

Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Progress Against the Communities Priorities

**For performance from
April 2023 to December 2023**

Cabinet Members



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



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



Cllr Sam Hoy
Portfolio Holder for
Housing & Licensing



Cllr Dee Laws
Portfolio Holder for
Planning & Flooding



Cllr Alex Miscandlon
Portfolio Holder for
Leisure & Internal
Drainage Boards



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



Cllr Chris Seaton
Portfolio Holder for
Transport, Heritage &
Culture



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

Communities

Projects from Business Plan:

Support Vulnerable Members of Our Community

ARP updates (Cllr French)

We continue to see more customers using e-services. The suite of forms and other functionality is available to all customer teams using Capita customer contact software to sign customers up to e-services and the number of those using e-services continues to rise. We have recently launched a new improved 'Contact Us' online form which signposts customers to online forms and gathers all required information at the first contact. We are also testing an option to send e-bills as PDF attachments to email to remove the complex sign-up and log in process currently required to view an annual Council Tax bill.

The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils secured just over £1 million. This is a great result for a small team actioning complex further recovery cases for the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax.

The Fraud team's work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £2.8 Million in fraud and error last year, an increase on the previous year. Following approval by Cambridgeshire County Council, the team have started work on the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub to achieve even higher values.

In collaboration with each partner's Housing teams, we took a risk-based approach to target empty properties where data indicated occupation. During the 2023-24 empty property review, a number of properties that had not returned review forms were visited and 38% of these were found to be occupied.

We continue to automate around 97% (in effect as close to 100% as possible) of changes reported by Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) and, following successful collaboration with our software supplier, we successfully helped to develop and implement automation of new claims via UCDS. Currently 35-40% of these new claims are automated and we continue to work with our software supplier to expand and improve the functionality.

Partnership working between teams across all Councils and the ARP teams continues to work well, remaining a priority to ensure that we continue to work as closely in the future, especially with regard to the impact of rising living costs and economic pressures.

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

In early 2023, two new Government schemes were announced to help support residents with rising energy costs if they did not receive payments automatically. The schemes (Energy Bill Support Scheme (Alternative funding) and Alternative Fuel Payments (Alternative funding) were administered by The Department of Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) with Local Authorities responsible for undertaking verification checks and making payments. The schemes ran from late February through to July during our busiest time of year alongside the CTSF and annual billing process. As a pilot site, ARP played a key part in helping to shape

and design the scheme guidance and processes and was the first Authority to make payment nationally. In total we paid out almost £1.6 m to help residents with rising fuel costs.

We continue to provide support for our residents via our My Fenland team to signpost them quickly to the support they need from partner organisations.

We are currently working with public health partners to scope out the delivery of an Early Help Hub based at Fenland to provide tailored support with Employability concerns.

Homelessness and meeting housing needs (Cllr Hoy)

The Housing Options team has successfully prevented 219 households from becoming homeless since April 2023 (up to 31/01/24).

Total homeless presentations for this period were 1844 households.

Housing advice has been given to 1213 households where no duties were owed.

The number of households requiring housing advice continues to rise as the cost-of-living crisis continues and fixed rate mortgage periods come to an end. There has been an 7.8% increase in homeless presentations compared to this time last year.

We have placed 310 households into emergency accommodation so far this year. This is a 30.8% increase on the number of placements last year (237). 244 of these placements have been into B&B which is a 23.2% increase on last year (198). This has had a significant impact on the team's available time and also on the local authority's resources.

The proportion of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing Options work for the year is currently 45% (219 preventions divided by 485 households where duties were owed). This is 12% under target with the following mitigating actions to improve performance which will also help improve the numbers of households we need to place in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation and the length of time for such placements:

- New community support officer recruited to provide management and support for existing and new temporary accommodation residents which frees up Housing Options officers time to resolve homeless presentations earlier through each households personal housing plan
- Increase in temporary accommodation through Local Authority Housing Fund and leased properties from Clarion
- Improvement in void performance by Registered Providers which has been affected by work necessary because of learning from the Awaab Ishak review outcome (damp and mould)
- Increase in new build affordable housing being completed (see affordable housing section)

We have successfully rehoused 64 households within the private sector. This continues to be a challenge with many landlords selling due to economic conditions thereby decreasing the pool of properties available. The market is also highly competitive.

