

Annual Report 2014/15

Welcome to the North Kesteven District Council Annual Report 2014/15.

The Annual Report is a summary of the achievements and progress North Kesteven District Council has made during the last year against its vision, strategic objectives and corporate priorities.

This was a successful year for North Kesteven, despite the challenging national and economic climate. The Council has made impressive progress with regards to the local economy, for example, a Renewable Energy Plant opened in Sleaford following a £165 million investment. The Plant is managed by Eco2 Limited on behalf of Glennmont Partners and has created 30 jobs with a further 50 jobs in the supply chain. This generates £8 million per annum into the agricultural sector, whilst providing free heat to five local public buildings.

In the north of the District, the 'Grow LN6' partnership has brought together a number of notable projects to make North Hykeham a prime employment growth area. This has seen improvements to the Hykeham rail services, developments at Teal Park, as well as the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Hykeham.

Overall, 277 jobs were created and/or safeguarded in the District during the last financial year as a result of targeted support by the Council. In addition, 131 businesses looking to grow in the District were provided with tailored advice and support.

There has been further investment in new social housing with the Council building its 100th council house, which has established the organisation's place as a pioneer of social housing expansion. The newly-finished houses were the latest in a long line of schemes delivering quality affordable homes in areas of greatest need.

The Council has completed another first for tenants due to the building of 'curvy houses' in the village of Ruskington. The properties are flexible, which allows them to be altered easily to meet the changing needs of the residents, and are all for affordable rent.

In total, 91 affordable homes have been completed through partnership working in 2014/15, which includes a range of property types. In addition, the Council directly helped to bring back into use 21 empty homes, which have been collectively empty for a total of 70 years.

North Kesteven is officially recognised as the safest place to live in England for the second year running. Official figures for the twelve months up to the end of March 2015 show that there were fewer crimes per 1,000 people committed in North Kesteven than anywhere else in the country.

The Onlincolnshire broadband programme introduced a partnership between Lincolnshire County Council, the seven District Councils and BT with the aim of promoting good connections between people, services, communities and places. A

total of 12,203 properties in North Kesteven, and 83,528 across the county now have access to superfast broadband. The Onlincolnshire Project was awarded a further £2.35 million grant to enable 95 percent of premises to access superfast broadband by the end of 2017.

Following the substantial refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, ten prestigious awards have been achieved. These include the Royal Chartered Institute of Building's Regional Sustainability Award and the Green World Ambassador Award.

Sleaford Leisure Centre exceeded its Sport England target recording over 180,000 visits in its first year of operation with overall usage up by 62 percent and overall satisfaction almost doubling to 98 percent. The popularity of the remodelled facility continues with 222,000 visits during 2014/15 compared to 116,000 visits in the year before its refurbishment.

Building on the successful £2.85 million refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, the Council has embarked on a further £3.6 million leisure investment in the North Kesteven Centre in North Hykeham. Phased over two years, the refurbishment includes the cafe and gym relocation, upgrading synthetic turf pitches, converting the pool changing rooms to a changing village and adding extra activity studios.

The National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) continued to hold a range of events seeing 112,000 visitors during 2014/15. Furthermore, there was a record number of visitors at the Natural World Centre (198,000) during the last financial year. This builds upon the success of the Natural World Christmas Craft Fayre, which saw a 7 percent increase in visitors.

North Kesteven has continued to be a high performing low cost authority and has increased our already high levels of performance during 2014/15 with 84 percent of performance indicators on or above target. In addition, the transformation programme continues to take shape with particular focus on ways to reduce costs or to generate income.

The Council has also taken on apprentices and is paying a Living Wage to its lowest paid employees. The apprenticeship scheme will support school leavers in finding work and promote career progression.

These are just some of the key activities the Council has achieved for the District and you will see throughout the publication that there are many more which we are all very proud of.

Despite challenges facing local government, the North Kesteven District remains a great place to live, work and visit. Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Vision, Purpose, Strategic Objectives and Corporate Priorities for North Kesteven 2014/15

Vision:

100 Flourishing Communities

The Council has held this well-established Vision for a number of years. Various inspection regimes have praised the Vision as being mature, having clarity, relevance and most importantly, being widely understood and owned throughout the Council and the District.

Purpose:

To deliver effective and efficient public services that meet the needs and priorities of local people and support growth in the district

Strategic Objectives:

Facilitating the delivery of new jobs, homes and infrastructure to support long term growth

Working in partnership to improve the quality of life, economic performance and environmental sustainability of North Kesteven

Inspiring community participation in the delivery of public services and the achievement of community aspirations

Transforming services to meet the changing needs of North Kesteven

Corporate Priorities:

Our Economy

To promote the economic and employment growth of North Kesteven

Our Homes

To promote housing growth that meets the current and emerging needs of North Kesteven

Our Communities

To promote the sustainability, wellbeing, safety, and health of North Kesteven's growing communities

Our Council

To be a high performing and value for money Council that is prepared for the future

The Council's priorities reflect the main issues or challenges facing the District in the short to medium term and contain key objectives that the Council will address if our vision is to be achieved. They are reviewed annually with reference to the 'State of

the District' research report to identify the challenges facing the district and as the basis of consultation with our residents, businesses and visitors.

The Corporate Priorities are supported by a corporate planning framework that links operational service delivery plans with the overarching vision and strategic focus of the Council, ensuring that the council's resources and finances are focused on delivering the 'right' things for the District.

Core Values:

Values are intended to help the Council achieve its aims and objectives and underpin the way the Council operates as an organisation. They provide a structured way of highlighting the skills and behaviours employees need to demonstrate in order to deliver quality services. As part of the review of the Core Values, a consultation exercise was undertaken enabling employees to choose the values of the Council. As part of this process, employees picked values that they thought best reflected the culture of North Kesteven District Council and the behavioural expectation of employees. This resulted in five values being chosen:

1. People-focused
 - Putting our customers and our people first
2. Professionalism
 - Acting appropriately at all times with the required competencies and skills to undertake each role
3. Teamwork
 - Supporting each other to achieve a common goal
4. High Performing
 - Focused on high quality outcomes
5. Honesty
 - Clear, open and truthful

North Kesteven District Council is a people-focused, honest and high performing organisation, which utilises teamwork to deliver a professional service to our customers and partners and to support all members of our 100 communities to make a positive contribution.

