

Overview & Scrutiny

Progress Against Economy Corporate Priority

September 2024

(includes information for
April 2024 to July 2024)

Cabinet Members



**Councillor
Chris Boden**

Leader of the Council
& Portfolio Holder for
Finance



**Councillor
Ian Benney**

Portfolio Holder for
Economic Growth



**Councillor
Mrs Jan French**

Deputy Leader of the
Council



**Councillor
Miss Sam Hoy**

Portfolio Holder for
Housing



**Councillor
Mrs Dee Laws**

Portfolio Holder for
Planning



**Councillor
Chris Seaton**

Portfolio Holder for
Social Mobility &
Heritage



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



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

Projects from Business Plan:

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

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

Inward investment

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Work closely with and respond to information enquiries from CA Inward Investment Team	Working with the Growth Works Inward Investment Team: 10 inward investment enquiries per annum 8 GW enquiries received 1 inward investment per annum 1 GW inward investment at negotiation stage	
Economic Growth Team inward investment service	There was engagement with 59 companies that were considering Fenland as an inward investment or expansion location, with 3 successful inward investments, 1 foreign direct investment from Peru and 4 expansions.	
Continue to market Fenland propositions to target growth sectors, individual businesses and locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarkets, fast-food brands, hotels, etc • Inward Investor Pack • Targeted Business Exhibitions • Programme of strategic marketing 	Email and telephone contact undertaken with major hotels, fast food companies and supermarkets Creation of Inward Investor Pack developed for UKREiif Attendance at the UKREiif exhibition and conference held in May Royal Armouries Leeds bringing together an array of key decision-makers from every area of the built environment: the public sector – with every core UK city and regions involved – alongside government, investors, funders, developers, housebuilders, and more.	
Deliver 'soft landing' tools that support an aftercare programme for new and	Creation of soft-landing package. Marketing of package to potential investors, intermediaries i.e., agents,	

<p>recently established investors, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings • Free office accommodation • Priority planning applications 	<p>lawyers, banks and partners Intermediaries identified. Meetings to take place, pack produced and marketed.</p>	
<p>Collate Insight/data – targeted market research to include opportunities for attracting an hotel into Fenland, high quality manufacturing and engineering, research institutions, etc</p>	<p>1 research project undertaken per annum.</p> <p>1 proposition created for a target market per annum. Initial Agrifood proposition created. Research organisation to deliver project identified and discussed with potential providers Initial Advanced Manufacturing/Precision Engineering proposition also created and will be delivered by research providers Discussion underway with CPCA to request funding for the research</p>	
<p>Discretionary Business Rate Relief to incentivise businesses to locate in Fenland and commercial developments to be brought forward. Any relief is totally discretionary and only considered where it acts as a real incentive to business.</p>	<p>To date no business has been considered suitable for consideration.</p>	

Provide responsive Business Support (Cllr Benney)

Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25

The Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25 was approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2022. The Refresh was created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031. The Refresh set out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to support economic growth in Fenland.

An updated and revised Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025-2028 will be presented to Cabinet and Council for approval later this year.

Within the current Refresh, five areas of focus have defined activities and outcomes the progress against each of which is set out below. The progress against each activity

in 2023-24 and up to July in 2024-25 is set out below. Delivery of outcomes will continue throughout the remainder of 2024-25.

In addition to the planned for activities in the Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25, several other activities were delivered against as required during the year. New opportunities continually arise to, for example, attract funding into the district and the Economic Growth Team operate flexibly to maximise these opportunities. These additional activities are set out below.