Reducing Rough Sleeping (Cllr Hoy)

Between April 2023 and the end of January 2024, under the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI), Fenland District Council supported 75 clients.

Of those 12 were placed in temporary accommodation and 15 were placed in off-the-street accommodation at the Ferry Project.

Of the 75 clients supported, 38 moved on successfully, 20 clients continue to be supported with their homelessness whilst the remaining 17 clients had an alternative outcome such as prison, hospital, or lost contact with support services.

Below is a table which outlines the positive outcomes achieved for those rough sleeping in Fenland.

	EU	UK	Non-EU
Supported Living	11	8	0
Modular Home	1	0	0
Private Rented	1	0	0
Family/Friends	7	2	0
Reconnected	2	1	0
Work & Accom	1	0	0
Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP)	1	0	0
Housing First	0	3	0

During December, extreme weather warnings were plentiful, and usually with a day or two between. Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) is put in place and activated when the overnight temperature is forecast to be 1C (one degree Celsius) or below, at midnight each day or when the Met Office issues an Amber or Red weather warning. The Council receives central government funding for SWEP.

Due to the decision to continue with SWEP from 24.11.23 to 11.12.23 it gave the opportunity for rough sleepers to use this period to settle and engage with services on a deeper level. In addition to SWEP being of advantage to those already being supported under RSI, it also allowed those who were at risk of rough sleeping to seek support. As those individuals accessed the provision while being at risk of homelessness, the Ferry Project were able to work with them and quickly put support in place so they could access alternative accommodation and therefore prevent them from becoming street homeless.

SWEP Provision Outcomes December 2023- Highlights Prevention Work 24.11.23 to 11.12.23

Prevention Outcomes for SWEP:

4x Placed in off the street accommodation.

1x Clarion Property through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funded by DLUHC.

2x Placed in supported living.

1x Private Rented.

5x Placed in Temporary Accommodation
2x Returned to family.
2x Found own accommodation.
1x Outcome unknown, attended one night and lost contact.

The Prevention and Move-on Fund received from DLUHC also positively influenced the successful outcomes of SWEP. Due to this funding (referenced as Intervention 1 below), a client could move from the Ferry Project into their own accommodation. This then created a space within Ferry to be able to move our rough sleeper client who was accessing SWEP in to off the street accommodation. This client therefore is no longer rough sleeping and is awaiting a move to RSAP accommodation.

Prevention & Move On (P&MO) Fund:

7 clients supported through this funding to date:

3x Under intervention 1 (Moving On Fund)

1x Under intervention 2 (Deposits)

2x Under intervention 3 (Decompression (period of calm and relax to get in a better frame of mind for addressing accommodation issues)

1x Under intervention 4 (Arrears)

Below is a case study which illustrates the positive impact that the continuation of SWEP has in addition to the support given for clients. For this client, there were concerns about how they would manage accommodation and support given that they had been street homeless for a long time. However, the client was able to use the opportunity of SWEP to decompress and engage well with support staff and be able to move on successfully. We were able to demonstrate to our partners the level of engagement from the client had increased and used this provision as an example of them being able and ready to move in to settled accommodation with support.

MS case study

MS is a 66-year-old recovering heroin addict who came to UK from Portugal. MS has a history of repeat homelessness.

He has been known to the service since June 2021, when he was verified as a rough sleeper. MS was in full time employment at this time and required support with finding appropriate accommodation. His engagement was lacking, and his record was closed in November 2021 when we lost contact with him.

MS approached again in April 2023. He was verified and assessed. MS was determined to change his life this time and engaged well with support offered to him. MS was in receipt of State Pension and Pension Credit and to help him achieve financial stability and boost his chances for housing, an application for Attendance allowance was completed jointly by the rough sleeper service and DWP.