Our Economy

1. To facilitate the delivery of new jobs across North Kesteven and Central Lincolnshire
2. To facilitate regeneration within the District to make NK an attractive location
3. To work proactively with new and existing businesses to provide focused support
4. To provide targeted interventions for employment growth and investment

Our Economy Performance Indicators

- 230 jobs created as a result of council intervention against a target of 50
- 11 new investments in North Kesteven for regeneration projects that the Council has facilitated against a target of 2
- 131 businesses provided with targeted advice and business support against a target of 70
- 277 jobs created and/or safeguarded as a result of targeted support by the Council against a target of 50
- Average workshop occupancy level was 98% across the workshop portfolio

To facilitate the delivery of new jobs across North Kesteven and Central Lincolnshire

A Renewable Energy Plant opened in Sleaford following a £165 million investment. The Plant is managed by Eco2 Limited on behalf of Glennmont Partners and has created 30 jobs with a further 50 jobs in the supply chain. This generates £8 million per annum into the agricultural sector, whilst providing free heat to five local public buildings. In addition, the Plant saves 150,000 tonnes of co2 per annum and generates renewable energy to power 65,000 homes.

Through the well-being agreement between the District Council, Sleaford Town Council, Eco2 and Kirkby-la-Thorpe Parish Council, there will be investment to the sum of £285,000. The key objective is to enhance the economy and environment of Sleaford and the surrounding area. This includes grants for local community groups and projects, an education programme and apprenticeships.

There has been an extensive review of the top 50 businesses within the District that were identified as key to supporting job growth in the area. A consultation will be undertaken which will focus on many areas. These areas include: factors that may have prevented or delayed the growth of their business; costs and expenditure associated with a business venture; and skills gaps within their organisation. The data from this consultation will be combined with other data the Council holds and will collectively tell the story of the local economy within North Kesteven. This will help focus economic development activities for future years.

The Council now has the flexibility to develop discretionary policy to encourage and stimulate economic growth. Therefore, the discounting of business rates (NNDR) will

be used by the Council on a case by case basis to unlock private sector investment in North Kesteven. Business rates can represent a significant cost to businesses and 'discounting' is a tool the Council can employ, where appropriate, in order to stimulate sustainable investment in land, capital equipment or premises. This will provide a positive impact in terms of creating and safeguarding jobs. It will also secure medium term revenue increases by developing additional employment floor space that would not otherwise be expected to be utilised in the short term.

Over the last year 329 jobs have been safeguarded and 150 created within the District. For example, a business near Bassingham was supported by the Economic Development Team through the sourcing of funding to enable them to expand their business, which created an additional 10 jobs and safeguarded 30.

To facilitate regeneration within the District to make NK an attractive location

A survey of over 1,000 residents, retailers and businesses in Sleaford has been completed as part of the retail visioning. The purpose of the survey was to understand the initiatives and shops that would encourage people to use Sleaford Town Centre more often; understanding why people do not currently shop in the town centre; and understanding what people most like/dislike about Sleaford.

The Economic Development Team has been directly involved in creating the 'Heart of Sleaford' during 2014/15. This is a private-public-third sector partnership with a shared vision to create a new 'destination' in the centre of Sleaford. This will include a viable mixed-use development comprising retail, leisure, community, commercial and residential elements, including the regeneration of the listed Corn Exchange site.

Additional services for Hykeham railway station have been confirmed, which were part funded by the Council. This will see significant improvement between Nottingham, Newark Castle and Lincoln Central, following more than £2 million of local and government funding. The benefits include an extra fourteen trains per day, which is an increase of 50 percent, plus extra morning and evening services to and from Nottingham.

The Council has bought two acres of land to the south of the railway in Sleaford, as part of its long-term plan to increase the availability of affordable housing and edge-of town parking. The purchase of this land is a key component to deliver the Sleaford Masterplan and is an initial realisation of the Sleaford Car Parking Strategy.

To work proactively with new and existing businesses to provide focused support

'Grow LN6' brings together representatives from the local Town and Parish Councils, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, and Lincolnshire County Councils, as well as representatives from the LN6 Business Group. The Partnership has had numerous successes with a number of projects, for example, improvements to the Hykeham rail services, the developments at Teal Park, as well as the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Hykeham. In addition, the Council has been heavily involved in negotiations to create a full-time role whose key functions will be to work across the partners

providing a direct connection to businesses, helping them access the services they need and address any issues they may have.

The North and South Kesteven District Councils successfully achieved funding from the European Union with a programme budget of £1.8 million. The fund is aimed at bottom-up, small scale projects that can demonstrate local need, for example, micro and small enterprise and farm diversification, cultural and heritage activity, rural tourism, amongst others.

The 'Made in Sleaford' initiative was launched at the Lincolnshire Manufacturing event, which focused on celebrating the skills, creativity and craft of local businesses. It also showcased business excellence and products ranging from farm machinery, crafts and ceramics. It was also an opportunity for innovators, inventors and designers to showcase their ideas, prototypes and products to potential investors and manufacturers.

To provide targeted interventions for employment growth and investment

Teal Park, the East Midlands largest new employment site, is located within the North Hykeham area, and has become a prime commercial and business area. There is a further funding commitment by the Council to the sum of £2 million to deliver 19 units within 20,000 square foot of industrial space with the primary objective to support start-up and small businesses. This new development follows the success of the scheme at Bracebridge Heath where all 14 new units were occupied within six months of completion.

Six units at Navigation Yard in Sleaford have been purchased by the Council and added to the commercial portfolio. The plan is to use them for new retail, craft or office use, in support of the local craft industry and the adjacent National Centre for Craft and Design. A longer term plan is for Navigation Yard to play an active part in the Sleaford Masterplan vision.

Within the District, the Bomber Command Memorial has been erected, which includes the Memorial Spire and the Wall of Names. Once fully operational, the International Bomber Command Memorial Park will be a real asset to the area, drawing between 80,000 and 100,000 annual visitors.

Other Our Economy Achievements

- 4.72 percent net growth in business rates
- There has been a growth in visitor numbers to 2.2 million visitors a year, which is worth £108 million a year to the local economy and supports 1,818 full-time equivalent employees
- A Business Support contract is in place allowing for a dedicated business support offer to all start-up and small businesses looking to grow in the District resulting in 17 start-up and small businesses using this service
- 40 business people attended the Business Breakfasts held by the Council
- 14 business visits were arranged and hosted by businesses within North Kesteven
- Commitment to deliver a Retail Vision for Sleaford Town Centre

What people said:

“Our estate of almost 80 units in other areas of the district have maintained a 100% occupancy for some time now, which gives us the confidence to invest further in supporting expanding businesses through the provision of such high-quality space. As the council’s wider involvement in the LN6 project gathers momentum and progresses, the rationale and benefits of this investment become clearer and stronger by the day.”

Councillor Marion Brighton OBE, North Kesteven Council Leader

“The Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant is not only bringing green investment to the local area but is also providing significant financial benefit to local amenities and communities.”

