs and Planning



Cllr Chris Seaton
Portfolio Holder for Funfairs,
Fenland Inspire! Projects,
Markets and Wisbech High
Street Projects

Economy

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

Promote and develop our Business Premises at South Fens, The Boathouse and Light Industrial Estates to encourage investment, business development, job creation and skills diversification (Cllr Count)

The Estates team continue to work to promote the investment portfolio and for the 3 months (May, June & July) average occupancy equated to 94.6%. For July this breaks down as follows:

- The Boathouse – 96.2%
- South Fens Business Centre – 72.5%
- South Fens Enterprise Park – 100%
- Manufacturing Factories – 100%

The Boathouse is showing as just below full occupancy however this is a transitional period, and new tenants are already identified and progressing through legal and therefore this should revert to 100% in the coming months

South Fens Business Centre whilst not full has seen a steady increase in occupancy this year with further interest now being shown which is encouraging. The property is shown with availability on the FDC web page, Rightmove and via local agents Eddison's.

The industrial units are consistently at full capacity, and we retain a list of prospective tenants that we can call on should one become vacant.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

Enable appropriate growth, development and infrastructure through delivering a proactive and effective Planning service (Cllr Laws)

The Planning Service is now fully staffed across Development Management, Planning Enforcement, and Planning Policy. This sustained period of stability is already delivering measurable benefits, including improved case handling, a more consistent approach to decision-making and greater internal resilience. A key structural change this year was the introduction of a Planning Enforcement Team Leader post, strengthening the management and oversight of enforcement matters.

Although overall application numbers, in 2025, are down compared to previous years, the Service continues to receive a disproportionately high volume of large and complex planning applications. These include major housing developments, commercial schemes and

renewable energy projects. In response, one planning contractor has been retained to support the team. The cost of this additional resource is being met in full by the substantial application fees attached to these schemes and the income for Planning Performance Agreements for the applications.

The Council continues to operate one of the lowest levels of delegation in the country; in 2024, it had the fifth lowest nationally. This results in a high proportion of applications being reported to Planning Committee. While this approach supports transparency and Member engagement, it places pressure on officers to meet statutory determination deadlines and contributes to lengthy committee agendas and an increased number of meetings.

Earlier this year, the Government consulted on a proposed National Scheme of Delegation, which would require all councils to adopt a standardised approach. The proposals represent a significant departure from the Council's current arrangements and would lead to far fewer applications being referred to committee. Fenland District Council submitted a formal response to the consultation, highlighting the implications for local accountability and the efficient operation of the planning system.

The Service continues to invest in service improvement and customer experience. A range of new guidance documents and internal process changes have been introduced to support more effective and consistent decision-making. In parallel, the Council is actively promoting its pre-application advice service to encourage early engagement and the submission of higher quality applications. This is helping to reduce avoidable delays and improve outcomes for applicants, communities and the authority.

The Planning Policy team has continued to progress the evidence base in support of the emerging Local Plan. Key outputs this year have included the publication of the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTNA) and an updated Five Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) position statement. The Council can currently demonstrate a 6.6-year supply of deliverable housing sites, a strong position which provides greater confidence in decision-making and helps resist speculative or inappropriate development.

In addition to plan-making, the Policy team continues to lead the Council's work on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Fenland is currently host authority for four NSIPs, all at different stages of development. These projects demand significant input and coordination, often on tight statutory timetables. Given the size of the authority, the level of resourcing required for this work is disproportionate, but the team continues to deliver this function effectively.

Activity	Outcomes	Performance Against Target
Speed of Determination of Planning applications 2024/25 to 31 July 2025	Major 93.02%	85%
	Minor 88.32%	85%
	Other 95.20%	85%
The national performance requirement is measured over a 24-month rolling monitoring period and in relation to this we are performing as follows: Major 94.52% (against a target of 80%)		

Non-Major 86.81% (against a target of 80%)

Activity	Outcome
Planning Appeals 2024/25 to 31 July 2025	24
No. won by FDC	14
Lost by FDC	10
Awards of cost	3

Activity	Outcomes
Enforcement (201.08.24 to 31 July 2025)	No. of Service Requests – 285 No. of Cases Closed (following investigation / mitigation action) – 206 No. of pending cases – 437
No. of Notice Served:	Enforcement Notices – 2 Section 215 Notices – 6 Breach of Condition Notices – 3 Other notices (S330/PCNs etc) - 86

Activity	Outcomes
5 Year Land Supply	Published – years (passed)
Housing Delivery Test	Published – % (passed)
Annual Monitoring Report	Published
Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTNA)	

Work with the Combined Authority on the development of its new ten-year Local Growth Plan, to link the potential for growth in Fenland to Government priorities and the development of a national industrial strategy and unlock the potential of its key industrial sectors to power the local economy (Cllr Count, Cllr Laws & Cllr Hoy)
Over the last 12 months, the Council has been supporting the development of a new Local Growth Plan for the Combined Authority to submit to Government to help inform future investment pipeline into the area linked with the National Industrial Strategy and the Comprehensive Spending review.

Drive forward the development and delivery of new homes and commercial space by using our surplus property and land assets to deliver sustainable economic and residential growth (Cllr Laws, Cllr Hoy, Cllr Count & Cllr Imafidon)

See the Elms and Nene Waterfront update.