MS was also referred to our mental health nurse, following his statement that his mental health was deteriorating. MS engaged well with this process.

In November 2023, an opportunity arose with RSAP and MS was immediately referred. MS attended all appointments and continued to engage well with support services. MS was concerned about his drug recovery however his recovery coordinator was invited to join the

appointment and all concerns were addressed.

Following several positive joint meetings between the RSAP project team, MS and the Rough Sleeper service, MS was accepted to the project and successfully signed his tenancy on 11th December. It was a multi-agency approach which included feedback from professionals such as CGL Drug and Alcohol Service and our RSI funded mental health nurse that helped to support his referral. MS has settled well in his new home and is extremely grateful with the support he has received.

Golden Age & Supporting older people (Cllr Wallwork)

This year, Golden Age hit a remarkable milestone – 20 years of serving our communities. To celebrate, we gathered in the Council Chamber in November 2023 with the Golden Age team which includes Cllr Meekins, Cllr Barber, Cllr Jan French, Cllr Sam Clark, Cllr Susan Wallwork, Cllr Kay Mayor and Cllr Anne Hay. This special occasion wasn't just about cake and congratulations, though. We also welcomed back past members, who shared heartwarming stories of their experiences with Golden Age and reminded us of the lasting impact Golden Age has made on countless lives.

Over the past year, our Golden Age Fairs have brought valuable resources to communities across Fenland, holding fairs at the Manor Leisure Centre in Whittlesey, in Christchurch (where our first ever event was held in 2003), Wimblington Parish Hall and most recently at the Braza Club in March for our Christmas celebration.

During the summer heat, we encouraged everyone to stay hydrated with handy Golden Age water bottles. As winter approached, we prioritised warmth with the "Stay Warm" campaign, partnering with Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) and Citizens Advice Rural Cambs to distribute winter warmer packs. These packs, filled with cozy blankets, hot water bottles, hats gloves, scarves and thermal flasks were met with resounding positive feedback from attendees.

In total, throughout the year, we have had 391 visitors, with one more event planned in this financial year at Parson Drove. Over 35 different organisations have supported the events over the last year including;

CPFT, Oddballs, Armed Forces Covenant Officer, CCC Communities Service Team, Cambridgeshire Libraries, PECT, Careline, March Model Railway Club, Dementia Carer Support Service, Octavius, The Bobby Scheme, CamSight, Parkinsons Support Group, Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, Fenland Volunteer Centre, Lyncroft Care Home, College of West Anglia, Citizens Advice Bureau, Anglian Water, Active Fenland, Victoria Lodge, FACT, Clarion Housing, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Age UK, How are You? Fenland, Fitness Rush, Caring Together, Breathe Easy, Neighbourhood Watch, Versus Arthritis, Care Network, Women's Institute, Fraud and Cyber Prevent, Healthy You, Royal British Legion, Cambs Fire and Rescue, Country Court Care Home and Hereward Rail Partnership.

After two decades, we are still committed to connecting older adults with the information support and resources they need to thrive. We're already planning exciting events for 2024 which will be found in the coming month on our website www.fenland.gov.uk/goldenage

Housing Enforcement Policy & Empty Homes (Cllr Hoy)

Town	HMOs investigated	Other Homes investigated
Wisbech	54	89
March	12	34
Chatteris	1	9
Whittlesey	9	12
Villages	4	38

Total homes investigated is 262.

VILLAGE BREAKDOWN

Benwick = 0

Coates = 2

Coldham = 0

Christchurch = 3

Doddington = 3

Eastrea = 0

Elm = 2

Fridaybridge = 3

Foul Anchor = 0

Gorefield = 2

Guyhirn = 3

Leverington = 9

Manea = 5

Murrow = 1

Newton = 2

Parson Drove = 2

Stonea = 0

Throckenholt = 0

Thorney Toll = 0

Tydd = 3

Turves = 0

Wimblington = 0

WSM = 2

No.s of Notices Served Apr-Oct 2023	S.11 Improve ment Notice *	S.12 Improve ment Notice **	Notice of Intent ***	Final Civil Penalty Notice ****	EICR *****	MEES *****	EPC *****
April		1	1				
May					1	2	
June	3	4		1			1
July			6	1			1
August	1	1					
September	4	4		1		1	
October	1	1			1	1	
November	1	1			2		3
December	2	2					
January							
Total	12	14	7	3	4	4	5

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study

Block of three flats

Freeholder owns and manages all flats- no 3rd party ownership.