1. Enterprise

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Economic Growth Team Service	<p>15 enquiries per year converting to 3 businesses per year finding new premises/site - 18 enquiries 1/3/23 - 30/4/24</p> <p>5 company expansions and 1 business consolidated into their premises in March from other premises outside the District.</p> <p>Currently working with Fenland Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robotics company looking to expand due to an increase in exports to Ireland. • 5 Medium business new site or existing site expansion • 6 small businesses looking for new premises <p>Inward Investors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 businesses located in Fenland • Expansion of Peruvian agrifood company to create a manufacturing facility in 2025 	
<p>Maintain regular meetings with the business community to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fenland Chamber of Commerce (FCC) • Federation of Small Business (FSB) 	<p>Quarterly meeting with FCC. Working closely with Chair of FCC to help re-establish the Chamber in Fenland.</p> <p>Quarterly meeting with The Federation of Small Business.</p>	
Develop the Fenland for Business website to support businesses with signposting	Working with the Council's communications team, continue to develop the Fenland for Business	

to advice and guidance and information	website with a focus on Start Ups, Growing Businesses and Inward Investors. We will add video content via YouTube, case studies showing how the Growth Team have supported local businesses and create a presence on LinkedIn. 5% increase year on year of visitors to the Fenland for Business website and the number of followers on X.	
Annual business start-up inserts in Council Tax bills – targeting the hard to reach home based businesses and those considering starting a business	An insert with link to the Fenland for Business website was included in 2024-25 Council Tax bill providing information on the assistance provided to businesses by the Economic Growth Team and partner organisations Plans are in place for insert into 2023-24	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Partner business support introductions	Smart Manufacturing Association regarding Industry 4.0 adoption and grants 5 companies referred to the SMA and a joint event held at the Boathouse with 21 companies attending. The SMA closed in March 2023 as CPCA funding was withdrawn. Business and Intellectual Property Centre (March) regarding Start Up support and grants An officer sat on the judging panel for the BIPC start up grant awards, judging entries from across Cambridgeshire.	

2. Enabling infrastructure

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Acquiring technical and	Internal FDC created and objectives	

specialist support to bring forward employment sites to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments.	agreed. Currently assessing which sites to focus on within the project. Forecast that reports will be completed by end September 2024.	
Work with partners to encourage and promote sustainable low carbon green infrastructure.	Ongoing dialogue.	
Support the development of sustainable and enhanced broadband infrastructure including completing the delivery of the Fenland component within the Connecting Cambridgeshire project	Engaging with partners including the private sector e.g. CityFibre to help them deliver >97% premises (homes and businesses) having access to broadband speeds of at least 24mbps. Meetings undertaken with City Fibre and UPP regarding fibre installation in Wisbech and March during the search for cabinet sites. Now operating as BAU	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Fens Reservoir	The new c£3billion reservoir is at the heart of a whole new water supply project to provide homes and businesses with a reliable water supply. The Economic Growth Team is working to help ensure that the opportunities of both the construction phase and the completed reservoir are fully exploited for Fenland residents and businesses.	
Discretionary Business Rates Scheme	Cabinet & Council approved a new discretionary business rates scheme aimed at encouraging developers to build new business units with the potential of not having to pay business rates for up to 12 months until the unit is occupied.	

3. Business retention & growth

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Undertake a proactive account management business engagement programme with larger employers and potential growth companies	4 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team. 5 case studies completed Group of 40 businesses receive 1:2:1 "account management" service with 40 businesses visited per annum 42 company meetings completed resulting in the identification of 9 active expansion projects involving the support of the EG Team.	
Undertake a proactive business engagement programme with all known employers and business owners	2,500 businesses have so far received 6 e-newsletters communications from the Team. Reactive follow up to engagement with Team from businesses	
CPCA Sector Advisors	The team will engage with the new CPCA advisors when they are in position in Sept 2024	
Work with agents and developers to bring forward employment land provision, encourage investment in 'move on' opportunities	2 agents and developers forum meetings per annum	
Develop joint Business events with partners to encourage networking, share business issues, etc	2 joint partner business events per annum Smart Manufacturing Alliance on - Digitalisation for the Pathway to Net Zero - Boat House - 30th November 2023. Decarbonising Dissemination event. Worked with Clarion to develop an event to share with the construction sector the lessons learnt from updating and retrofitting social housing (net zero). COWA had a speaking slot. Jan 24. Event with Innovate UK Edge in March 2023 regarding support for research and development	
Services for Business - All businesses registered for business rates receive information advising them of the services available to them from the Council	Every business registered for business rates received communication from the Economic Growth Team with their 2024-25 Business Rates Bills.	

and its partners such as Growth Works.		
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and data management	A CRM system branded Evolutive provided by Alcium Ltd was acquired in April 2024. All data held by the Economic Growth Team on local business is now held in the system and the number of businesses is targeted to grow annually. The CRM delivers significant benefits including enabling reports and analysis to be created efficiently, a joined-up service provided for businesses, targeted communications and the end-to-end management via the CRM of business grant schemes. The CRM has also enabled the hosting of a commercial land and property database to be created on the Fenland for Business website.	

Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Updated and revised Economic Growth Refresh for 2025-28. Consultation undertaken with other council departments and external stakeholders.	Cabinet and Council approved Economic Growth Refresh 2025-28 setting out the Economic Growth Team's strategic priorities and outcomes for the next three years.	

Other updates

We welcomed Dawn Caplin, Investment in Business Officer, to the team who will be project managing the Shared Prosperity Investment in Business grant schemes and the Rural England Prosperity Fund. The post is fully funded by the Shared Prosperity fund.

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

The Estates team remain actively engaged with tenants of all sites. Overall occupancy across the investment estate remains high at 94.5%

- Industrial units are fully occupied.
- Boathouse occupancy has dropped to 96%. Representing two empty offices for which we have interest in one.
- South Fens Business Centre has fallen to 63% as of 31st July 2024

We continue to have had a high turnover of tenants at SFBC. However, following the relaxation of the rents we can charge, we have seen a flattening of the curve and four tenants who had either served notice to quit or looking too have now reversed that decision based on the new rent profile and agreed new leases.

In addition, with a dedicated marketing budget now available estates team members are working on a renewed marketing strategy to raise the profile of the site, and this will be rolled out during the autumn of 2024.

Skills Update (Cllr Benney)

Workforce development

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

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
To engage with CA Growth Works with Skills - demand-led skills service connecting learners and employers with opportunities that enable growth.	Number of referrals per annum – 20 to end Dec 2023 when the service was ended by CPCA. A new Skills service established in April 2024.	
Work collaboratively with Jobcentre Plus to help raise awareness to businesses of enterprise opportunities and work placements.	4 meetings per annum with Jobcentre Plus. 8 meetings to date 3 listings per annum of DWP in programmes in the Team's e-newsletter. 3 listings to date DWP had a stand at the redundancy event, which was arranged by FDC officers for IPL, Westry staff. EG Team attended the DWP Jobs fair in Wisbech	
Work collaboratively with College of West Anglia (COWA), North Cambridgeshire Training Centre (NCTC) and ARU Peterborough to deliver programmes that meet	4 meetings per annum with COWA – 4 meetings complete & COWA presented their skills offer at an FDC online event to share lessons learnt from the retrofit program run by FDC and Clarion Housing 4 meetings per annum with ARU	

the needs of local business including quarterly collaboration meetings	Peterborough – 2 meetings to date 4 meetings per annum with North Cambridgeshire Training Centre – 4 meetings to date Number of company referrals per annum – 7 companies referred Quarterly meetings held with centre manager and training officer to discuss company training needs	
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Additional activities:

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Memberships and Events	The team worked with partners to benefit Fenland businesses, including CPCA, Shoestring – a member of the East of England board of the Institute for Manufacturing scheme, Committee members of Fenland Chamber of Commerce and judging the BITP grant scheme for startup businesses in Cambridgeshire Innovate Edge event – held at NCTC to inform Fenland companies of the support available for innovation. StocksAG - Innovate UK Edge Event, David Hampton, manufacturing and operations director at Wisbech firm StocksAG, said: 'I found it to be very informative as we had no idea of the help and support that was out there to help support our journey. A number of the topics discussed were exactly the things we are underway with here at StocksAG.'	

Environmental Health inspection and business support programme (Cllr Wallwork)

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

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

Food safety support

The table below sets out the number of support visits undertaken between April and July, and the resulting food hygiene rating score awarded following that visit.

FHRS score 5-0	5	4	3	2	1	0
April	15	2	0	0	0	0
May	23	2	0	1	1	1
June	18	2	2	0	1	0
July	22	3	0	0	1	0

94 visits were undertaken in premises meeting the criteria for a food hygiene rating scheme award (take away and restaurant premises) and in total 113 interventions were undertaken, some of these include telephone surveys or questionnaires.