Councillor Richard Wright, Chairman of the Sleaford Renewable Energy Liaison Panel

“LN6 represents a wide variety of residential, business and environmental areas in both urban and rural settings. However within the immediate vicinity of North Hykeham station are some significant larger businesses and a plethora of smaller ones, all of whom can benefit from employees, customers and suppliers being able to make use of the additional trains here. We believe LN6 offers a premier business location in the county and with further infrastructure improvements, such as the additional train services, it could quickly become *the* premier business location. We believe that improved connectivity for physical movement is as important as improved connectivity in the digital world. “We are delighted to see in our area a continued focus on local partnerships of businesses working together with decision-making bodies, who have the funds and the mandate to shape the economic landscape of the future. We look forward to greater engagement on LN6 businesses with these bodies and even more infrastructure improvements.”

Chris Trigg, LN6 Business Group

“Enhancing rail services in and out of Lincolnshire is an important part of our overall strategy to improve our infrastructure. This new service is good news for Lincolnshire as it will mean journeys to and from Nottingham and beyond are more frequent, and it’s a first step to securing more direct trains to London. Hykeham, which is a key employment site for Greater Lincolnshire, will benefit substantially and there will be fantastic opportunities to grow businesses here and make the service sustainable going forward.”

David Dexter, Deputy Chair of the Greater Lincolnshire Partnership

“Undertaking a public art commission for the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant was such a great opportunity due to its rich subject matter – electricity, fire, water, growth, cycles. Elemental stuff I could really get my teeth into. As well as these strong themes, there was also enthusiasm and support from the steering group to let the artwork design develop through local research and community engagement. This approach, which was a strong emphasis of the commissioning body, puts local people at the heart of the public art process. Their participation gives the final artwork identity and also helps broadcast pride and ownership throughout

communities. It's been a privilege to add to the already a rich heritage of public art in North Kesteven."

Michael Condon, artist commissioned to fulfill a public art engagement and sculpture for the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant

"North Kesteven District Council has been immensely supportive of the International Bomber Command Centre project from the original concept through all the developments, and their contribution has enabled the project to grow. There has been support with economic development, planning, licensing, events and numerous other items. Planning Services could not have been more helpful in their advice, fluidity of service and rational and practical approach to the necessary changes and developments as the project evolved over the last three years. The support from the Economic Development Team has been invaluable, with not only advice but day to day active engagement helping draw consultants together, manage work flows of those consultants and support the project in general. This project really is one about community and partnership and the International Bomber Command Centre consider North Kesteven District Council to be a key partner in their efforts to deliver this Centre."

Nicky Barr, Director, International Bomber Command Centre

"As a growing business, APSS was delighted to host a fact-finding visit by Members and Officers of North Kesteven District Council in the spring of 2015. The visit enabled us to form relationships with the authority in general, and the Business Support Team in particular. As an LN6 business, we appreciate the efforts that the Council are putting into attracting new commercial initiatives into the area."

Tim Conning, Key Account Manager, APSS Commercial, Industrial and Retail Interiors

"This plant is a great example of the benefits on offer, including continued local investment in jobs and fuel sourcing and in the local community. I have been very impressed by everything I have seen and heard and congratulate everyone involved. The care the Council has taken in these matters has been visionary; working closely with the community and a forward-thinking business like Eco2 to ensure community benefit. It demonstrates that local people on local authorities understand local communities best and how to get the best solution locally."

Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Climate Change when opening the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant

"We are creating jobs and bringing ongoing value and investment to the community, not least through the long-term procurement of straw. In no small part thanks to North Kesteven's diligence and determination, this project is a great community project for many reasons, providing environmental, economic and social benefits and supporting the UK's energy security by reducing our reliance on imported oil and gas."

Peter Dickson, Glennmont, a partner with Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant

"The Castle Line is a vital rail corridor and this major increase in services will give the communities along the route the service they deserve, making it much easier for passengers to travel to work, get together with friends and family or visit the exciting attractions along the line. I pay tribute to all of the local authorities, local enterprise

zones and partners for their tireless support and hard work, which has helped to deliver these major improvements.”

Jake Kelly, Managing Director for East Midlands Trains

“We look forward to working with the Council in bringing forward opportunities for businesses in Sleaford and North Hykeham where continued investment in the expansion of workspaces will support growth and emerging businesses in distinct trading locations.”

Marie Gutteridge, a partner in Hodgson Elkington LLP

“It is always a thrill, a pleasure and a privilege to work with North Kesteven District Council. For so many years we have had a close partnership, recently having built a third of the 100 new council homes they have pioneered and currently working with them at Teal Park, the NK Sports Centre and on the Bomber Command Memorial. It’s always good fun and refreshing.”

Neil Coote, Director, Lindum Group Ltd

“Having known Sleaford all my life I have seen a marked decline in the quality and quantity of the shops, so it’s good to see and experience the District Council is making in trying to boost the town’s retail fortunes and regenerate buildings like the Bass Maltings.”

Toby Dennis, Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire

Our Homes

1. To deliver the Local Plan and supporting Policy Framework
2. To work with others to facilitate the delivery of Sustainable Urban Extensions
3. To work with partners to increase the supply of housing and affordable homes
4. To increase the supply of homes for people with specific needs
5. To bring empty homes back into use and improve private sector housing condition
6. Implement the Housing Business Plan

Our Homes Performance Indicators

- 462 new homes constructed against a target of 320
- 91 affordable homes delivered against a target of 50
- 21 private sector empty homes brought back into use for residential occupation purpose against a target of 20
- 3,645 social housing properties that the Council has been able to access have achieved the NK Homes Standard

To deliver the Local Plan and supporting Policy Framework

A new single Local Plan to replace the Local Plans of the City of Lincoln, West Lindsey, North Kesteven, and Lincolnshire County Councils is currently being established. It will establish policies for the growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire over the next 25 years and beyond. Once finalised, the Local Plan will ensure that homes and employment are in the 'right' locations, whilst ensuring local communities are sustainable, accessible and inclusive.

To work with others to facilitate the delivery of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUES)

The Council has been facilitating the development of SUES, which are being promoted as part of the Draft Local Plan. Working with the landowners, Delivery Groups have been established for each of the eight SUES, which are anticipated to deliver significant opportunities for growth over the next 25 years. Outline Planning permission has already been granted for Sleaford South SUE, and draft concept plans are under consideration for Sleaford West SUE and Lincoln South East Quadrant SUE.

To work with partners to increase the supply of housing and affordable homes

In total, 91 affordable homes have been completed through partnership working in 2014/15, which includes a range of property types. This included houses built by the Council at Ruskington and Sleaford, and houses completed by Waterloo Housing at Basingham. This is in addition to the 98 properties built in 13 locations over the past five years.