Work with our partners to enable new affordable housing to meet housing needs (Cllr Laws & Cllr Hoy)

Forecast & completion of affordable homes in 2025/26

Wisbech Road, March – 67 Affordable Rent, 25 Shared Ownership

Whittlesey Green – Phase 4. Total 51- 24 Affordable Rent, 27 Shared Ownership

Norwood Road, March – Total 50 – 50 Affordable Rent

Gosmoor Lane, Elm – 8 Affordable Rent, 4 Shared Ownership

March Road, Wimblington – 7 Affordable Rent, 5 Shared Ownership

Total 217 Affordable Homes

Developments with construction start dates in 2025/26

Fairburn Way – 50 Affordable homes (100% affordable rent)

West Street – 70 Affordable homes

Barkers Lane – 130 Affordable homes

Burrowmoor Road – 46 Affordable homes

Hereward Hall – 19 Affordable homes

Princess Avenue – 31 Affordable homes

Queen Street – 21 Affordable homes

Upwell Road – 110 Affordable homes (66 social rent, 45 shared ownership)

Wimblington Road – 48 Affordable homes (all social rent)

Sandy Lane – 100 Affordable homes

Drybread Road – 99* Affordable homes

*This includes both S106 and additionality that is currently at a late stage of negotiation

Total 724 Affordable Homes with expected completions in the next 18-36 months.

Enabling Work

Looking further ahead, there are over 1,000 affordable homes in the early stages of the planning process, many with planning permission. While not all will proceed, this pipeline reflects strong developer and registered provider interest and continued demand in Fenland. This is despite Homes England programme uncertainty and delays in programme clarity post-election that are causing registered providers to pause, or caveat offers.

This strong delivery pipeline is a direct result of the Council's enabling work and proactive and flexible approach to partnership working. Our efforts have and continue to make Fenland an attractive area for investment for the registered providers, ensuring that grant funding is being directed and used effectively to meet the needs of our Fenland residents.

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

The Economic Growth Service have lead responsibility for delivery of the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) the key objectives of which include the provision of a source of funding to enable the investment in domestic local priorities and target funding where it is needed most: building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment and productivity growth and increasing life chances.

The UKSPF Invest in Business Grant Scheme was agreed by Cabinet and the Economic Growth Service have successfully delivered the grant scheme which enabled eligible local businesses to benefit from £907k of grant funding monies available.

The UKSPF scheme initially ran for a three year period from 2022/23 – 2024/25. However, an additional one year transition fund for 2025/26 has now been established. In large part due to the excellent performance on the current UKSPF programme, Fenland has secured the highest amount of transition funding for 2025/26 allocated to a single authority. The £279k will support the continuation of the Investment in Business grant programme (£220k) and the continuation of the Anti-Social Behaviour & Firebreak programme (£59k).

The one-year SPF allocated for Fenland projects will be paid by the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) to the CPCA. In accordance with the Draft Funding Agreement the District Council will claim in arrears the funding for each of the projects from the CPCA.

The Invest in Business Scheme received 130 Expressions of interest with 8 Businesses invited to submit a full application

In addition, the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) will be continued for a further year during 2025/26. The Rural Fund is integrated into the UKSPF which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. For eligible local authorities, the Rural Fund is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF. The REPF for 2025/26 is £130k

The REPF has received 51 Expressions of interest which are currently being reviewed in relation to shortlisting businesses that will be invited to submit a full application

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

The March Future High Street fund programme is now in its final phase. All public realm improvement work is now completed with construction of the new toilets set to complete early October.

The final physical project of demolishing the old Barclays bank to prepare a development site to be sold, returning a capital receipt to FDC, is set to commence at the end of September subject to planning approval on August 20th. This demolition should take circa nine weeks to complete. The project team are currently aiming for all works in March to be completed before December.

Once the Barclays site is completed, Octavius will leave March and the programme will come to a formal close.

To date the project has run under budget, with the saving being used to complete the public realm work at the southern gateway to the town outside of Iceland.

24 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Seaton, Cllr Boden, Cllr Hoy & Cllr Tierney)

Practical completion of the building is expected on 29 August. At this point the building will cease to be a construction site under our contractor's control and FDC will take on the

responsibility for the new building.

A celebratory event will take place in September to highlight the significant investment from FDC and partners in this project.

The Properties Team is preparing to let the flats and the commercial property within the building.

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

A reserved matters planning has been submitted by FFL's Development Management partner Lovell. The scheme is a revision from the approved outline and is now for 54 homes due to the mitigation of surface water flood risk.

The scheme is being processed, and a series of planning documents are being discussed for amendment to enable the RM application to be considered.

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

A Reserved Matters planning application has been submitted by FECC, the selected partner to deliver a 70 bed all affordable extra care scheme on plot 5.

A series of meetings have been held by FECC, FFL regarding the remaining plots

FFL's intention is to sell all the plots at this site subject to their selected partner/s securing detailed planning approval

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

Work continues in respect of the final sites identified in the first tranche of disposals with further sales completing recently. This results in overall sales in Tranche 1 of £676,000 with additional receipts from overage clawbacks of £49,090 thus a total return of £725,090 to date.

Work has also begun in relation to the second tranche of sales as approved by members in December. The first stage is to prioritise the sites to identify which can be progressed and also which have the potential to generate the most significant capital receipts for the Council and this strategy will soon be discussed with Cllr Imafidon prior to implementation

Fenland Inspire! (Cllr Seaton and Cllr Count)

Projects Update

A report was tabled at the Cabinet meeting held on 16 June 2026 giving an update on all Fenland Inspire! projects - [Report and appendices A-S.pdf](#)

Wisbech Splash Pad

A report was tabled at the Cabinet meeting held on 24 March 2025:
[Draft Cabinet report - Fenland Inspire.pdf](#)

11-12 High Street, Wisbech

Following cabinets agreement to the initial design, planning and tender phase of this project, a multi-disciplinary team all of whom were involved in the design and delivery of 24 High St, Wisbech have now been engaged and are commencing the final review of the outline designs and preparing for discussions with FDC planners on the most appropriate way forward with the project.