Complaint received from top floor tenant, who had been occupying for a significant period, that front bedroom window was in poor condition, allowing drafts and water ingress.

Officer made an appointment to inspect flat, which was duly carried out. During inspection, it was noted that communal areas were in poor condition and didn't comply with Fire Safety requirements.

Officer made a formal appointment to inspect other flats and communal areas and landlord/owner attended. Fire Officer and FDC attended.

A significant number of defects were identified, mainly Damp & Mould, Excess Cold and Fire Safety issues. The officer detailed the defects within correspondence to the landlord, however

he failed to offer any solutions to remediate.

Due to the level of disrepair throughout and evidence that landlord did not accept the significant impact on his tenants, the officer was not convinced that the landlord would carry out the remedial work and therefore opted to serve Improvement Notices for Category 1 & 2 hazards under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System in each of the 4 areas.

Subsequently, the landlord failed to complete the remedial work in the timeline (including requested extensions) afforded and the work that was completed was not satisfactory. Therefore, the officer served Civil Penalties for each of the 5 breaches, totalling £10,350 in accordance with our Housing Enforcement Policy.

The landlord exercised his right to appeal, in addition to direct complaints via the council's 3C's complaints procedure, claiming that he never received the officers informal letter detailing defects.

At the request of the landlord, and in conjunction with the council's Housing Enforcement Policy, an internal review was carried out and 2 out of the 5 fines were amended (in totality to £8,852) with the remaining 2 being upheld. The landlord was not satisfied with this decision and further appealed application to the Residential Property Tribunal (First Tier). As a result, the council officer received instructions from the trial judge to prepare a bundle to be issued to all parties. A hearing date was convened, with the Council being represented by legal counsel.

It was noted that whilst 5 fines were initially issued by FDC, in relation to breaches at all 3 flats, the landlord only appealed against 1 fine, and therefore the trial judge could only consider reviewing this case alone. Upon hearing the appellant and respondent, the judge upheld the council's decision to serve a Civil Penalty Notice.

Subsequently, the landlord has paid the fines via a monthly payment arrangement and has recently sold the block of flats to a new investor landlord, who has made contact with the Council and looks forward to ensuring adequate housing conditions & management are maintained.

Empty Homes:

The following tables give a trend as to how the Council is influencing bringing homes back into use that have been empty for more than 6 months (LTE) and more than 2 years (LTEP)

Table 1

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use through officer involvement.
From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	67	14
Total for the period	1.4.22 – 31.3.23	81

Table 2

Represents the total number of properties brought back into use through officer involvement.
From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. (Up to and including the 31 December 2023)

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Total Officer involvement	60	10
Total for the period	1.4.23 – 31.3.24	70

Table 3

Represents the number of properties brought back into use for the New Homes Bonus
From 4 October 2022 to 2 October 2023 (CTB1 submission date)

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	61	22
Total for the period	5.10.21 - 3.10.22	83

Table 4

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

	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS+
Total Officer Involvement	17	5
Total for the period	3.10.23 - 7.10.24	22

The 2 key Performance Indicators above reflect the impact of this work and how that helps with the financial determination linked to the New Homes Bonus.

The officer has found that one of the more problematic issues is those executors who refuse or are unwilling to apply for probate. Consequently, properties are sitting empty with an F exemption and not paying council tax (property left empty on the death of the taxpayer). Once a Grant of probate is obtained, the executors have a further 6-month exemption from the date of the grant.

