

Presentation by Leader and Chief Executive of Fenland District Council

FDC Overview & Scrutiny
Meeting

21 October 2024

Sources of further information

Please click on the links below to access further information:

[Business Plan 2024-25](#)

[Annual report 2023-24](#)

[Corporate Priority Reports already tabled at O&S Committee meetings](#)

[Joint Portfolio Holder Reports tabled at Council Meetings](#)

Finance

- Balanced budget set for 2024/25 but in year pressures are currently suggesting a deficit if interventions not met.
- Projected deficit of £2088k (2025/26) rising to £2728k in 2028/29.
- No Council Tax increases included in these figures.
- Outcomes of Fair Funding, Business Rates and New Homes Bonus reviews now not expected until 2026/27 at the earliest.
- Financial control and progress with the Commercial and Investment Strategy, transformation, savings and income continues to be very important for FDC.
- Draft Budget for 2025/26 will need to be considered by Cabinet in December.

Corporate Projects

Transformation

- We continued to roll out our ongoing transformation agenda programme to optimise our workforce, improve services and customer experience and make it even easier for people to interact with the Council.
- Phase 1 and 2 of the programme is on track to deliver over £1m savings over the medium term and has not only helped develop more modern and resilient working practices for staff, but also improve customer experience.
- TA2 will help to deliver efficiency savings which will contribute to mitigating against the projected budget deficits in coming years.



For further information, please see 'Transformation & Communications Portfolio Holder Update' report also being tabled at the Overview & Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 21.10.24

Corporate Projects

Accommodation review

- The Accommodation Review continues to assess our accommodation needs for the future and forms a fundamental element of the Council's work in seeking to reduce costs and/or make savings, without any impact on service provision to our customers.
- A confidential report was considered by Cabinet on 30 September which presented a short list of possible future Accommodation options.
- Cabinet agreed their preferred option is the acquisition of Hereward Hall
- The confirmation of a preferred option does not commit FDC to any course of action at this stage as a final decision is dependent on the following;
 - The results of a Full Business Case
 - A formal decision by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) that Hereward Hall is an asset they wish to dispose of (Decision scheduled 15/10)
 - A separate formal decision by CCC to agree the sale of Hereward Hall
- The Full Business Case is currently being commissioned which will ultimately be presented to Full Council for consideration.
- If Members agree the Full Business Case this will initiate the implementation of the Accommodation Review