As per Cabinet's direction the project will gain planning consent and identify a preferred contractor and cost before being reported back to cabinet for formal approval to proceed with the delivery of the development

Wisbech Floodlighting for Clarkson Memorial

The work to restore lighting back to the Clarkson Memorial has been broken down into three sections:

1. Power enabling works – This involves extending the UKPN supply cable from an existing lighting asset to a new feeder pillar to be located adjacent to the former wine cellar entrance. These works have been ordered and are programmed to commence on site on 27/08/25 subject to County Council road space being approved.
2. New trenching, ducting and cabling works – Works on the planned cable route has commenced and is awaiting a formal quotation from FDC's streetlight contractor. Once the layout and quote is approved, an application to the County Council for a section 50 licence will be made.
3. Lighting design and formal quotes – lighting designs have been undertaken by four manufactures for the provision of three new LED lights and the designs are currently being analysed by the Engineering Team. The design and products that best suits the lighting requirements will be ordered. Installation will be undertaken by FDC's streetlight contractor.

Part of the project requirement is also to relocate and increase the number of planters, if required, located on the pedestrian island to prevent unauthorised vehicle parking. The existing planters are not owned or maintained by FDC and contact is being made with the local volunteer groups who maintain the planters to understand their access requirements and capacity to adopt some additional planters.

Several attempts have also been made to contact the owners of the wine cellar entrance to ascertain any above ground loading capacity requirements for the underground vaulted cellar. Officers will continue to contact the owners.

Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey

Work has commenced on this project since the confirmation to proceed at Cabinet in June 2025. This will be a complex, multi-faceted project that will deliver a substantially new facility in Whittlesey, on one site, with improved community facilities under one roof and a significantly enhanced community space at the Manor Field.

Currently the team is completing RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 2 of the pre-construction work with the other pre-construction phases RIBA Stages 3 and 4 planned.

The project programme is as follows:

- **RIBA Stage 2 – Concept Design and stakeholder / community / local elected Member engagement;**

This stage is underway with stage completion anticipated in September 2025.

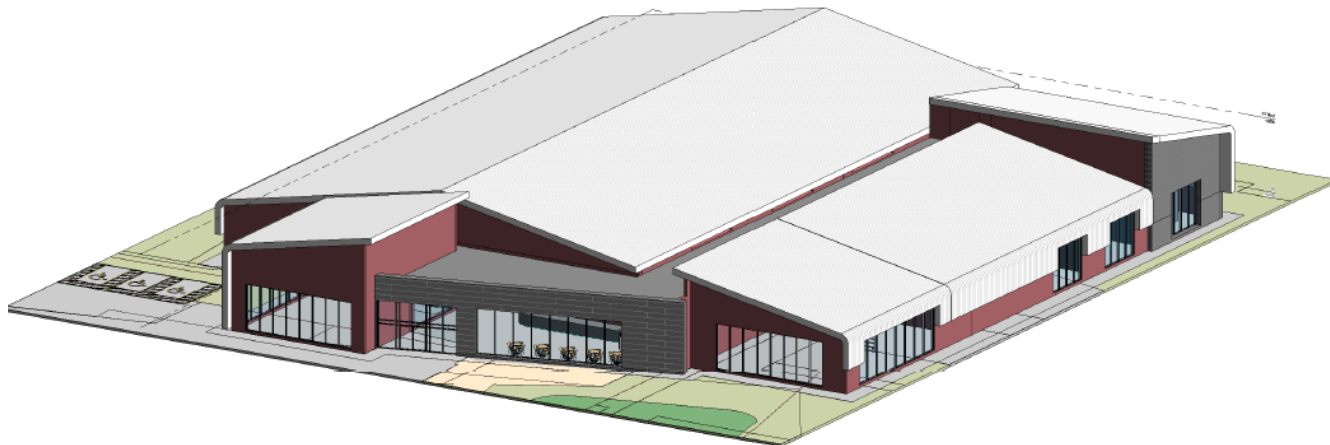
An online community engagement survey is currently under development, alongside seminars for those who have completed the initial survey and would like to take part in engagement sessions online. Finally for the local community, the opportunity to feed into the work will take place at a marketplace session and also with customers within the leisure centre. Additionally, in-person stakeholder meetings will take place in the coming weeks with the user clubs on the Manor site. A session will also be offered to local Elected Members to engage with the process.

Stage Gateway:

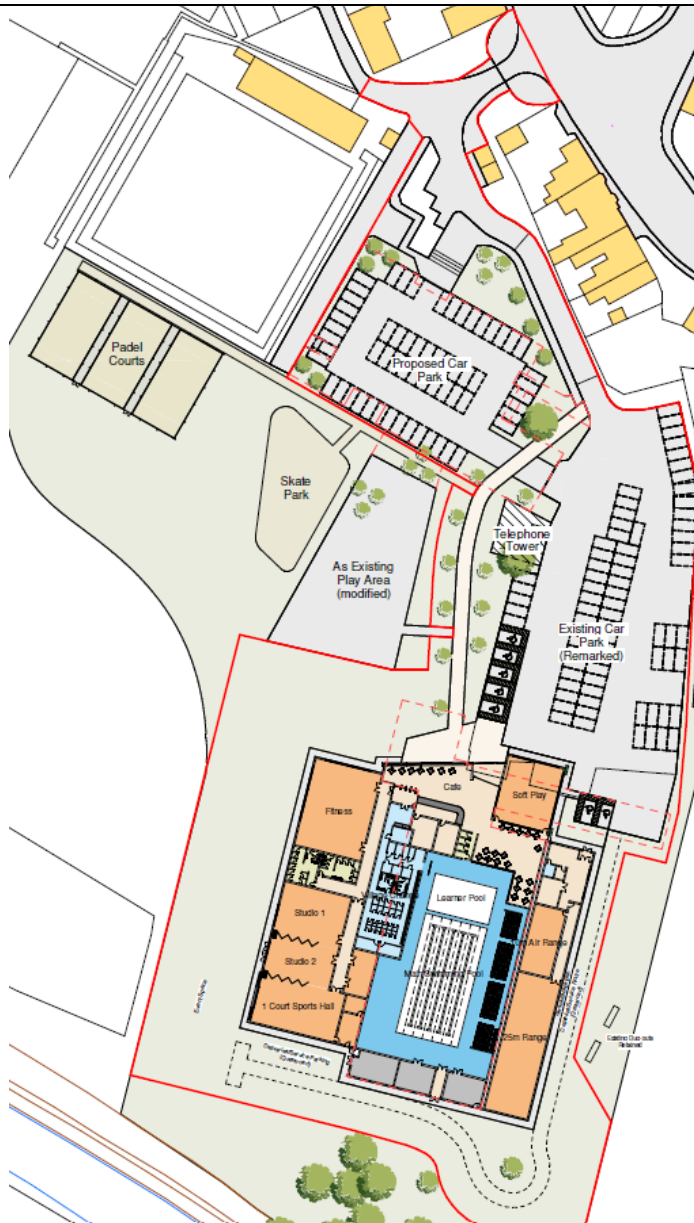
A Portfolio holder discussion of the RIBA 2 completion report will take place in early October 2025

Current Draft Designs and site plan

The current **draft** designs for the site and footprint of the new and refurbished pool facility are as follows. Note that these are DRAFT and are subject to stakeholder, community and local elected Member engagement sessions. Additionally, Sport England is likely to feed into the design with their expertise and utilising their design guidance information. There are several months of further work ahead prior to submitting plans to the Planning Authority as part of a planning application.