To increase the supply of homes for people with specific needs

There have been 61 Disabled Facilities Grants that were approved for private sector properties to a value of £264,714. In addition, 86 Disabled Adaptations have been completed within Council properties during 2014/15 at a cost of £198,819. This ensures that people are able to stay in their properties for a longer period of time than they originally anticipated, as their homes are adapted to meet their specific needs. For example, level access showers, improving access to houses and extensions to properties.

To bring empty homes back into use and improve private sector housing condition

The Council directly helped to bring back into use 21 empty homes during 2014/15 through a variety of measures, which have collectively been empty for a total of 70 years. This has generated a total of £96,304 in New Homes Bonus paid over six years, with £16,050 generated during 2014/15.

Implement the Housing Business Plan

An allocation of £1 million funding from the Homes and Communities Agency for three new build sites, with an additional £2 million borrowing has been approved for new homes. This will enable the Council to build an additional 16 properties in Sleaford and seven in Thorpe-on-the-Hill, which includes a range of property types to suit the housing need within the area, for example, flats, bungalows and houses.

A further 26 new homes have been completed at Bonner Close in Sleaford. 24 properties have been constructed by Barratt Homes in Greylees, which include 12 one bedroom flats and 12 two bedroom flats. These 24 properties will be delivered to the Council to be included as part of its social housing mix as part of the Section 106 obligations. Furthermore, land at North Hykeham has been purchased for the development of 12 bungalows in the area.

The Council completed its 100th Council house, which has established the organisation as a pioneer of social housing expansion. The newly-finished houses in Metheringham were the latest in a long-line of schemes delivering quality, affordable homes in areas of greatest need. The Council has built 100 new homes on 19 separate schemes in ten towns and villages; expanding a stock which had declined from 5,500 to 3,800 through Right to Buy.

The Council has also completed the building of 'curvy houses' in the village of Ruskington. The properties are flexible, which allows them to be altered easily to meet the changing needs of the residents, such as changing the amount of bedrooms by sub-dividing rooms. The 13 homes are a mixed development of two bungalows and 11 houses, all for affordable rent. The curvy homes are according to North Kesteven's own NK Fabric First which, developed in consultation with tenants, ensures new build properties are built to exceptionally high insulation standards with the objective of minimising tenant energy usage.

The Council has allocated sufficient funding to undertake structural improvements to the flats in Hutson Drive, North Hykeham. Further investigations have been

undertaken to identify the work required to implement permanent improvements. Allocation was also provided in the 2015/16 capital improvement programme for estate improvement to the flats at St John's Square in Bracebridge Heath. This includes improvements to the communal areas, car parking, storage and glazing.

Within the Council's social housing stock, many housing improvements have been made, which include 691 heating system and boiler renewals, 154 kitchen replacements and five bathroom replacements.

Other Our Homes Achievements

- An agreement has been created to deliver a Central Lincolnshire Local Plan by November 2016
- 32.70 percent increase in the cumulative income from the New Homes Bonus
- 13 homes have been delivered for older people with specific needs

What people said:

"My recent engagement with planning and strategic growth has been extremely productive. Dealing with the council has demonstrated that we can work together to deliver new affordable homes, flexibly and innovatively to fully meet our customer's needs. I was impressed with the level of understanding on any issues we had and the potential repercussions if these weren't addressed not to mention the speed in which they were tackled. I can only say thank you and this definitely demonstrated true partnership working."

Andy Parker, Area Development Manager (East Midlands), Waterloo Housing Group

"Taylor Pearson Construction is a local company, employing local people and we are proud to work with North Kesteven District council providing quality social housing to support the community through the provision of affordable homes. Therefore adding to the employment of a local workforce and bringing inward investment into North Kesteven district with construction related income."

Mark Robinson, Managing Director, Taylor Pearson Construction

"Northfield Estate Ruskington delivered its community brief in regeneration of a redundant sheltered housing/garage site in to a unique scheme of thirteen contemporary and innovative homes, providing modern, spacious energy efficient homes. Both North Kesteven District Council and D Brown Building Contractors Ltd worked hand in hand to ensure the Council's Fabric first requirements were met whilst constructing this scheme in line with Code 3 for Sustainable Homes. Through collaborative working the Council and D Brown Building Contractors Ltd have ensured delivery of this the project on time and to a high standard. All parties from the surrounding community to the end user are extremely proud and pleased of the outcome, with North Kesteven District Council having other Local Authorities visiting the development to learn from their approach taken from inception of the project. In recognition of the spirit in which this contract was completed in a tree was donated by D Brown in partnership with North Kesteven District Council as a lasting legacy for the development."

Kurt Mason, D Brown Building Contractors Ltd

“I feel really privileged to have such a lovely new house that’s so big and perfect and that no one has lived in before. I’m both excited and nervous and pleased to be so close to everything.”

Emma Fahy, who moved into the 100th new house the Council built

“It has been a thrill to be involved in this landmark development. I commend the Council for its commitment to building in support of its 100 flourishing communities and I thank the neighbouring residents for their support. I hope that these homes prove to be as energy efficient and comfortable to live in for the families moving in, as we hope.”

Glenn Slater, Business Development Director, Robert Woodhead Ltd, who has completed four projects for the Council, the latest being the complex including the 100th Council house

“It’s always great to work with North Kesteven District Council. The new build team is so easy going. They know what they want, they’re demanding and on top of their game, but they’re honest, don’t take any nonsense. I love to work with that team.”

Eddie Lucas, Site Manager for housing contractor Robert Woodhead Ltd

“The Council has been such a great help in helping us to resolve the many complicated issues and pitfalls surrounding bringing our empty house back into use.”

Vanessa Green, homeowner within North Kesteven

“It is clear there is a strong desire within the Council to deliver quality affordable housing and it is a pleasure to work with committed people in an open and productive environment.”

Paul McSorley, Group Director, Lindum Group Ltd

Our Communities

1. To encourage residents and businesses to commit to a sustainable future
2. Work in partnership to ensure safe and cohesive communities
3. Develop and implement improvements in the health and wellbeing of our communities
4. Promote opportunities for residents in sports, leisure and health activities
5. Encourage community participation in cultural activities
6. Support our local communities with the impact of Welfare Reform
7. Work with partners to improve support services for vulnerable residents
8. Maintain and improve excellent housing services to tenants and other residents
9. Promote digital inclusion for residents in North Kesteven
10. Act as a Community Leader, embracing key partnerships to shape North Kesteven

Our Communities Performance Indicators

- 83% of people reporting their health and wellbeing is either good or very good against a target of 80%
- Number 1 safest place in the Country against a target of 7th place
- 621,209 people attending the North Kesteven Sports Centre, Sleaford Leisure Centre and Northgate Sports Hall against a target of 410,000
- 23,756 visitors attending the Council's outdoor and countryside facilities/events
- 439,781 visitors attending Council cultural venues and ArtsNK programmes against a target of 430,000
- 98% of service users are satisfied with the Wellbeing Service
- 87% of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by the Council
- 998 homeless cases prevented through use of housing advice and prevention tools against a target of 650

To encourage residents and businesses to commit to a sustainable future

The Low Carbon NK Charter aims to reduce the levels of carbon emissions in the area and prepares the District for the impacts of climate change. It brings together different organisations, businesses, and communities across the District to work together as partners to achieve this objective. During 2014/15 an additional 35 businesses and schools were signatories of the Low Carbon NK Charter.

