

CABINET

MONDAY, 16 JUNE 2025 - 4.00 PM



PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor G Christy and Councillor S Count

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor A Miscandlon

Councillor Boden announced that since the Cabinet agenda was first published on 6 June 2025, a subsequent decision was taken to lift the exemption in relation to item 7 concerning the Fenland Inspire! Project report and make it a public report. This followed the necessary checks and enquiries being concluded in relation to the potential business and financial implications of publishing the information and specifically in relation to procurement and the public interest in achieving best value.

CAB1/25 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 19 May 2025 were approved and signed.

CAB2/25 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2025-26

Members considered the Outside Bodies 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Members commented as follows:

- Councillor Tierney pointed out that the names of the Combined Authority outside body committees had been changed from those listed in the report and requested that records be updated with the new names.
- Councillor Mrs Laws said she could not see the Peterborough Flood Committee listed and queried whether this is an outside body. Councillor Mrs French commented that it is a body she sits on with representatives nominated by the County Council. Councillor Mrs Laws said she believed it was a district appointment, so Councillor Boden requested the matter be investigated and brought back to the next Cabinet meeting.
- Councillor Mrs Laws advised she sits on the Middle Level Navigation Committee which again is not listed but is due to meet next week, and so queried whether she is still on this. Councillor Boden advised that this will also be checked but as she is named as a member of the board, she will remain on it if so.
- Councillor Seaton stated that he cannot see the A47 Alliance on this list which is an outside body he attends either virtually or in Norwich. Councillor Boden confirmed that Councillor Seaton is the representative, and he intends that Councillor Seaton be appointed to carry on.

Councillor Boden advised an updated report would be brought back to the next Cabinet meeting on 15 July.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws and AGREED to:

- the appointments set out at Appendix A of the report
- note where required representatives to outside bodies cannot currently be fulfilled.
- delegate to the Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders the addition or deletion of outside bodies as the need arises during the municipal year and appointment of members to vacancies on outside bodies during the municipal year.

CAB3/25 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUNDING 2025-26

Members considered the Rural England Prosperity Funding 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Boden.

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

- recommend acceptance of Rural England Shared Prosperity Fund from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for a one-year period 2025-26.
- recommend that officers be delegated to approve and liaise with the CPCA the Rural England Shared Prosperity Grant Funding Agreement 2025-26.

CAB4/25 FENLAND INSPIRE! PROJECTS UPDATE

Members considered the Fenland Inspire! Projects Update report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden advised that a proposed resolution had been tabled at the meeting which he proceeded to read in full as follows:

“Cabinet notes the report on Fenland Inspire!

Cabinet reaffirms its intent to use the Fenland Inspire! Programme to leave an inheritance for Fenland residents after FDC is abolished as a result of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Cabinet further notes that the timescale for LGR is not yet certain, and that although it is currently thought likely that LGR will go ahead on 1st April 2028, there is at present no certainty as to the date of FDC’s abolition, assuming that LGR goes ahead at all.

Cabinet affirms that it is unacceptable for FDC to enter into spending commitments that it cannot meet and that FDC must therefore exercise caution in entering into spending commitments, in the interests of both current and future Fenland taxpayers.

Cabinet notes the significant increase in the estimated costs of the Fenland Inspire! Programme. It would clearly be inappropriate to progress all of the current elements of Fenland Inspire! although, once Government publishes a draft Statutory Instrument to effect LGR, we can reasonably assume that LGR will go ahead on the date stated in the Statutory Instrument.

Until Cabinet can reasonably assume that LGR will be going ahead, it would be imprudent to proceed with all of the Fenland Inspire! Projects, especially given that frustrated or wasted early costs on capital projects have to be accounted for as Revenue, rather than capital, expenditure.

However, several of the Fenland Inspire! Projects are already in the pipeline or are quite small in cost and low-risk in implementation. Most of these projects have already received approval from Cabinet or Council to progress.

Moreover, if we were to wait until we can reasonably assume that LGR will be going ahead, it is clear that FDC would have real capacity limitations in delivering all the projects in the programme.

Accordingly, Cabinet approves that Officers progress the projects, or parts of projects, listed in appendix 1.

The list of projects in Fenland Inspire! is not definitive. Projects may be added to or deleted from the list by Cabinet.

Cabinet believes that the Wisbech Chapel building improvement project is unsustainable and that it should be removed from the Fenland Inspire! Programme.