Total F Exempt properties in each category (January 2024):

LTEP – 14

LTE – 129

0-6mths 153

The officer has completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) which allows the ability to email a tracing company the list of F exempt properties. The company will check every case and provide an update as to whether Probate has been applied for and or granted. This information will be used to update the council tax system, by removing the F exemption if the grant has been obtained and the exemption has expired. This also ensures the council can recoup the council tax that hasn't been paid. Ultimately It enables the officer to determine which executors haven't applied so when contact is made, they can be encouraged to do so, or the officer will at least understand what is preventing them from applying.

The officer continues to work closely with Anglia Revenues Partnership and during visits and using intelligence from members of the public, has identified several properties which were not listed as empty and should have been paying a premium charge or they have been fraudulently claiming council tax reductions.

Overall empty home trend:

Following feedback from Overview and Scrutiny we are providing the overall trend in long term empty properties. The factors that influence this trend are outside the control of the Council and whilst the list is not exhaustive here are some examples:

- Properties going through probate (F Exempt)
- Properties waiting for planning permission to redevelop or demolish.
- The fluctuation in the property market
- The change in interest rates and mortgage offers, causing some owners to withdraw from prospective sales.
- The increase in labour & material costs and quotes for refurbishment.
- Properties where occupation is prohibited by law until works are completed to make them safe. (G Exempt)
- Repossessed properties (L Exempt)
-

In the tables below it is evident in the January 2024 data that 248 of the 447 LTE properties and 71 of the 162 LTEP properties are ones that the officer can focus work around. The tables show an increase in empty properties when comparing the December 2022 and 2023 data which then stabilises when comparing January 2023 and 2024. However, the overall data for the year supports the national trend, with an increase of empty properties nationally and gives an indication to members of the overall picture.

December 2022	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty	279	88
F Exempt (Probate)	107	14
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	2	11
L Exempt (Repossessed	2	1
Registered Provider:	53	43
Total for the period	443	157

December 2023	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty	234	98
F Exempt (Probate)	132	18
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	1	11
L Exempt (Repossessed	1	0
Registered Provider:	83	41
Total for the period	451	168

January 2023	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty	161	90
F Exempt (Probate)	113	12
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	2	11
L Exempt (Repossessed	2	1
Registered Provider:	53	47
Total for the period	448	161

January 2024	LTE 6-23MTHS	LTEP 24MTHS +
Empty	248	71
F Exempt (Probate)	129	14
G Exempt (Occupation Prohibited by law)	1	11
L Exempt (Repossessed)	1	0
Registered Provider:	68	41
Total for the period	447	162

Promote Health & Wellbeing for all

Leisure & Freedom Updates (Cllr Miscandlon)

Freedom continues to run the leisure centres on Fenland's behalf in a professional manner. Customer feedback remains positive and sales in January were exceptional. A recent partnership meeting has taken place between FDC officers and the Freedom Operations Director. Both parties feel that the partnership remains strong and that Freedom are delivering for the community in Fenland.

The Council has initiated the Strategic Facility Assessment of the three older leisure facilities. This work will take 4 months to complete and will produce a document that highlights the opportunities for the facilities as well as actions required to address building condition survey concerns. [Alliance Leisure](#), an experienced firm specialising in this type of work has been appointed and as part of the assessment a latent demand analysis of the swimming and gym membership elements has recently been undertaken. This work highlights who lives in an area using demographic analysis within a specific drivetime of the facility, and identifies how many members ought to be using the facility as a result of the analysis. This can then be compared with actual user numbers to highlight the level of performance that is possible and the potential that the site has to generate more footfall.

Swim England Learn to Swim (LTS) Latent Demand Analysis summary; Manor Centre, Whittlesey;

- Current LTS attendees: **1,185**
- There is a LTS Latent Demand of **1,067**

Summary;

Manor Leisure Centre currently offers lessons priced in line with Swim England National Benchmarks for LTS (Learn To Swim).