Premises receiving a score of 2 or lower will receive follow up visits. All premises, if unhappy with their score, may request a paid for reassessment.

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

[Search for ratings | Food Hygiene Ratings](#)

National sampling programmes

As part of both food safety and health and safety service plans resource is allocated to undertaking sampling of various products and environments, following national study criteria.

There are currently 3 national surveys running.

- **Study 80:** Unpasteurised and pasteurised milk cheeses (UK and non-UK) from retail and manufacturers/dairies. Study to run from April 2024 until the end of March 2025.
- **Study 81:** Hygiene in Tattoo and Cosmetic Piercing Premises. Study to run from June 2024 until the end of November 2024.
- **Study 82: (Reactive Study)** Raw Shell Eggs (Non-Lion brand). Study to run from July 2024 until March 2025.

Currently we have 8 manufacturing / approved premises in the district. These include food preparation and packing premises. These approved premises are subject to more complex legislative requirements such as sampling of product and certain quality assurances.

Food allergen awareness

To support colleagues in trading standards services we are working closely to support their sampling campaign in relation to food allergen awareness. Trading Standards colleagues have accessed national funding streams to work closely with businesses to better understand this important food standards responsibility.

Health and safety support

Between April and July 22 supportive visits were undertaken with high risk or special project businesses.

There were 9 visits to tattoo and body piercing establishments. Some of these were to provide updated information and guidance and some to assess for additional licensing requirements to be added to current licenses. Thus, ensuring customers can be confident in the processes carried out to protect their health and safety, including infection control.

There were 13 visits to funeral director premises following a special request received in April 2024 from the Ministry of Justice and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

This project was initiated following the recent distressing incident at Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull and East Riding which has received widespread media coverage. The initial police investigation identified some concerns with practices at the premises and therefore each local authority was asked to undertake local visits. This information will be used to inform potential regulation of the industry, something which government have been reviewing since 2020.

13 visits were made. The visits, which were supported by an industry appointed representative for Cambridgeshire, followed a set protocol;

1. Hygiene, facility conditions, and capability
2. Traceability and transparency
3. Dignity and condition of deceased people in a funeral director's care; and
4. Pre-paid funeral plans.

A report was returned to Ministry of Justice setting out no local issues were identified.

Satisfaction with business support visits

Following the service plan interventions a short survey is undertaken with customers. Approximately 25% of businesses are contacted and asked for feedback.

Between April and July 34 business were surveyed and 100% provided positive feedback.

Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration

Planning updates (including progress on the Local Plan) (Cllr Laws)

Overview

The year so far, there has been significant change in the Service due to a number of new members of staff joining Fenland District Council. Planning Policy including S106 Management has been resourced in house after Peterborough City Council withdrew their support for these matters. The vacancies within the Development Management and Enforcement have reduced but the Service is still covering 3.no vacancies and agency staff are still required to deliver the service and to deal with the backlog generated over the extended period of vacancies. Alongside this the Head of Planning role, which was increased from part time to full time, has been filled.

The amended scheme of delegation, which decides which planning applications are determined by committee as opposed to officers, continues to put pressure on the ability for Officer's to meet the statutory deadlines for planning applications. This is particularly relevant for the smaller and less controversial planning applications. The resulting impact is also of lengthy meeting agendas and the associated significant impact on those engaged in delivery of them.

In addition, we are continuing to work with colleagues in the MyFenland Team on a multistage Transformation project which is already implementing change within the service. The objective of the transformation project is to identify and implement efficiencies.

The Government are currently consulting on significant changes to the NPPF and have indicated that they are looking to bring forward further changes to the Planning System. The impact of these changes is unknown at this moment but is likely to put additional strain on the limited resources within the Service.