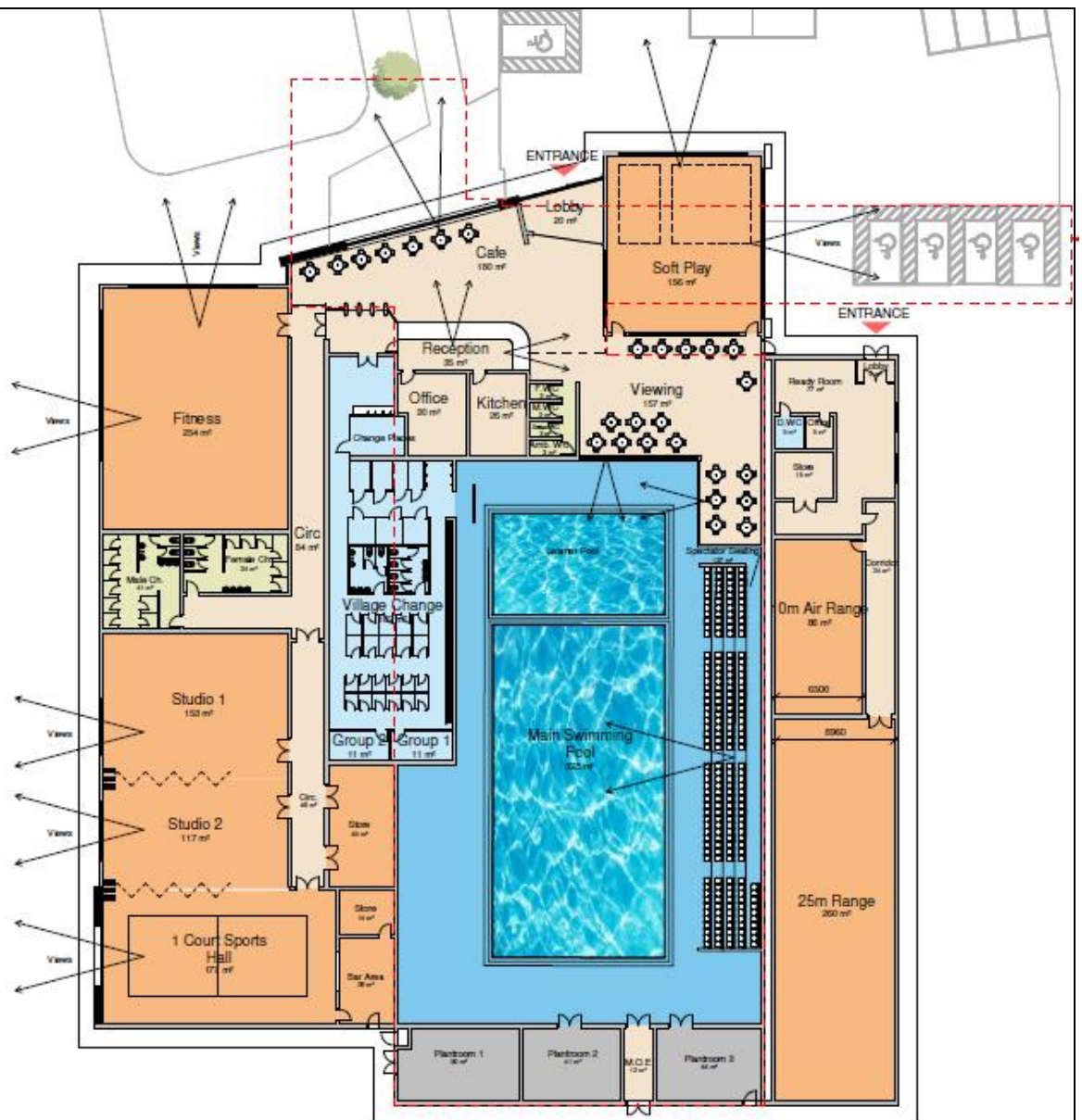


In the above **draft** impression of the external of the building, the front lower roofed area is main reception, with the higher roofed area to the left being soft play. The rifle range is behind soft play and runs alongside the building parallel to the pool. The entire roof of the old swimming pool building has been replaced, with the new flat roofed areas forming a link between the previous building and the new building on the right. The new area consists of an extended gym, 2 exercise studios that have flexible spacing provided by walls that fold away and finally a single badminton court hall – again with a flexible wall joining the other 2 exercise rooms.



The **draft** site plan above highlights how the refurbished and extended swimming pool building sits within the site, the switch of the sports hall site to an extended car park, improvements to the roadway to access the site, the location that the skate park will be moved to and a proposed site for the padel courts. Whilst this is a draft plan, consideration of vehicle traffic flow as well as pedestrian access is under review.

What this draft plan does demonstrate clearly is the opening up of the Manor Field area as you enter the site. The large sports hall will be gone, offering views across the fields, and to the leisure centre. The change to the pool reception, the addition of soft play and the necessary removal of the existing rifle range to run alongside the eastern side of the swimming pool further opens up the field and views of the cricket ground.



The **draft** floor plan above highlights the main aspects of the revised facility. Again, as a draft, some details are missing, as well as some changes to the 1 Court sports hall storage / bar area that are anticipated to include a wellbeing space for older persons activity sessions and a consultation room for use by staff or teams associated with community support from the NHS. The footprint will change in the coming weeks. [For information, MOE indicated in the plant room areas to the foot of the diagram represent Means of Escape / Exit in terms of a fire exit or other emergency requirement for swimmers and those in the viewing area]

As noted several times above – these remain draft drawings and are already subject to change. Elected Member, community and stakeholder club feedback will add further input into the design, alongside Sport England input and Police assessment of the rifle range design. A final step in the design process is the planning application that may also influence design, materials, elevations and the use of materials such as glass.

- **RIBA Stage 3 – Spatial co-ordination and design development** will take place between mid-October and 8 December 2025.

Stage Gateway:

A Portfolio Holder discussion regarding the RIBA 3 completion report will take place by 19 December 2025.

The planning application follows RIBA 3 and runs concurrently with RIBA 4 with an expected timeframe of 5 January 2026 until 9 July 2026.

- **Planning Application**

- Expected submission of planning application in January 2026.
- Target date for securing planning consent late April 2026.
- Discharge of pre-commencement conditions expected by early July 2026.

- **RIBA Stage 4 - Technical Design phase** will run from 3 November 2025 until 10 July 2026.

Stage Gateway:

- A Portfolio Holder discussion regarding the RIBA 4 completion report will take place in June 2026.
- This will then lead to Cabinet report and Full Council report regarding a decision to move into the construction phase of the project.

Project Governance

This programme will complete the pre-construction side of the project. Throughout this process the Portfolio Holder for the project will be closely consulted and involved, with the Leader of the Council, as Portfolio holder for Finance, also kept closely informed of financial matters, with the Gateways indicated to ensure elected Members formally approve each stage of the project once completed.

At the completion of the pre-construction stage, a report will be prepared for Cabinet with a recommendation to Full Council to take the project forwards to construction, subject to affordability.

With regard to construction, the construction programme aims for mobilisation of the main contractor to start in July 2026.

Regarding budget management and the affordability of this significant capital project, each stage of the project has a focus on expected costs. As the Council is working within a procured framework for the project, this means that our construction contractor is already part of the team, so the cost assessment at every stage will be accurate and will also be cross-checked by a quantity surveyor. A further cost assessment could be undertaken should FDC be minded to contract a third-party QS.

This project will not be a case of a long development programme at significant cost to the Council only to find the actual procured cost is different to that envisaged. When we end RIBA Stage 4 the Council will have an actual delivery cost that has been tested for value at that point.

Freedom Leisure

Renewed discussions with Freedom Leisure will commence in October 2025 in order that a revised agreement between FDC and Freedom relating to the Manor Leisure Centre part of our agreement is in place to facilitate an increased level of income to FDC from the new facility in a mature year to offset some of the capital costs. Such an agreement will also take into account compensation to Freedom, where necessary for the loss of use of the pool during the construction phase.

It should be noted that all other aspects of the leisure centre will remain available to the community during construction, with the gym being moved to the sports hall building.

Sport England support

Very early initial discussions regarding design input have begun with Sport England. The project is now within Sport England's significant project pipeline. As the project progresses, it is anticipated that Sport England may ask the Council to submit a grant funding application. Any significant funding is only available by invitation from Sport England, where the governing body feels that the project fits within Sport England's strategic framework – Uniting the Movement - for increasing physical activity levels in the local population.

Other potential funding opportunities

As the national governing body for sport, Sport England is the best likely source for significant funding. However, FDC's project manager will also seek support from smaller potential funders (for instance wind farm funders, landfill tax credit funders, local charities, other national governing bodies for sport such as Swim England.)

The rifle club is already considering additional equipment that would be able to switch to the new facility – with grant funding applications being developed to support the purchase of this equipment.