- The LTS latent demand of 1,067 LTS students is below the current performance by 264. Manor is performing exceptionally well
- Taking into consideration the available pool space at Manor Leisure Centre, Swim England feel the Aquatic Latent Demand is achievable and could be exceeded to include those 'interested' in lessons.
- With the future of the Peterborough Regional Pool uncertain, the opportunity could look

different across Fenland in the near future.

Hudson Leisure Centre

- Current LTS programme; **1,015**
- There is a LTS Latent Demand of **1,449**

Summary;

- There is currently no LTS competition in the catchment area, which presents an excellent opportunity for Hudson Leisure Centre to further expand their programme.
- The Hudson Leisure Centre currently offers lessons priced in line with Swim England National Benchmarks for LTS and in line with the other facilities in the district.
- The Hudson Leisure Centre already has a well performing LTS programme, above Swim England benchmarks for pools of a similar size, but still has the potential to achieve an additional 434 swimmers on swimming lessons.
- Taking into consideration the available pool space at the leisure centre, Swim England feel the Aquatic Latent Demand is achievable.
- Consideration should be given to staffing levels and pool programming to reach the maximum capacity

George Campbell Leisure Centre

- Current LTS programme; **613**
- There is a LTS Latent Demand of **700**

Summary;

- George Campbell Leisure Centre currently offer lessons priced in line with Swim England National Benchmarks for LTS for public sector swimming lessons.
- George Campbell Leisure Centre's LTS programme is performing well relative to the opportunity in the catchment area and considering the size of the available water space.
- Taking into consideration the available pool space at George Campbell Leisure Centre, Swim England feel the Latent Demand of an additional 83 learn to swim students is achievable and could be exceeded to include those 'interested' in lessons. However, the opportunity in the catchment area is not significant and presents a ceiling on too much development.
- Levels of deprivation are significant in the catchment area surrounding George Campbell Leisure Centre, which is factored into the analysis.

Leisure Database Company; Fitness Membership Latent Demand Analysis

Manor Leisure Centre

The estimated the overall demand for fitness at Manor Leisure Centre is 1,192 – this is the total number of members that could be achieved. This includes allowance for the 15% of members who travel from outside the 12 minute catchment area. No negative consideration for competition has been made as there is nothing comparable in the area.

There are currently around 1,075 members at Manor Leisure Centre, so the estimate highlights a potential increase of 117 members. Ultimately, the leisure centre is already performing well in an area with a fairly low population.

Hudson Leisure Centre

The estimated overall demand for fitness memberships at Hudson Leisure Centre to be 1,573 – this is the total number of members that could potentially be achieved. This includes allowance for 30% of the total who are estimated to travel from outside a 12 minute catchment area. A negative consideration has been included for competition in the area, particularly PureGym.

The Centre currently has around 1,063 fitness members so if we subtract these from the total, a potential increase of 510 members may be possible. This work takes into account demographic analysis, but still leaves an unusually high potential increase in members. This assessment will be further scrutinised as the Facility Assessment work progresses.

George Campbell Leisure Centre

The estimated the overall demand for fitness at George Campbell Leisure Centre is 1,439 – this is the total number of members that could be achieved. This includes allowance for 30% of the total who are estimated to travel from outside the 12 minute catchment area.

The centre currently has around 1,152 fitness members so if we subtract these from the total estimated potential membership, there remains the potential to attract an increase of a further 287 members.

Integrated Care Partnership (Cllr Boden)

Please see [Health & Wellbeing Update](#)

Active Fenland (Cllr Miscandlon)

The Active Fenland Team continues to deliver three main projects across the District. All projects are funded entirely by third party grants with one project funded by the CCC Public Health Team (as a consortium of Districts across Cambridgeshire) and the other two projects funded by the ICS. Just under 4,000 participants have attending the Active Fenland sessions in this financial year so far.

A list of available activities can be found here;
[New Year Timetable 2024 - Digital v5 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

Following a Transformation Team review of customer bookings for both the Events team and Sports Development Team, a piece of booking software has been purchased. This should be operation in the Active Fenland Team in February. It will improve the customer experience considerably when booking or cancelling sessions. It will also allow the team members themselves more time to effectively manage the projects and potentially delivery more opportunities to be active in Fenland.