Activity	Outcomes	Performance Against Target
Speed of Determination of Planning applications 2024/25 to date	Majors	100 %
	Minor	86.05 %
	Other	87.50 %

The national performance requirement is measured over a 24-month rolling monitoring period and in relation to this we are performing as follows:

Major 85.94% (against a target of 60%)

Non-Major 75.2% (against a target of 70%)

Activity	Outcome
Planning Appeals 2024/25 to date	3
No. won by FDC	1
No. Lost by FDC	2
Awards of cost	1

Income 2024/25 to July 2024*

Application Fee	£323,680 (down £25,902 on previous year)
'Major Development' Application Fee	£168,789 (down £51,779 on previous year)
Pre-application Fee	£11,019 (up £7,036 on previous year)

* It is worth noting that Planning application fees increased by a minimum of 25% (35% for 'major development') in December 2023 and the comparison to last year is therefore not directly helpful as this would further increase the shortfall stated above. More importantly income is circa £130k lower than the profiled budget to July 2024.

Activity	Outcomes
Enforcement (2024/25 year to date)	No. of Service Requests – 183 No. of Cases Closed (following investigation / mitigation action) – 914 No. of pending cases – 392
No of Notice Served:	Enforcement Notices – 7 Section 215 Notices – 7 Breach of Condition Notices - 1

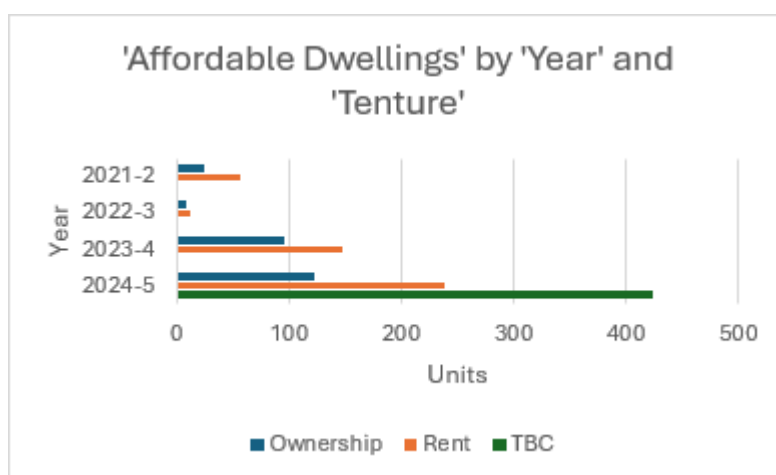
Activity	Outcomes
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5 Year Land Supply	Published May 2024 – 8.08 years (passed)
Housing Delivery Test	Published December 2023 – 96% (passed)
Annual Monitoring Report	Published Feb 2024
Fens Reservoir second non-statutory consultation response	Submitted August 2024

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

Over the last 4 years we have seen an upward trend in the number of affordable dwellings delivered in the district. 2021–2023/4 are confirmed, 2024/25 remain subject to change, but we currently forecast that the trend will continue and that the number of completed units will continue to see an increase year on year.

Clarion continues to hold the most stock as the councils' stock transfer provider, but the districts has also attracted new RP's. This has been difficult in previous years, with developers and RP's feeling that the district was less attractive and viable. Whilst some of the changes in attitude are associated with external influences, Fenland DC should also take credit. Our constant engagement, collaborative approach, supportive planning team, realistic policies and pragmatic planning committee have all helped developers and RPs look more favourably on the district. Case Study – Accent Housing



External funding bid and major projects updates (Cllr Boden)

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

Council Officers have successfully completed the requirements of MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) to access the LTPFT capacity funding.

Work has been undertaken to set up a Town Board in Wisbech with an independent chair, several local community representatives and representatives of local partner authorities.

The agreed aims and objectives of The Board are:

- To work together to shape and manage the development of a ten-year, long-term plan for the town.
- To work together to deliver a three-year delivery plan of projects (in the short term) for the town.
- To allocate and deliver projects in line with the Government guidance to invest £20,000,000 into the town of Wisbech.
- To explore new ways of working to maximise the impact of resource deployment within core organisational resources to address the priorities for the communities we support.
- To seek to add social value to the work we all deliver by considering wider socioeconomic, environmental and health impacts through our normal service and project delivery work.
- To work together to deliver a joined-up approach towards strategic interventions which improve the long-term opportunities and fortunes of our communities.
- To provide support and advice to the accountable body (Fenland District Council) in developing and governing a Long-Term Plan For Towns programme in line with the MHCLG prospectus.

