

Wednesday 8th January 2025



The Fenlander is a regular bulletin from Fenland District Council updating on council news, events and services.

The New Year is often a time of contemplation, plans and change and that's reflected in the articles we bring you this month.

We've got some tough decisions to make with our annual budget and **we're calling for your views on our spending plans** for the year ahead.

If you're struggling with health issues that prevent you from working or risk making you give up work we're inviting you to join **a new voluntary support programme to help you be well for work.**

You can also take proactive steps to support your health with our **Active Fenland programme of free and low-cost exercise and wellbeing classes**, many of which are launching afresh in January.

There's a few days left to **apply for a culture fund grant**, while you have all month to **get your entry in for the Fenland Poet Laureate Award.**

Plus, don't forget you can still **sign up for 2025 garden waste collections.**

Whatever your current focus, we wish you a happy and healthy 2025.

[Council launches public consultation on draft Budget and Business Plan amid significant financial challenges](#)

Residents are being asked for their views on Fenland District Council's draft Budget and Business Plan to help inform the "difficult choices" it faces.

For six consecutive years there has been no rise in Fenland's portion of the council tax - with 2023/24 even seeing a 2% cut in its element - as councillors reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to supporting local households.

The draft budget for 2025/26 is currently proposing a seventh year of no rise in Fenland's council tax. However, current forecasts based on that proposal show a deficit of £2.6million, due to less funding from central government, soaring costs and increased demand.

A budget report before Cabinet last month said the projected shortfall was "significantly higher" than previously forecast and represents "significant challenges" for the Council.

Cllr Chris Boden, Leader of Fenland District Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, said: "For several years, we have been in the rare position in local government to not raise council tax thanks to careful planning and a continued focus on efficiency. We have been clear that raising council tax over the medium term to 2029/30 will be a last resort.

"However, like local authorities across the country, we are experiencing significant budget challenges due to less funding from central government, as well as increased costs and increased demand. Many councils will just raise the council tax by the maximum and then start to examine how they'll save money. We do it the other way round; we start by looking at how we can save money and reduce costs and only if we absolutely have to, will we consider looking at council tax."

"We are faced with having to make very difficult choices and not raising council tax is quite possibly not going to be realistic," he added. "We may well find ourselves forced to make a choice between unpalatable changes or increasing council tax."

See more: [Council launches public consultation on draft Budget and Business Plan amid significant financial challenges](#)

[New service offers help and hope to people who are struggling to work due to health barriers](#)

People in Fenland who are struggling to work due to health barriers can access a new free support programme to get the help they need.

WorkWell Fenland is a voluntary scheme for people struggling to stay in their job or to get a job.

It sees people allocated a supportive work and health coach to discuss how they are feeling and help them to access treatment or support.

The scheme is for anyone aged 16 or over who is finding it difficult to retain or get a job due to a physical or mental health issue. To access it, you must

have the right to work in the UK, live in Fenland or be registered with a GP or JobCentre Plus in Fenland. You do not need to be on benefits to access the service. Taking part in the programme is completely voluntary and has no impact on benefits.

See more: [New service offers help and hope to people who are struggling to work due to health barriers](#)



[Active Fenland](#) promotes and provides informal and fun sport and physical activity sessions in community settings in Fenland.

New free and low-cost exercise and wellbeing classes

A broad range of free and low-cost exercise sessions launch in Fenland this month especially suited to people whose fitness has decreased - young and old alike.

They include a special programme for people who want to lose weight, new couch to 5k running sessions, strength classes for the older and less mobile, kickboxing for wellbeing, fun dance-based exercise, yoga, tea dances and more.

Discover all the details and sign up at: [New free and low-cost exercise and wellbeing classes](#)

The logo for Fenland for Business features the word 'fenland' in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below it, the words 'for business' are written in a smaller, light blue font.

fenland
for business



Looking to start, grow or relocate your business? Our [Fenland for Business](#) team can offer free and impartial advice.



Business Premises

Starting or expanding your business? Looking for affordable offices or factory units? We can help! Our business premises and industrial units are ideal for small and start-up businesses.

- **The Boathouse Business Centre**
The Boathouse overlooks the marina in Wisbech. It is just a short walk from the town centre and is easily accessible from the A47.
- **South Fens Business Centre**
South Fens Business Centre, in Chatteris, is next to the A141 and A142 - offering easy access to Ely, March, Huntingdon, Cambridge and beyond.

Deadline approaching for Fenland Culture Fund

Creatives and community arts organisations have until Monday, January 13, to apply for round two of Fenland District Council's Fenland Culture Fund.

Grants of up to £2,000 available for revenue and capital projects, which could support anything from workshops, events, performances, festivals, exhibitions, skills development to investments into things like new lighting or sound equipment, cameras, furniture and building improvements.

See more: [**Fenland Culture Fund**](#)

Still time to enter Fenland Poet Laureate Award

The 2025 Fenland Poet Laureate Award and Young Fenland Poet Laureate Award remains open for entries until Friday, January 31.

The competition is open to anyone who lives, works or attends school in the administrative district of Fenland, and is free to enter.

Discover more at: [**Fenland Poet Laureate Award**](#)



Consultations

Have your say to help us improve our services and make more informed decisions.

Upcoming Events

Find out more about upcoming events and activities across Fenland.

Don't forget to sign up for household garden waste collections

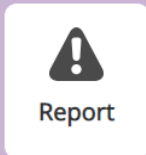
Join more than 24,000 households who benefit from fortnightly garden waste collections by signing up for the 2025/26 service.

You can subscribe by direct debit for £47 or by debit card for £59. The 2025/26 service starts from April 1st.

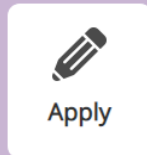
See more: [Subscribe to garden waste collections](#)

Don't forget to Do It Online

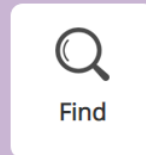
The quickest and easiest way to apply, report, find or pay via Fenland District Council is usually our website. Available 24 hours a day whenever it's most convenient for you.



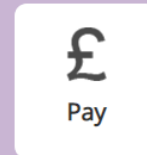
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