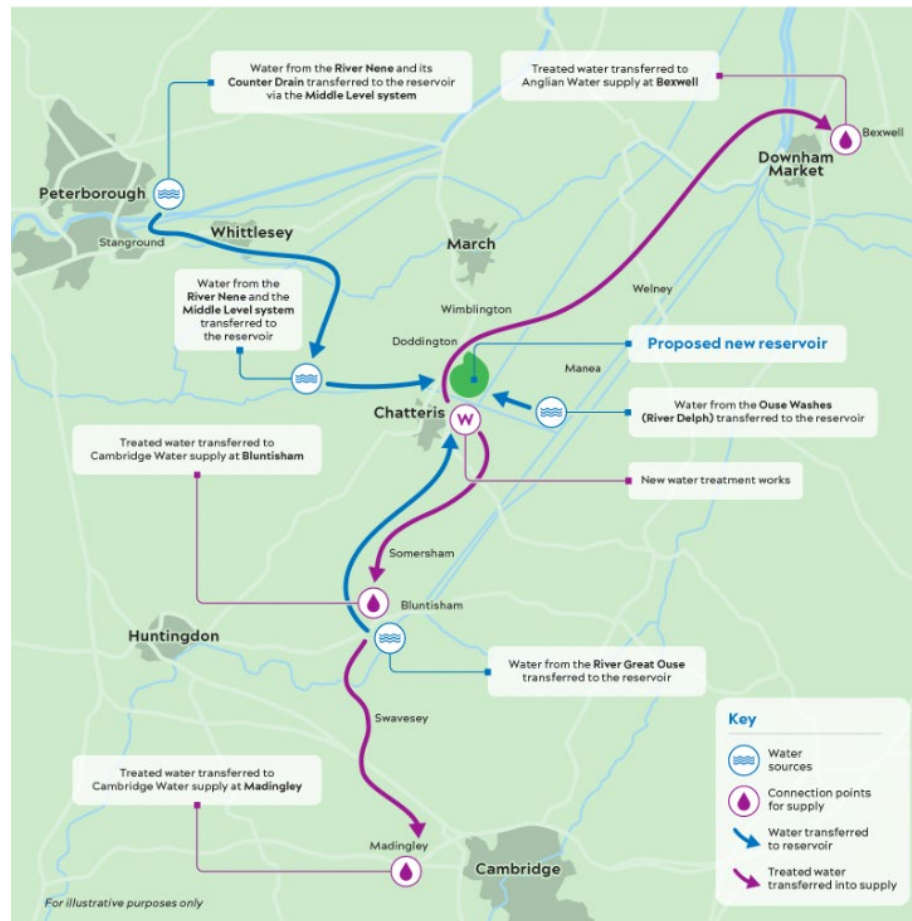


Strategic Projects

Fens Reservoir

Further information can be found here:

[A proposed new reservoir in the Fens - Anglian Water - Fens Reservoir](#)



Strategic Projects

Fens Reservoir

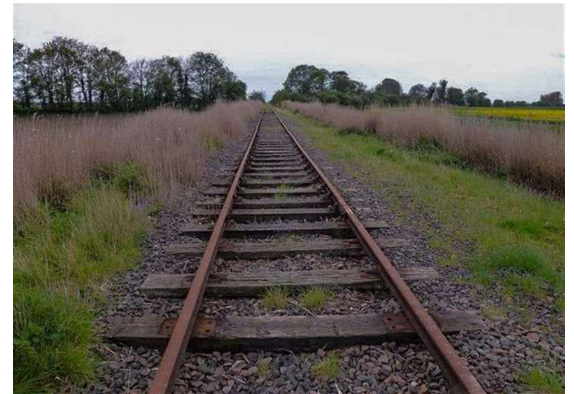
- Officers are working with Anglian Water ensure that we capitalise on potential opportunities for Fenland, such as skills and employment.
- Future housing needs are likely to be affected by this major project.
- Connectivity and transport links will be a key to leisure use.
- Development Consent Order (DCO) due to be submitted to Planning Inspectorate in late 2026/early 2027.
- FDC continues to respond to statutory consultations.



Strategic Projects

Transport

- Work continues on improvements to transport links and connectivity including:
 - Fenland Rail Development Strategy
 - Fenland Cycling Walking & Mobility Improvement Strategy
 - Fenland Station Regeneration
 - March Area Transport Study
 - Wisbech Access Strategy
- Improvements to March town centre are almost complete, following the successful application for Future High Street Funding.
- An update on options for the **Wisbech to March rail link** were shared at an All Member Seminar held on 1 October 2024. The preferred option was Option 2 – Provision of Tram/Train (Hybrid Heavy Rail/Light Rail System) and this will be taken to the next CPCA Transport Infrastructure Committee on 4 November.



Strategic Projects

Economic Growth

- The CPCA are coordinating a Local Growth Plan for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area.
- This will feed into the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, due to be published in summer 2025.
- FDC schemes have been promoted in the hope of securing additional funding. For example, transport schemes, sports facilities and science / research / advanced manufacturing parks.

Local Plan

- Work has started on reviewing and resubmitting the Local Plan.
- Changes to national planning policy, guidance and processes will need to be included as well as any new Government priorities/ministerial statements.
- It will be important to consider NSIPs for other major projects in the area, such as the Fens Reservoir, National Grid improvements (Grimsby to Walpole) and the MVV Medworth Energy from Waste CHP Facility.