In light of the uncertainty surrounding LGR, Cabinet resolves to suspend further work on all projects (other than those listed in Appendix 1) until a comprehensive report is brought back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

Officers should, nevertheless, keep careful watch for external funding opportunities for all projects.

The Leader will provide Officers with an updated Schedule S, detailing which members are leading on which projects.

APPENDIX 1

- 1. Wisbech Park Splash Pad: phase one only.*
- 2. Wisbech 11/12 High Street*
- 3. Manor Leisure Centre Whittlesey*
- 4. Chatteris Leisure Centre condition survey work*
- 5. District wide assessment: new play equipment*
- 6. New Village Green Wimblington*
- 7. Civil Parking Enforcement*
- 8. St John's Graveyard, March*
- 9. New March Country Park: confirmation of land transfer agreement only.*
- 10. 3G pitches: preparing or submitting applications to the football Foundation for external funding."*

Members commented as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French requested that item 8 be corrected to read St John's Chapels, not St John's Graveyard.
- Councillor Tierney said it was important to clarify to the public what this all means. Fenland Inspire! came about because Government announced in December its plans to abolish FDC, so members want to leave a legacy for the benefit of Fenland residents with the idea being to spend Fenland's money locally and not have it taken into a big new authority where it would either be spent elsewhere or get swallowed by other councils' debts. However, the Government is known to U-turn on its policies so it would be unwise for FDC to rush to spend all the money whilst there is still some uncertainty as to whether it will be abolished. This is a good and prudent approach, but members want to push forward with whatever projects they can in time if the Council is to be dissolved.
- Councillor Boden responded that is the reason why Cabinet would like officers to come back with a more comprehensive and realistic report about what projects can be done and when. Some will not be completed by 31st March 2028 but certain projects, such as the proposed new swimming pool in Chatteris, may be so far advanced in construction or contractually that they will have to be completed by the new unitary authority.
- Councillor Hoy expressed her surprise that floodlighting for the Clarkson Memorial and the Wisbech Park pathway improvements are not listed on Appendix 1 considering they are relatively low cost and asked if this was an oversight. She said it may be that works are being

done already because the pathway is just general maintenance and the same with the lighting for the Clarkson Memorial as there are lights already there needing to be fixed, but importantly for her the Clarkson Memorial was going to have additional planters installed to stop illegal parking on the war memorial paving. She would not like to see this removed when it is a case of one or two thousand pounds as opposed to tens of thousands.

- Councillor Boden responded that in respect of the Wisbech floodlighting, the report shows it is more complicated than merely installing the floodlights. Questions have arisen over the power supply to the Clarkson Memorial and enquiries are being made about the road alterations around the War Memorial. The project is expected to be deliverable but may also require listed building permission for alterations to be made. Councillor Boden added that the original budgeted figure for this project was £30,000, not one or two thousand pounds and that is one of the reasons why it has been put back into the second phase but when revised information is received from officers, he sees no reason for a delay until there is certainty as to the date of FDC being abolished.
- Councillor Hoy replied that she believes the reason for the enhanced cost has more to do with the War Memorial rather than the Clarkson Memorial and in her opinion the two should not have been placed together as one project. She believes the Clarkson Memorial is the one that people are most bothered about and could have been quicker and so asked if these could potentially be split, as she believes the War Memorial will hold everything up and people will just keep parking on the Clarkson Memorial.
- Councillor Boden said he would be interested to hear what Wisbech members in particular thought of the suggestion to split the floodlighting and deal with the two memorials separately, and to prioritise the Clarkson Memorial.
- Councillor Imafidon spoke in support of Councillor Hoy's suggestion, saying that the Clarkson Memorial already has power to the site, the problem being that the original cables were damaged beyond use. However, there is an existing but redundant county council lighting facility that still has power to that unit, so if both are separated, he thinks the Clarkson Memorial lighting can be delivered more quickly.
- Councillor Tierney expressed his support for Councillor Hoy's suggestion saying that although both projects are important, if one can be done more quickly it should be. Councillor Wallwork said she agreed, particularly as parking at the Clarkson Memorial creates a lawless environment so it is paramount to move forward with whatever projects we can as soon as possible.
- Councillor Mrs French agreed with Councillor Wallwork and said that is why she is trying to push through civil parking enforcement. She recommended that if listed building consent is required, this should be applied for as soon as possible.
- Councillor Seaton agreed that parking around the Crescent is a nightmare, particularly for the emergency services. He said that despite Wisbech being a town that has free parking people continue to park inappropriately.