In addition, 1,515 residents have received advice from the Sustainability team and 1,831 people are recipients of the sustainNK newsletter. The newsletter details available financial incentives, competitions and initiatives the Council is undertaking to reduce the impact of climate change.

The Council has been working hard to reduce its own carbon footprint. The local authority has reduced its total carbon footprint by 21.13 percent over five years, which is equivalent to a reduction of 24 percent per full-time equivalent employee. Furthermore, co2 emissions per capita have reduced from 8.4 tonnes co2 per person

in 2005 to 6.9 tonnes co2 per person in 2012, which is a reduction of nearly 18 percent.

Work in partnership to ensure safe and cohesive communities

North Kesteven was officially recognised as the safest place to live in England for the second year running. Official figures for the twelve months up to the end of March 2015 show that there were fewer crimes per 1,000 people committed in North Kesteven than anywhere else in the country.

The success of the North Kesteven 'It's that Easy' programme means it has now been adopted County-wide. The aim of the project is to raise the awareness of young people of how easy it is to fall into, or remain out of, the criminal justice system. Through a balance of fun activities and hard-hitting messages over one day, students are made aware of the consequences of their actions on themselves as individuals, their families, the victims and the community in which they live. The project originated in North Kesteven secondary schools and was well received by the students. Due to its amazing success, the project has backing from the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner and, as result, has secured funding to potentially offer these days to every school throughout Lincolnshire.

During 2014/15 there was the introduction of a simple and effective tool for tackling anti-social behaviour. This is intended to provide better protection for victims and communities and act as a real deterrent to perpetrators. It will also give victims a say in the way their complaints are dealt with. The Community Trigger has been designed to make sure agencies, such as, the police, local councils and housing providers, work together to try to resolve complaints of anti-social behaviour. This means that they will not be working in isolation but will be working together to consider more creative solutions to tackle problems.

The Council has also revised its Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which, as a result, has introduced its first Public Space Protection Order. This enables the Council to place prohibitions in an area, such as Millennium Green in North Hykeham, and is able to issue fixed penalty notices for breaches. Public Space Protection Orders are designed to stop individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in a public space where it has a detrimental effect on those living in the locality.

The 'Community Kickabout' has restarted in Heckington with 15 to 20 young people attending each week and the Parish Council has reported reductions in anti-social behaviour.

In response to the independent enquiry commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council into their own safeguarding procedures, North Kesteven District Council decided to take proactive steps in reviewing its taxi licenses to ensure it is actively and effectively managing potential risks.

Develop and implement improvements in the health and wellbeing of our communities

There are 21 different Health Walks established across the District in 13 different parishes, with over 30 active walk leaders, offering different walks for different capabilities. The North Kesteven Social Strollers is an accredited Health Walk Scheme and the project is being rolled out countywide as part of a national initiative: Walking for Health (Natural England). All health walks are free and are designed to be accessible regardless of age, income, location and ability, and within physical capabilities of most people. Furthermore, walk leaders have been trained to run 'Dementia Adventure walks', which includes listening to the birds, talking to the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust representatives and taking walks around the lake.

The first ever week-long walking festival took place covering 13 parishes with 200 attendances. Furthermore, the Spires and Steeples event had 330 participants with an overall satisfaction of 93 percent.

15 GP surgeries are now referring into the Exercise Referral, Health Walks and Health Trainer projects. As part of the Health Trainer project, the Staying Healthy Programme is a key function, which aims to support and motivate people to increase their physical activity and incorporate more healthy food within their diet. In total over 7,070 people have been activity engaged and supported in these programmes in the past twelve months.

Promote opportunities for residents in sports, leisure and health activities

Following the substantial refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, ten prestigious awards have been achieved. These include the Sleaford Civic Society's annual award, which recognised the Centre as having a 'bold striking design, pleasant and stimulating environment and a splendid addition to the town'. Further achievements include the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' regional commendation for leisure; Royal Chartered Institute of Building's Regional Sustainability Award; and the Green World Ambassador Award.

Sleaford Leisure Centre exceeded its Sport England target, recording over 180,000 visits in its first year of operation with overall usage up by 62 percent and overall satisfaction almost doubling to 98 percent. The popularity of the remodelled facility continues with 222,000 visits in between April 2014 and March 2015 compared to 116,000 visits in the year before its refurbishment. Furthermore, gym membership has increased by 86 percent whilst additional clubs have been created which has resulted in the introduction of new members and a more interesting programme.

Building on the successful £2.85 million refurbishment of the Sleaford Leisure Centre, the Council has embarked on a further £3.6 million leisure investment in the North Kesteven Centre in North Hykeham. Phased over two years, the refurbishment includes the cafe and gym relocation, upgrading synthetic turf pitches, converting the pool changing rooms to a changing village and adding extra activity studios.

The Council successfully delivered an enhanced programme of events to mark Armed Forces Day, culminating in the 'Concert on the Green'. This included live music, entertainment, food and drink stalls, a licensed bar, children's entertainment, and arts and crafts.

Encourage community participation in cultural activities

The Council organised a 'Lights Out' event to mark the centenary of the start of World War I, which received live TV coverage and attracted 500 people. This was part of a wider national programme that invited everyone in the country to turn off their lights between 10pm and 11pm on 4 August 2014 leaving only a single light or candle for a symbolic act of reflection.

The National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) continued to hold a range of events seeing 112,000 visitors during 2014/15. The NCCD held its 'Gifted 14' event, which is a contemporary Christmas market presented by two of the UK's leading craft and design organisations. The market offers a day of craft, live music, entertainment, practical workshops, demonstrations and local specialist food. In just three years, the contemporary Christmas craft, design and food market has grown into a landmark event, which attracts high quality designers from across the UK and local food suppliers. Over 3,000 people attended, which was a 17 percent increase in visitors, with a 22 percent increase in retail spend.

There was a record number of visitors at Natural World Centre (198,000) during the last financial year. This builds upon the success of the Natural World Christmas Craft Fayre, which saw a 7 percent increase in visitors and displayed handmade gifts, such as, handcrafted children's toys, photography, artwork, jewellery and glassware.