The current makeup of The Board is as follows:

- Chair: Iain Kirkbright
- Member of Parliament: Stephen Barclay MP
- Fenland District Council Member: Cllr Sam Hoy
- Wisbech Town Council Member(s): Cllr Susan Wallwork
- Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) or their Representative: Chair to invite the PCC or ask the PCC for a senior local Police Officer to attend as the PCC's representative
- Local community member: Louise Pitt
- Local community member: Amanda Scott
- Local community member: Paul Faulkner
- Serving member of Cambridgeshire County Council: Cllr Steve Tierney
- Serving member of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority: Cllr Chris Boden

A long list of project ideas has been initially created which has been distilled down to form the basis of how the board would like to see the investment spent.

The Board has taken its first actions to employ consultants (in line with CLG guidance on spending of funds) to create both a 3-year investment plan and 10-year vision for the town of Wisbech. Alongside this work there are public consultation events planned.

Following the recent change to central government, the deadline has been pushed back from November to a future date, and officers are awaiting clarity on this revised deadline from MHCLG. The Board have taken the decision to continue working with the consultants to generate the required documentation. Public consultation is on hold until more information is available from MHCLG regarding deadlines.

Accommodation Review (Cllr Boden)

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

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

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

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

Activity	Outcomes	Variance
Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)	SPF funding of £1.25m over three years has been secured by the by the Growth Team. Case studies will be made available via the Fenland for Business website. The programme is on time and funding will be utilised by February 2025. A full programme evaluation report will be produced by August 2025.	
Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)	REPF funding of £436k over two years has been secured by the Growth Team. Case studies will be made available via the Fenland for Business website. The programme is on time and funding will be utilised by February 2025. A full programme evaluation report will be produced by August 2025.	

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

The March Future Highstreet Fund programme continues through delivery phase and at pace. To date the Market place scheme has been completed on time and under

budget, along with four property grants being provided to local property owners. March Dental and 24 Market Place have both received grants totalling £100,000 to improve their premises from empty/derelict properties to bring them back into use. Following intervention by the grants, FDC have been able to support the creation of two new purpose build business units (now let) and three new residential units (also let) within the town centre.

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

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

Following a successful Project Amendment Request to MHCLG, FDC has recently launched a further grant funding scheme for business owners to access funding for new shop-fronts. The team have received 16 Expressions of Interest to date with first full applications being requested in September.

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

A revised design and expected costs and their affordability continue to be discussed by the project team. Sources for funding are also being investigated to see if delivery of the project is an affordable proposition.

24 High Street, Wisbech (Cllr Seaton)

Etec, FDC's main contractor, continues with the construction work on 24 High Street, Wisbech. More progress is visible, with work now taking place at height, with brick and blockwork at the first-floor level, moving up towards the second floor more recently.

Unfortunately, the original completion date has slipped due to considerations regarding the floor slab size impacting on the laying out of brickwork following slight movement of buildings adjacent to the 24 High Street. Discussions are ongoing with the contractor regarding the revised formal expected completion date. Following piling issues in 2023 absorbing the 'float' in the project plan (i.e. the excess time built into the project plan in case of issues), there is no further flexibility so any issues mean that the project will complete later than expected. The original completion date was in October. Current estimations set the date in early 2025, but at the time of writing a confirmed date has not been negotiated between the contractor and FDC.

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

FFL and Lovell Homes are progressing a reserved matters planning application to build out the site

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

A reserved matters application is being progressed for plot 5 for an affordable housing extra care scheme and options being further considered for the remaining plots.

Growing Fenland (Cllr Boden)

Chatteris Projects

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

The contract for the works to 14 Church Lane has been awarded and work is well underway in converting the former museum and town council chambers to create better workspaces, badly needed storage facilities and new community rooms. The existing first floor accommodation (residential flats) is almost ready to be offered to prospective tenants. The building work continues but should be completed shortly, allowing Chatteris Town Council to move back after using temporary accommodation at 2 Park Street. As a result of the building works large meetings of the Council, including full council meetings, are being held at the King Edward Centre.