Chatteris Leisure Centre Condition Survey Work

The work to carry out conditions survey aspects of the facility is under contract at a cost of £44,000 with this work due to complete in the next few weeks.

District Wide Assessment of New Play Equipment

Reports were tabled at the Cabinet meeting held on 21 July 2025:

[Report.pdf](#) (play equipment) and [Fenland Inspire Project North Drive.pdf](#) (North Drive Recreation Ground – options for new play equipment).

Work will commence on these projects once a project officer has been recruited to carry out the streams of work required.

Wisbech Park – Apple Orchard removal project

A report regarding this project will be put to Cabinet in October 2025.

March Country Park

Contact has been made with agents and representatives of the owners of the land which we hope will form the new Country Park. At this time the landowner's representative is awaiting a response and instructions from the board as to how they wish to proceed, and they will revert

to us once received.

New Village Green for Wimblington

Provisional agreement for the transfer of the freehold of this site has been reached with senior members of the Parish Council and formal confirmation is awaited before solicitors are instructed.

The sale will also include restrictions on title limiting the use to that of Public Open Space

Development of five 3G synthetic turf sports pitches

The two PlayZone pitches identified in recent Cabinet reports at Whittlesey Manor and Barton Road, Wisbech both part-funded by FDC and the Football Foundation, are in the development phase with planning application expected to be submitted in September. Subject to planning permission, construction is anticipated to begin in November with the new sites handed to the Council in February 2026.

Further funding for PlayZones across England is being assessed by the Football Foundation's Board in September. If the Football Foundation opens another round of funding, FDC will work together with the Foundation to identify further suitable areas in Fenland, as well as third-party funding, where possible, to support such facilities.

St John's Chapel, Station Road, March

Initial discussions are taking place between estates officers and Town Council members to agree the preferred transfer method and from their terms and conditions can be formulated

Civil Parking Enforcement

A Cabinet report was tabled at the Cabinet meeting held on 21 July 2025:

[Civil Parking Enforcement Update Rev3 Final.pdf](#) and all recommendations were approved. Updated sign and line costs have been requested from Milestone via the County Councils Policy and Regulation Team. The awaited costs are for both the poor signs and lines identified in 2021 survey works and also an estimate of the 2021 fair lining which would now also be categorised as poor.

It is intended that a further Cabinet report will be tabled following receipt of the updated costs.

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

Promote sustainable road, rail and concessionary transport initiatives to improve access to employment and local services (Cllr Christy)

Whittlesea Station

The procurement phase for the design and feasibility work is expected to complete in August 2025. The procurement phase for the Outline Business case is expected to complete in September/October. The Survey work for the station and Station Road relating to the level crossing closures and volumes of traffic completed in July 2025.

By way of background, CPCA approved up to £3 million pounds for Whittlesea Station from April 2024 to end of March 2027. Further details about the Whittlesea Station funding are available here [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx)

Engage with the Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council on the feasibility and delivery of road and rail infrastructure projects (Cllr Christy)

Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC

The Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) project is now complete. The final report and appendices were approved at FDC Cabinet in May 2025. Please see the link to the report and the Cabinet meeting minutes below.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 19th May, 2025, 2.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Officers have been asked to consider options and sources for the additional funding that is needed to take forward the recommendations in the SOBC report forward. This includes opportunities to reduce potential costs of the scheme, further assessment on scheme benefits, a broader network wide assessment using the traffic model and an assessment of how the scheme supports economic growth and planning. Possible funding opportunities are being discussed with CPCA and other partner organisations.

A47

In July 2025, Government announced the funding of rail and road schemes following the spending review. Please see the link below which has the full details of the announcements. There is no new spending for A47 and the Wansford to Sutton Scheme that has been in developed for several years has now been cancelled.

[Green light for over 50 road and rail upgrades supporting over 39,000 new homes and 42,000 jobs - GOV.UK](#)

March Area Transport Study – Main schemes

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

The following are currently being progressed following approval by the CPCA to draw down an additional £7million pounds for spend between 2024 and 2026 in July 2024. These schemes are continuing to progress on time and on budget.

- A141 / Twenty Foot Road Signals scheme delivery
- High Street / St Peter's Road Traffic Signal Improvements scheme delivery
- Development of a full business case and detailed design work for Northern Industrial Link Road (NILR)

Work with the Combined Authority to influence how housing and infrastructure funding is used to stimulate housing development and economic growth and improve connectivity in the district (Cllr Christy, Cllr Hoy and Cllr Laws)


The 6 flats at 24 High Street, Wisbech have reached practical completion. This has been achieved with the support of funding from the Combined Authority and will be allocated through a local lettings policy through Homelink.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 25/26	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP14	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	91%	85%	100%	
CELP15	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	85%	85%	95%	
CELP16	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	91%	85%	99.06%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	94.2%	92%	94.25%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	85%	90%	86%	

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

Comments

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny	
Date:	08 September 2025	
Report Title:	Reporting – Use of Waiver Provisions	

1 Purpose / Summary

To provide notice to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of decisions taken without the need for notice to be given on the Forward Plan and/or for the call-in procedures to be applied.

2 Key Issues

To comply with the notice requirements set out in the Council's Constitution at paragraphs 16.3 of Procedure Rule 2 and paragraph and 20.4 of Procedure Rule 4.

3 Recommendations

For the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to note the waivers permitted by the Chairman since the date of the last meeting.