The Council recognises that within communities there are buildings and amenities that are important to residents, whether it is a village shop, a pub, a community centre, a library or a piece of land. Communities can now 'stop-the-clock' on the sale of valuable local assets and amenities. This gives Town and Parish Councils and other voluntary and community groups with a local connection the opportunity to nominate a building or piece of land as an asset. If the asset fulfils the criteria it will be added to a list which will be maintained by the District Council for a period of five years. There are currently five approved assets of community value. This will pause the sale of these assets for six months, giving communities the time to prepare a bid and get a business plan together.

Support our local communities with the impact of Welfare Reform

A Welfare Reform Strategy for the shared service between North Kesteven and City of Lincoln Councils, has been officially approved following a period of consultation, which sets out clear aims and objectives for delivering the project. The Strategy has a 'high level' action plan supplementing it, as well as a communications plan. Officers in the team also have an in-depth 'operational' plan to ensure all welfare reforms are delivered successfully, for example, reviewing the required technical changes and ensuring training and awareness is up to date.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) have been available to local authorities to assist customers who need additional help with their housing costs. The shared service has been extremely proactive in promoting the availability of DHPs, as well as thoroughly reviewing policies and procedures to ensure those most in need have access to such payments.

National welfare reforms have had significant impacts on the way in which our Revenues and Benefits service operates. The Council acknowledges the challenge faced by residents and that those most affected by Welfare Reform are also those groups most likely to be financially excluded. Therefore, the Council has been committed to working with the providers of financial products, such as, the Lincolnshire Credit Union to extend the choice of low-cost financial products.

The Council has helped develop incentive schemes for under occupiers across the county to promote social mobility, affordability and effective use of social housing stock.

There has also been support and advice to promote training and education opportunities for households at risk of homelessness.

Work with partners to improve support services for vulnerable residents

The North Kesteven Wellbeing Service is free to recipients and works with each customer to devise a bespoke 'Support Plan'. The service also provides direct intervention and referral into other appropriate agencies. The service has ensured there are cost savings for the NHS. For example, patients are not kept overnight in hospital and there are reductions in terms of falls in the home. Individual examples of success include a new flat for a customer which was better suited to his mobility issues, plus the creation of the correct care plan.

The Wellbeing Service has funded an art project at venues across the District. The successful pilot session has resulted in over 20 people attending and people are invited to paint using water colours. This is a community project for groups and individuals to develop a sense of wellbeing and new skills.

Maintain and improve excellent housing services to tenants and other residents

Tenant satisfaction across all key areas remained high during the last financial year, as demonstrated in the tenant satisfaction survey. For example, just over nine in ten respondents said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood (92 percent); rent (88 percent); last repair (88 percent); quality of home (87 percent); and overall service provided by the Council (87 percent).

Promote digital inclusion for residents in North Kesteven

Outcomes and decisions made in Council meetings are now communicated 'at the moment' through web and social media to our residents and the local press.

Forms on the website have now been redesigned to be mobile responsive for use on smartphones and tablets, plus new e-forms have been added to the website to report empty homes to the Council.

The Onlincolnshire broadband programme introduced a partnership between Lincolnshire County Council, the seven District Councils and BT with the aim of promoting good connections between people, services, communities and places. A

total of 12,203 properties in North Kesteven, and 83,528 across the County have now been enabled under the OnLincolnshire Broadband programme. The programme is ahead of schedule by 1,000 premises.

Act as a Community Leader, embracing key partnerships to shape North Kesteven

The Children's Local Partnership Forum encompasses partners from the voluntary and public sectors and provides an environment to discuss issues affecting children and young people within North Kesteven.

The Council has supported seven communities with their business plan application to take on a Community Hub (library), all of which were successful.

The NK Champions Awards were held, which recognises the community contribution and achievements in 2014. They provide an opportunity for residents to say thank you to a person, group or business that has made a real difference to the local community. Through eight different categories the Council aims to acknowledge all of its community champions from young achievers to people contributing to sport to community businesses.

Three significant county food businesses have chosen to use the services of North Kesteven District Council to ensure they are complying with food hygiene legislation. Lincolnshire Co-operative Group Ltd is the third company to enter into a Primary Authority Partnership with the Council, which means that the local authority now handles all matters relating to food hygiene for the business across 87 business areas in ten local authority areas. This builds on partnerships with Heckington-based butchery firm G. Simpson Butchers Ltd, which has six businesses across four council areas, and school meals provider The Farm Kitchen Ltd at Ewerby, which supplies 100 primary schools across Lincolnshire and Rutland.

Other Our Communities Achievements

- 621,209 visitors attended the indoor leisure and sports facilities
- 439,781 visitors attended the cultural venues and ArtsNK programmes
- The Council has adopted a Welfare Reform Strategy to give clarity about its approach to welfare reform issues in the District
- The Families Working Together Service was established at North Kesteven and located at the District Council Offices

What people said:

“I didn't believe that closing for a whole year would be necessary or worth it – however, it was. Great facilities. Friendly staff. I just cannot fault it.”

Steve Bentley, user of Sleaford Leisure Centre

“The Centre is part of our life five days a week. Every day we are met by lovely staff and the pool is fab. Long may it continue to be our favourite place in Sleaford.”

June Veal, user of Sleaford Leisure Centre

“Wow. This place is the reason I get up in the morning.”

Kathryn Bridge, user of Sleaford Leisure Centre

“Since the refurbishment, the centre is great. I use it six days a week. The staff are very friendly – excellent.”

Eric Clay, user of Sleaford Leisure Centre

“My eyesight is failing so I gave painting up eight years ago, I never thought I would paint again.”

Mary, attendee at the painting classes supported by the Wellbeing Service

“I’ve never done anything like this before, but the stencil makes it very easy to paint the picture.”

Jean, attendee at the painting classes supported by the Wellbeing Service

“Thank you North Kesteven District Council and all involved in tonight's Lights Out at St. Denys - a fitting tribute to honour a generation who served us so well and to whom we owe so much.”

Anna Maltby, Sleaford resident, regarding the Lights Out Commemorative Event

“We’re very pleased to support North Kesteven District Council in this scheme to help people at risk of isolation during winter. It’s clear that this [establishing a Winter Wellbeing programme] will make a real difference to people in need.”

Michelle Scott, Lincolnshire Co-op spokesman

“I greatly value the garden waste service offered by North Kesteven; even at £25 it is invaluable. We’re actually really impressed with all three refuse collections as we benefit from a smaller collection vehicle better-suited to the narrow lane we live down, which is too narrow for regular lorries. This saves us and our neighbours from having to drag our bins up to the main road.”

Gavin MacKay, Wellingore resident

Users of the new parts of the NK Centre emerging as the £3.6m refurbishment programme unfolds:

“I’ve seen the new studios to day - they are fab.”