Whittlesey Projects

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

- Develop an SOBC regarding a Whittlesey relief road. Consultants will be appointed to progress this work.
- Add additional solar PV to the Manor swimming pool; Business case developed. Application to UKPN underway – awaiting notice from UKPN to proceed, procurement completed. Expecting to deliver project, subject to UKPN approval in early 2025.
- Improvements to the netball / tennis court area at the Manor Centre have been completed
- Whittlesey Buttercross
A meeting with local Members has taken place an improvements discussed are to be highlighted to the property owners (CCC) to see if FDC is able to manage the (minor) works concerned.

Wisbech Projects

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

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

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

The first tranche of disposal continues as planning consents are granted followed by either a sale via auction or by private treaty. In the case of private treaty sales, to ensure fair value an independent valuation by a local RICS qualified surveyor is undertaken prior to disposal. To date Tranche 1 sales of resulted in capital receipts of £431K.

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

Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements

Wisbech Access Strategy

This is a CPCA funded project being delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council. The latest information about the project can be found on the County Council website from the following link:

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

A Wisbech Access Strategy report was presented to CPCA Business Board in July 2021 and CPCA Board in September 2021. The report required a strategic decision on the way forward linked to timescales and budgets. It was agreed that funding would be made available to complete the detailed design and the land acquisition for the 3 schemes – A47 Broad End Road, A47 Elm High Road and A1101 Ramnoth Road/Weasenham Lane. The work is progressing alongside a full business case project. These projects are now very near to completion with the final land acquisitions expected to be complete in the autumn 2024.

The next step for these 3 projects is to secure funding for their construction. Discussions between FDC, CCC and CPCA are ongoing to consider all the opportunities to get the funding needed.

March Area Transport Study

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

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

In July 2024, an additional project update went to the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. This report included the recommendation to draw down an additional £7million pounds towards phase FBC2b of the project, for the next two years up to March 2026. The funding is to progress the construction of the Twenty Foot Road and St Peter's Road schemes. It is also to progress the Northern Link Road FBC3 up to and including detailed design. Further information can be found on the CPCA website from the July 2024 meeting using the link below:

[Agenda for Transport and Infrastructure Committee on Monday, 22nd July, 2024, 1.00 pm \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/Agenda-for-Transport-and-Infrastructure-Committee-on-Monday,-22nd-July,-2024,-1.00-pm)

March to Wisbech Railway Line

This is a CPCA funded project with current study and assessment work having recently been completed by Network Rail. The outcome of the latest study work was discussed at the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee in mid-November 2022. The study focussed on light railway and heavy railway options. The CPCA Committee and the CPCA Board agreed to undertake an Options Assessment project to provide the economic analysis on mode options. This will include existing information on heavy rail, based on a service operating between Wisbech and March. This removes the current dependency on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements whilst still being mindful of the future strategy to link into Cambridge. An additional £80,000 was drawn down to facilitate this work. The outcome of this work is expected to be available in the autumn 2024. A link to the papers and information from the CPCA November 2022 meeting can be found from the link below:

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

A47 Dualling (CPCA Project)

It was reported in late 2020 that National Highways (formally Highways England) Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) announcement did not include the A47 dualling project. Pipeline work for RIS3 has been ongoing which includes consideration of the A47 Elm High Road Roundabout. Stakeholders and the public are now waiting the funding announcement for RIS3 covering the period April 2025 – March 2030. It is likely that any announcement will be in early 2025.

Whittlesea Station

In May 2024, FDC Cabinet approved £3million funding from CPCA to enhance Whittlesea Railway Station. The funding is available from April 2024 to March 2027. The first phase will be delivered up to June 2025 and will be an outline business case stage

with a preferred option scheme. Further details are available from the Cabinet paper using the link below:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 20th May, 2024, 2.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Key PIs:

Key PI	Description	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Cumulative Performance	Variance (RAG)
CELP15	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	74%	70%	100%	
CELP16	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	62%	70%	86%	
CELP17	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	81%	80%	88%	
EGA1	% occupancy of our business estates	93.9%	90%	94.5%	
MS1	% occupancy of Wisbech Yacht Harbour	95%	100%	90%	

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

Comments