Wards Affected	All
Report Originator (s)	Maureen Davis, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Amy Brown, Assistant Director for Legal and Governance amybrown@fenland.gov.uk
Contact Officer(s)	As above
Background Papers	Fenland District Council's Constitution: https://www.fenland.gov.uk/localgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=315&MId=2451&info=1&bcr=1

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Access to Information Procedure Rules which constitute Rule 2 of the Council's Constitution specify at paragraph 13.1 that a key decision may not be taken unless notice of that decision has been published in the Forward Plan for a minimum period of 28 days. The Council's Forward Plan is accessible via the following link: <https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=136&RD=0&bcr=1>
- 1.2 Article 13 of the Council's Constitution defines a key decision as any decision which results in saving or expenditure in excess of £100,000 or, in respect of any land or property acquisition in excess of £250,000 and/or which is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District comprising two or more wards.
- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Procedures Rules which constitute Rule 5 of the Council's Constitution specify at paragraph 18 that when a decision is made by Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet or a key decision is made by an officer with delegate authority from the Cabinet or under joint arrangements, that decision must be published within 3 working days of being made. There then follows a period of 5 working days following publication and prior to implementation, during which that decision can be called-in. Information about the procedure for call-in can also be found at Rule 5 of the Council's Constitution.
- 1.4 In exceptional circumstances, if it is not possible to meet the forward plan publication requirements, there are 2 procedures that can be followed to enable the decision to still be taken:
- 1.5 Procedure Rule 2, paragraph 16 of the Council's Constitution specifies that if a matter which is likely to be a key decision has not been included in the Forward Plan and the procedure at paragraph 15 cannot be complied with then, in cases of special urgency, the decision may still be taken if the Chairman of O&S or, in their absence, the Chairman of the Council agrees that the taking of the decision cannot be reasonably deferred.
- 1.6 Rule 4 of the Council's Constitution which comprises the Cabinet Procedure Rules specify at paragraph 20 that the call-in procedure shall not apply where the decision being taken is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The Chairman of O&S or, in their absence, the Chairman of the Council agrees that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances to be treated as a matter of urgency.
- 1.7 Paragraph 16 of Procedure Rule 2 and Paragraph 20.4 of Procedure Rule 4 both specify that decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel together with the reasons for the urgency.
- 1.8 Decisions taken after the application of the urgency provisions are also routinely published in the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's annual report which is also submitted to Full Council for approval.

2 NOTIFICATION OF DECISIONS

- 2.1 Since the date of the last meeting the Chairman of O&S has permitted the use of the waiver provisions on TBC occasions:
- 2.1.1 A waiver of the requirement to place an entry on the Forward Plan for the full period of 28 days was granted on 27th June 2025 together with a waiver of the associated call-in provisions. The Decision Notice relating to that decision can be found via the following link and related to a recommendation to urgently proceed with the proposed roof repair due to the level of deterioration and escalating health and safety concerns: [Decision - Award of a contract to Roof-Link in the sum of £190,256+VAT for the replacement of the existing roof on industrial units at Longhill Road, March - Fenland District Council.](#)
- 2.1.2 A waiver of the requirement to place an entry on the Forward Plan for the full period was granted on 4th July 2025. An entry was published on the Forward Plan on 4th July 2025 ([Issue details - Fenland Inspire! Project - Civil Parking Enforcement Update - KEY/04JUL25/01 - Fenland District Council](#)). However as the decision was taken by Cabinet on 21st July 2025 ([Civil Parking Enforcement Update Rev3 Final.pdf](#)) the entry was not on the Forward Plan for the full period of 28 days. The need for a waiver arose due to the need for an urgent commitment in relation to the application of funds to the delivery of the project within required timescales.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny has to date provided a verbal update as to the use of the waivers provided for in the Constitution. In future, unless it is not possible to prepare a Report in time for Agenda dispatch in relation to the next available meeting of O&S, a Report will be prepared.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Legal Implications

- 4.1.1 The legal implications are as set out in the main body of this Report.

4.2 Financial Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this Report.

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REF	Date Requested	Question	Target Date
COMPLETED ACTONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 02/12/24 	<p>Anglian Water Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Carney was asked to provide an example to help Anglian Water answer his question in more detail: The specific example I have is in Church Lane Chatteris where there is a historic issue with part of the street having a slump, widely thought to be a result of a collapsed drain, and in periods of heavy rain it floods Sometime last year Highways filled in the pothole that emerged; one of the residents asked the Highways Team whether the drain beneath the hole could be repaired and was promptly told "no, that's a job for Anglian Water". Further back in time, one of my former neighbors tried, along with the Chatteris Town Council clerk, to get AW to repair the drain only to be told "no, that's a Highways issue". And so, it went on. I asked the resident who spoke to the Highways Team last year to send me pictures of any flooding and if they are required. Send 12-01-25 <p>I have now heard back from Lucy, our local Water Recycling Network Manager, who tells me that she's speaking to Highways to find suitable contact / time to discuss issues on Church Lane, Chatteris.</p> <p>Also, to confirm that we have not had any jobs that we have had there in the last 12 months.</p> <p>We hope to get this resolved soon and if it turns out to be linked to one of our assets, we will, of course, attend to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the 2nd of December 2024 at the FDC O&S meeting Councillor Booth asked about the business plan from Anglian Water and the upgrade of pipes in the rural areas which remains unanswered would you be able to supply your business plan to show these plans please. AW 	<p>12/01/25</p> <p>28/02/25</p> <p>31/01/25</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responded that I have checked my notes and cannot see if he was referring to clean water pipes or sewer pipes. Would you be able to clarify please and then I can see what I can find out and report back. Cllr Booth replied, "It is clean water pipes in the villages to the west of Wisbech. Parson Drove has been experiencing low pressure issues due to old pipes bursting. Sent 31-01-25 <p>I've now caught up with our Network Supply team and our Capital Investment Portfolio team to see what we have planned for the main water network in parts of Fenland.</p> <p>We are looking at the areas around Guyhirn, Murrow and Parsons Drove in particular for water mains renewals during the next five-year investment plan. At the moment we cannot say when and we would say we are probably between six and nine months off knowing how we will proceed in the area, but as soon as plans are ready, we will share with the community and local stakeholders of course.</p> <p>Also, Wisbech St Mary saw considerable investment over the last five years, which has driven improved performance, but, again, we may return to carry out further upgrades if required. And there may be the possibility of smaller areas of renewal around other villages too, such as Leverington and Gorefield over the next five years.</p> <p>As I say, specific schemes have not yet been agreed, designed or scheduled in, but improvements across the rural parts of Fenland are certainly in our plans. - received 05/02/25</p> <p>O&S meeting</p> <p>Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that the response from Anglian Water is noted.</p> <p>Councillor Booth stated there is a response from Anglian Water, but it is not anything definite and would like to keep the question active and ask for regular updates when they know plans are confirmed by November.</p> <p>Amy Brown stated that Anglian Water is due to visit the O&S committee in December and suggested before they visit the question is updated ready for them to answer.</p> <p>Councillor Sennitt Clough suggested it could be possible to get a six-month update so when Anglian Water visits in December the committee will have the most up-to-date information.</p> <p>Councillor Booth stated that Anglian water is developing a business plan and suggested asking for the highlights of the business plan that are relevant to Fenland to be able to give the committee a clear understanding of what will be happening in the Fenland area.</p>	05/02/25
ONGOING ACTIONS			
<p>.</p> <p>.</p>	09-06-25	<p>Diagnostic Centre, Wisbech</p> <p>Arrange for additional statistical data to be shared with panel members as an action following the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Booth asked what the number would need be to be, to have the CT scanner running per day at the North Cambridgeshire Hospital? 	