Lesley Berrington, user of North Kesteven Leisure Centre

“I had a good work out in the newly refurbished studios. I’m looking forward to aerobics here too - cannot wait! My daughter also had a good workout at this morning’s Body Attack class, plus an Abs session and can’t wait for next week’s classes.”

Edna Friest, user of North Kesteven Leisure Centre

“The studios are fantastic. So nice to work out in clean and air conditioned environment. Facilities and equipment are wonderful after having to ‘make do’ for a long time.”

Donna Julie, user of North Kesteven Leisure Centre

“When I moved to North Kesteven, I didn’t appreciate just how peaceful it is. Sunny days, happy people and few worries. There’s a lot to be said for that combination and it can be no accident that stress levels are so low around here as people appreciate such good quality of life and good local services.”

Andy Dunlop, Swaton Resident

“I was blown away by the quality of work and performance on show at North Kesteven’s main arts venue, the National Centre for Craft & Design. The NCCD is a huge asset not only to Sleaford but the whole of Lincolnshire.”

Stephen Philips MP QC

“The waste collection service in North Kesteven is the most efficient I have known and the emphasis on recycling is to be applauded. North Kesteven does what it does well so very well.”

Cliff Baxendale, Nocton Resident

“North Kesteven District Council has always been pioneering and innovative, leading from the front, as with the two projects it piloted that are now being rolled out across the County. It is a real testimony to what can be achieved through partnership working with a clear and decisive organisation such as NKDC in the driving seat. It is no coincidence that North Kesteven has been recognised as the safest place to live in the last year.”

Alan Hardwick, Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire

“It is a significant endorsement of the quality, professionalism and effectiveness of the Environmental Health Team to be chosen by three businesses as their nominated Primary Authority. The team has worked tirelessly with businesses throughout the district to raise and maintain their food hygiene ratings, to the point that all but 18 of the 775 rating we issue are scores of three or above – with 531 premises achieving the top score of five. This is the highest level of compliance in the county and 59th best of all local authority areas in the country, which reflects well on the respectful relationships built up between the team and traders.”

Councillor Richard Wright, Executive Board Member with responsibility for environmental services

Our Council

1. To deliver high quality, affordable services that are resilient and easily accessible
2. Improving and operating in the most effective, efficient, value for money way
3. Ensure that the Council is transparent, open and accountable
4. Engage with customers to define community based service delivery and seek feedback

Our Council Performance Indicators

- 94% of customers found it easy to access the services they require against a target of 80%
- 82% of residents feel the Council provides good quality services against a target of 80%
- 82% of residents believe the Council offers value for money against a target of 80%
- 87% of residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things against a target of 80%
- 99% of invoices for commercial goods paid within 30 days of receiving the invoice
- 9,874 residents participated in consultation and engagement activities against a target of 5,000
- 84% of performance indicators on or above target

To deliver high quality, affordable services that are resilient and easily accessible

The Annual Report to Tenants has been published, which includes benchmarked performance information from Housemark demonstrating that all housing services are considered to be both delivering high performance and at low cost. The Annual Report to Tenants reached the final of the TPAS awards, which showcases success stories of tenants, landlords and contractors working together.

The establishment of a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy, which sets out the expected financial position of the Council's General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programmes to 2017/18.

The Council has developed a Customer Access Strategy for 2014-2016, which has been introduced to enhance ways of accessing services.

The Council has trained its Councillors in using Social Media, to enhance and extend their means of communicating with, and supporting our residents, businesses and visitors.

The Council has achieved 'Bronze status' following its assessment under Investors In People (IiP). This is classed as a benchmark for any successful organisation and looks for strong leadership, a compelling vision and a culture of improvement, which is seen as essential for high performance.

Improving and operating in the most effective, efficient, value for money way

The Council has successfully co-located Job Centre Plus into the Council's Customer Service Centre, to provide integrated services to our residents.

The Council is successfully offering to deliver services for other local authorities to achieve savings. For example, the provision of a Payroll service for another Lincolnshire district council with a further agreement coming to fruition in the next financial year.

The Council replaced its ICT infrastructure to provide a modern platform for the next five years.

The Transformation programme has driven a range of proposals to help form a balanced budget for 2014/15. Various projects included bringing partners into the Council building to ensure a more integrated service and to generate income for the local authority.

Following a transformation period within the organisation, consultation was held with employees to choose the core values of the Council to better reflect its culture and organisation.

Equality and Diversity training was provided to all employees. This focused on understanding discrimination; awareness of our own and others pre-conceptions; and increasing knowledge and confidence in relation to equality and diversity.

Ensure that the Council is transparent, open and accountable

The Council has ensured key corporate information is published and accessible. For example, the Council Statement of Accounts, the Council's Annual Governance Statement and the Corporate Plan for 2015-17. In addition, there has been adherence to the Local Government Transparency Agenda and publication of the Council's Publication Scheme, as required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Engage with customers to define community based service delivery and seek feedback

Budget Workshops were delivered in December 2014 using an innovative method of engagement. The unique concept aimed to educate and provide an experience of the budget setting process of the Council by utilising a board game devised in-house. Following this, further events were held providing a question and answer session with both Members of the District and County Council.

A consultation exercise was undertaken with residents in Sleaford with the objective to understand residents' views on whether the infrastructure of the town meets current and future needs. The results are being used to help shape Sleaford's Town Centre Vision.

Consultation was undertaken regarding the refurbishment of the North Kesteven Leisure Centre in North Hykeham via the use of events, paper and online surveys. The events provided the opportunity for people to put forward their comments and concerns, but also suggestions on how to improve the Centre; the results of which have been used to help tailor design and refurbishment.

Local Democracy Week was undertaken with seven schools in the District focusing on helping students to understand more about how democracy works in North Kesteven by giving them the opportunity to take part in activities and events. Responses from the event will be used to tailor future Local Democracy activities and initiatives.

Consultation was undertaken with tenants as part of the STAR survey, with the principle objective to understand the views of local tenants on key satisfaction measures.

Consultation was held with Council Tax benefit recipients in relation to key principles in the Council Tax Support Scheme; the results of which will help tailor future requirements of the scheme.

Other Our Council Achievements

- The Council has taken on apprentices and is paying a Living Wage to its lowest paid employees
- The Council has over 3,000 twitter followers, receiving information, and using it to correspond with the Council to make requests for a service, report issues and provide feedback
- The Annual Communication Plan was produced to show major communication events and activities over the year

What people said:

“Very organised, informative, fun, interesting’.”

“Thank you for a brilliant day. All staff were helpful and willing to listen, I learnt a lot from it’.”

“I enjoyed it very much and gained an insight of democracy’.”

Student feedback from Local Democracy Week 2014

“A wonderful experience for my students and I feel an enlightening one.”