Increase the use of local open spaces and collaborate with local activity providers and other partners to address health inequalities (Cllr Wallwork)

With the Wisbech Park pavilion now completed, both the Active Fenland Team and Community Teams are considering the use of the Pavilion, with bookings through the Town

Council, for opportunities to carry out more community activities within Wisbech Park. The Pavilion as a point to meet, relax, grab a coffee, or use the community room is expected to provide real opportunities in the coming few months.

Health & Wellbeing Update (Cllr Wallwork)

Partnership approaches:

The last meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board was January 2024.

The agenda pack can be found here:

[Council and committee meetings - Cambridgeshire County Council > Meetings \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Tobacco Control Alliance are developing a fresh plan 'Smoking and Vaping Prevention Plan 2024-29' following the government's recent announcement (following the consultation period in 2023) to remove disposable vape products from sale. This plan will be developed as a partnership approach with oversight through the Joint Health and Wellbeing and Integrated Care Partnership Board.

The Integrated Neighbourhood Boards for the north and south of Fenland are partnerships working together to address local priorities. In both areas the priorities were set in late 2022 and will be reviewed in 2024. The priorities link to the joint health and wellbeing board and integrated care service strategy. This can be found here:

[Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System | CPICS Website](#)

The priorities for the north Fenland board are smoking cessation, wellbeing and community engagement. For the southern board they are frailty, young people and dementia. Each board has a coordinating officer appointed by the integrated care service to support the partnership.

Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture & Heritage

Delivering the Creativity & Culture Strategy (Cllr Seaton)

The Fenland Cultural Strategy and the part-externally funded role of Creativity & Culture Development Officer has enabled successful applications to the UK: Shared Prosperity Fund (£120,000) and the Integrated Care System Tackling Prevention Fund (£50,000). Please find below an update for both of these funding streams.

The UK: Shared Prosperity Funded project called 'Amplifying Community Arts and Culture' has levered in additional external funding to enhance the impact made, including enabling the extension of the Creativity & Culture Development Officer role by two years until September 2025.

The Fenland Culture Fund is a programme of micro-grants for arts, culture, and heritage, [Fenland Culture Fund - Fenland District Council](#). First launched in October 2023, it includes an

investment of £34,000 from UK: Shared Prosperity Fund and has been created in collaboration with Arts Council England (with an additional £25,000 contribution) and Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy (a further £5,000 contribution for costs to pilot a Giving Circle scheme).

The grants launched on Monday 9 October, and closed on Monday 20 November and decisions were made in December 2023. A total of 42 applications were received with a combined value of more than £70,000. Initially a £23,000 budget was available in the first round (from Arts Council England and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund). However, due to the high number of quality applications, further funding was made available from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund project.

The Fenland District Council communications team and colleagues in finance have supported this piece of work, and we are pleased that this is the first public element of the Fenland Cultural Strategy that people have seen and been able to benefit from.

The Creativity & Culture Development Officer has also been successful in securing £50,000 to deliver a programme of events to support young people's mental health using creativity and art interventions, in part inspired by the NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing model. This is a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System funded project, and the fund is for Tackling Prevention and Supporting Community Engagement. An administrative partner has been engaged and a project plan for 'Express Yourself' has been developed with delivery starting when it launched its artist call-out process in December, and training and delivery commencing in 2024.

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

The Creativity and Culture Development Officer regularly makes introductions and can identify valuable connections for people to meet and encourage collaboration and learning from each other. The communications team at Fenland District Council are very supportive and can often help Fenland organisations in promoting their events and opportunities to our own wide audience.

The Culture, Art and Heritage Committee was established by the Council, which is an important next step in connectivity and advocacy with the Fenland Cultural Strategy and associated projects. The first meeting was on Tuesday 3 October, and saw a training session with presentations from:

- Fenland District Council, Creativity and Culture Development Officer.
- Arts Council England, Relationship Manager / Priority Place Lead for Fenland.
- Historic England, Stakeholder Engagement Advisor and Local Heritage Education Manager.
- National Trust, General Manager and Project Manager.
- Creative People and Places, MarketPlace Project, Programme Director and Creative Producer.