		CSP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action for FDC Communications Team to help promote the Speed Watch Scheme and to get more groups set up across the Fenland area.• Find out if there is a cost involved with the Speed watch Scheme and what exactly the Constabulary provide free of charge.	
WATCHING BRIEF ITEMS			
		None at present	

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Overview and Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme 2025-2026

**All Informal pre-meetings are held via Teams until further notice,
but Formal meetings will be held in the Council Chamber at Fenland Hall**

Meeting Dates

<u>Agenda Despatch Due Date</u>	<u>Informal pre-meeting</u>			<u>Formal Overview & Scrutiny Meeting</u>	
	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
26 September 2025	29 September 2025	2.00pm	Via Teams	6 October 2025	10.00am
21 November 2025	24 November 2025	2.00pm	Via Teams	1 December 2025	10.00am
9 January 2026	12 January 2026	2.00pm	Via Teams	19 January 2026	10.00am
20 February 2026	24 February 2026	2.00pm	Via Teams	2 March 2026	10.00am
10 April 2026	13 April 2026	2.00pm	Via Teams	20 April 2026	10.00am

6 October 2025

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ CMT/Officer/Guest
	Clarion		Dan Horn Sally Greetham Sue Stavers Paul Newman Daniel Read Karl Grimmer Daniel Shurvington(Cllr Hoy? – check with Carol)
10.00 -12.00 Meeting	Annual Meeting with the Leader and Chief Executive to include LGR update.		Paul Medd All of CMT Cllr Boden All of Cabinet
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions	All	Amy Brown Chair
	Future Work Programme 2024/25	All	Amy Brown Chair

1 December 2025

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ CMT/Officer/Guest
10.00 -12.00 Meeting	Anglian Water		Cllr Imafidon Grant Tuffs Anglian Water
	Arts Council	Communities	Carol Pilson Phil Hughes Jamie-Lea Taylor (Cllr Hoy? – check with Carol)
	Progress of Corporate Priority – Communities	Communities	Carol Pilson Dan Horn Cllr Mrs French Cllr Wallwork Cllr Christy Cllr Boden Cllr Hoy Cllr Laws Cllr Seaton Cllr Tierney Annabel Tighe Phil Hughes Sam Anthony
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions	All	Amy Brown Chair
	Future Work Programme 2024/25	All	Amy Brown Chair

19 January 2026

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ CMT/Officer/Guest
10.00 -12.00	Draft Budget 2025/26	Quality Organisation	All of CMT

Meeting			Sian Warren All of Cabinet
	Draft Business Plan 2025/26	Quality Organisation	All of CMT Dave Wright All of Cabinet
	Fees and Charges 2025/26	Quality Organisation	Peter Catchpole All of CMT Sian Warren Cllr Boden All of Cabinet
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions	All	Amy Brown Chair
	Future Work Programme 2024/25	All	Amy Brown Chair

2 March 2026

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ CMT/Officer/Guest
10.00 -12.00 Meeting	Annual Review of Anglia Revenues Partnership	All	Peter Catchpole Anna Goodall

			Cllr French ARP representatives
	Road Safety Partnership update		Dan Horn Alan Boughen Cllr Wallwork Simon Burgin
	Public Health & Education	Communities	Carol Pilson Anna Goodall Annabel Tighe Cllr Count (skills)
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions	All	Amy Brown Chair
	Future Work Programme 2023/24	All	Amy Brown Chair

20 April 2026

Time	Agenda Item	Fenland Corporate Priority	Portfolio Holder/ CMT/Officer/Guest
10.00 -12.00 Meeting	KEEP CLEAR IF POSSIBLE		
	Matters arising – Update on previous actions	All	Amy Brown Chair
	Future Work Programme 2024/25	All	Amy Brown Chair

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