Councillor Boden suggested that in light of members' comments he proposed that Cabinet add the Clarkson Memorial lighting planters to Appendix 1. Members agreed to the proposal.

- Councillor Hoy sought clarification on the Wisbech Park Splash Pad improvements brought before last Cabinet, and specifically that phase one includes the canopy. Councillor Boden said the report papers state that phase one includes the expansion of the existing splash pad features as well as improvements to soft landscaping and park furniture. He added that the order has already been placed for the splash pad equipment from Canada and is not expected to arrive before the end of next month. The current budget for phase one is set at £60,000 so if it did not include the canopy that would be a lot of money for landscaping and park furniture. Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services confirmed that Councillor Hoy is correct that temporary umbrellas have been arranged for existing seating whilst additional seating, soft landscaping and a more substantive shade area is coming later as well as the splash pad enhancements coming from Canada all as part of phase one.
- Councillor Hoy asked if something could be done regarding the orchard in the park which,

although was a nice idea in theory, has become an eyesore due to not being maintained by the group set up to manage it, and it encourages antisocial behaviour. It also blocks the line of sight from the café to the splash pad and the playground. Councillor Hoy suggested a proper orchard project with the trees to be taken up and replanted in a more appropriate location. A general discussion followed regarding the time of year that replanting would be appropriate, and Councillor Mrs Laws offered to contact the appropriate officer for a response. Councillor Boden suggested that this issue be brought back to July's Cabinet meeting.

- Councillor Imafidon referred to the footpath in Wisbech Park and asked when it may be resurfaced as footfall has increased. Councillor Boden advised that is an ordinary maintenance matter and has never been part of the Fenland Inspire! project but Councillor Mrs French advised she will have the footpath inspected next week.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to note the content of the report on Fenland Inspire! and resolved:

- to reaffirm Cabinet's intent to use the Fenland Inspire! Programme to leave an inheritance for Fenland residents after FDC is abolished as a result of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- to further note that the timescale for LGR is not yet certain, and that although it is currently thought likely that LGR will go ahead on 1st April 2028, there is at present no certainty as to the date of FDC's abolition, assuming that LGR goes ahead at all.
- to affirm that it is unacceptable for FDC to enter into spending commitments that it cannot meet and that FDC must therefore exercise caution in entering into spending commitments, in the interests of both current and future Fenland taxpayers.
- to note the significant increase in the estimated costs of the Fenland Inspire! Programme. It would clearly be inappropriate to progress all of the current elements of Fenland Inspire! although, once Government publishes a Statutory Instrument, to effect LGR, it can be reasonably assumed that LGR will go ahead on the date stated in the Statutory Instrument.
- to note that until Cabinet can reasonably assume that LGR will be going ahead, it would be imprudent to proceed with all of the Fenland Inspire! Projects, especially given that frustrated or wasted early costs on capital projects have to be accounted for as Revenue, rather than Capital, expenditure. However, several of the Fenland Inspire! Projects are already in the pipeline or are quite small in cost and low risk in implementation. Most of the projects have already received approval from Cabinet or Council to progress. Moreover, if FDC was to wait until it can be reasonably assumed that LGR will be going ahead, it is clear that FDC would have real capacity limitations in delivering all the projects in the programme.
- to approve that officers progress the projects, or parts of projects, listed in appendix 1.
- that the list of projects in Fenland Inspire! is not definitive. Projects may be added to or deleted from the list by Cabinet.
- that the Wisbech Chapel building improvement project is unsustainable and should be removed from the Fenland Inspire! Programme.
- that in light of the uncertainty surrounding LGR, Cabinet will suspend further work on all projects, other than those listed in Appendix 1 below) until a comprehensive report is brought back to a future meeting of Cabinet.
- that officers should, nevertheless, keep careful watch for external funding opportunities for all projects.
- the Leader will provide officers with an updated Schedule S, detailing which members are leading on which projects.

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3. Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey
4. Chatteris Leisure Centre condition survey work
5. District wide assessment: new play equipment
6. New Village Green, Wimblington
7. Civil Parking Enforcement
8. St John's Chapels, March
9. New March Country Park: confirmation of land transfer agreement only
10. 3G pitches: preparing or submitting applications to the Football Foundation for external funding
11. Clarkson Memorial lighting and planters

CAB5/25 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan was noted for information.

CAB6/25 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 19 May 2025 were approved and signed.

4.37 pm

Chairman