The Creativity and Culture Development Officer is an active member of a range of Fenland events and groups. Including:

- Fenland Young Creatives, Local Cultural Education Partnership which is committed to children experiencing art and culture at home in Fenland and creative volunteering and careers.

The Fenland Poet Laureate Award launched on the 4 December 2023 for entries. This is an annual poetry competition to find the next Poet Laureate for the district, which has often been described as the most prestigious award of its kind in Cambridgeshire, and this is the first time it has been organised by Fenland District Council. Again, our communications team hugely supported this to raise its profile, and it was great to see the first output from the new Culture, Art and Heritage committee 'go live'. The Awards didn't close for entries until late January 2024, hence no further details in this report.

Supporting groups to hold public events (Cllr Murphy)

Throughout 2023 Fenland's community event groups delivered successful town events. These events are planned and managed in partnership with town committees and with part funding provided by Fenland District Council. The Council also provides support staff and event management staff. Each event plan is presented to the Cambridgeshire Safety Advisory Group for advice and support with regard to ensuring public safety.

In April, March Town hosted St George's Fayre

A new online booking system, which has been introduced as a council transformation project, is soon to go live. This will provide a simple end to end booking system for the customer and save considerable time for staff.

March Christmas Market – The wrap up meeting took place this week and feedback has been very positive both from traders and visitors. Thousands turned out to shop. This year we trialled a park and ride from Fenland Hall which was successful. The date for 2024 will be Sunday 1st December and plans are underway to utilise the new Broad Street layout for the benefit of local businesses.

Wisbech Christmas – Despite the rain setting in around lunch time footfall in Wisbech Town Centre was 3 times that of the Sunday before. Highlights included stilt walkers and over 1400 visitors to Wisbech Library and 600 at Wisbech Museum. The date for this year's event will be Sunday 8th December 2024.

Planning for St George's Fayre (21st April 2024), Chatteris (22nd and 23rd June 2024) and Whittlesey Festivals (8th September 2024) are currently underway.

Pride In Fenland Awards (Cllr Wallwork)

The Pride In Fenland Awards will be taking place on Wednesday 13th March 2024 at Wisbech St Mary Community and Sports Centre with the closing date for nominations being midnight on Sunday, February 11, 2024. At the time of writing there are over 70 nominations.

For Pride in Fenland, please visit: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/prideinfenland>

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

Phased demolition works commenced at the site and the owner is preparing a planning application for the replacement building. Decorative hoarding to the existing herras fencing is being investigated in order to improve the appearance of the street scene.

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2023/24	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
ARP1	Days taken: new claims and changes for Council Tax Support	6.48 days	9.00 days	9.45	
ARP2	Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit	5.29 days	8.00 days	10.86	
CELP1	Total number of private rented homes where positive action has been taken to address safety issues	246	250	262	
CELP2	The proportion (%) of households presenting to the Council as homeless whose housing circumstances were resolved through Housing options work (%)	53%	57%	45%	
CELP3	Number of empty properties brought back into use	81	50	70	
CELP4	Amount of New Homes Bonus achieved as a result of bringing empty homes back into use	£98,395	£45,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP6	Number of Active Health sessions per year that improve community health	513	650		
CELP19	Satisfaction with our leisure centres (Net Promoter Score)	29	30	N/A (March 2024)	N/A
CELP20	Value of Arts Council Grants achieved in Fenland	£43,000	£201,000	N/A (March 2024)	N/A

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

Comments
<p>ARP 2 - Days taken: new claims and changes for Housing Benefit. Performance year to date has been impacted by the energy schemes which have now closed. A system issue affecting automation of Universal Credits records has also impacted resource requirements within Benefits. This has also now been resolved, we have added several 'focus' days and identified some additional focused resources to assist and we aim to meet the target by the end of the year.</p>