“Fantastic event. Very well organised and enjoyed by our students. Thank you.”

“An excellent day giving students a valuable experience. Excellent to have Councillors working with the students. Thank you for a great day.”

Teacher feedback from Local Democracy Week 2014

“The Youth Council offers a good opportunity for young people to get their voices heard.”

“It is good that Local Government is getting young people to engage in the way that it operates.”

Youth Council Members

Financial Review of the Year

General Fund

The General Fund covers all net spending by the Council on services, other than those accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account. General Fund services are paid for from Government Grants, retained Business Rates and Council Tax.

The local government finance regime was revised in 2013/14 with the introduction of the retained business rates scheme. The scheme allows the Council to retain a proportion of the total business rates received – 50% is paid over to Central Government and the remaining 50% distributed locally between the District Council and Lincolnshire County Council.

The Government has confirmed its continued commitment to the payment of New Homes Bonus to authorities based upon additional properties, particularly affordable homes, being built and empty properties being returned into use. This grant is being top sliced from the national Revenue Support Grant (the Government's main grant to support the Council) with the Council receiving £2 million in 2014/15, which means that the Reserve now stands at £4 million.

For 2014/15, the approved net expenditure budget for the Council's General Fund was £11.342 million which included budget savings of £307,000.

The gross expenditure of the Council against the General Fund for the year was £41,286,000.

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has to be kept as a separate account and contains all the expenditure and income relating to the Council's function of managing and maintaining Council owned dwellings as a landlord. HRA Self Financing, which came into effect from 1 April 2012, has allowed the Council to have greater freedoms over the money it collects from its tenants and how this is spent. During 2011/12, the Council had to 'buy' itself out of the previous finance regime around HRA Subsidy with a one off payment of £57 million. This has meant that it now retains all the income raised through tenants rents and is reinvesting it back into its housing stock and its new build programme. The Council has established a robust 30 year Business Plan and financial plan charting its long term aspirations in the provision of local government housing. The overall financial position of the HRA over the 30 years is strong with opportunities provided for further investment. The Plan sets out that the guiding principles for investment are to:

- Improve - the quality of accommodation to at least the NK homes standard;
- Build - new housing for rent through the housing service; and
- Respond - to the service needs and aspirations of customers

The gross expenditure of the Council against the HRA for the year was £110,774,000. For 2014/15 the HRA is showing a more favourable position, which provides an in year deficit of £1,152,947, against an Approved Budgeted deficit of

£1,604,000. This includes budget carry forward requests relating to the HRA totalling £138,900 received for projects to be finalised in 2015/16.

Capital Programme

The Council's capital expenditure on the provision of new or enhanced assets is largely met from revenue contributions, borrowing, government grants and contributions from third parties.

The gross expenditure of the Council against the capital programme for the year was £12,306,000. The Council's Housing Capital Programme showed that the main areas of expenditure was spent in the following budget heads:

- Component Replacements, for example, heating systems, kitchen and bathrooms - £4,989,900
- Vehicles, for example, handyman vehicles - £9,400
- New Build Schemes - £5,446,200

The Council's Housing Capital Programme showed an underspend of £2,284,000. The main areas of underspend occurred in the following budget heads:

- Disabled Adaptations - £123,000
- Heating - £1,356,000
- Estate Improvements - £121,000
- New Build schemes - £405,000

The General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/15 showed that the main areas of expenditure was spent in the following budget heads:

- Disabled Facilities Grants - £261,400
- Navigation Yard - £202,000
- Refuse - £347,900
- North Kesteven Centre Refurbishment - £489,000
- Grantham Road Warehouse (car park) - £28,600

The General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/15 resulted in an underspend of £772,000. The main underspend of £300,000 relates to the broadband project, however most of this outstanding expenditure is planned to be incurred in 2014/15. Often with capital projects the delay relates to difficulties with third parties and is outside of the Council's control.

Since 2010 the Council has embarked on a number of new build schemes and has been successful in receiving funding in order to achieve this. An additional 55 new build council dwellings have been delivered and 1 property purchased, a number of other new build developments are currently under construction. The council has continued investment in the current housing stock to maintain them at the Council's "NK Fabric First Plus" standard.

Resources available for investment in non-housing capital assets and schemes have been increasingly scarce in recent years and the Council continues to work hard with stakeholders and partners in order to provide investment in non-housing assets.

Earmarked Reserves

The Council began the year with £10.8 million in Earmarked Reserves for specific purposes across the Council's General Fund, HRA and Capital programme. The largest of these relates to the Greater Lincolnshire Transport Strategy (£0.6 million), Capital (£0.8 million), Regeneration (£0.7 million), New Homes Bonus (£3 million) and Refuse Vehicle Replacement (£0.6 million); all of which the Council is planning to invest into infrastructure, growth and its asset base.

During 2014/15, the Council received a further New Homes Bonus amount of £2 million which has initially been allocated to the reserve and contributed £9 million to the HRA Major Repairs Reserve from the HRA to fund capital expenditure on its housing stock and new build programme. Other contributions to reserves totalled £1.9 million.

Use of reserves, mainly on the housing capital programme, totalled £9.6 million which gave a position at 31 March 2015 of £14.3 million in Earmarked Reserves.

The Accounts

The Council's accounts for 2014/15 were approved by the Head of Finance and Resources as the Council's Chief Finance Officer at the end of June 2015 with the Full Council approving the final audited version by the end of September 2015. A "Summary of Accounts" will be provided once this has been completed.

Future Financial Information

The most challenging aspects for the Council remain meeting further reductions in Central Government grant announced in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 Settlement Funding Assessment.

With small signs of economic growth and the Government currently going through its next spending review for 2016/17, it is likely that the Council will have to keep finding further savings in its budgets for the foreseeable future.

Governance

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Annual Governance Statement outlines the council's governance arrangements and achievements during 2014/15 and highlights areas to continue to strengthen governance, quality and internal control in 2015/16.

Transparency

The council has three Overview and Scrutiny Panels who continue to provide challenge to the Executive Board and have continued to strengthen their policy development and review role. The Overview and Scrutiny Panels, comprising representatives of the leading and opposition parties, take a council-wide view and lead on collaborative scrutiny issues.

The Audit Committee comprises five Councillors and one independent person who have been elected to enable robust challenge. The Committee is focused on providing independent assurance on the Council's control environment, the adequacy of the risk and governance arrangements and financial reporting.

As part of the Council's policy on transparency and openness, more information is being made available to residents and businesses through the publication of expenditure invoices for spend over £500 and through the Council's pay policy.

Human Resources

The Council ensures that time and resources are invested to enable all employees to be fully engaged and motivated. Employees are given a number of tools and support through various mechanisms that enhance their learning and development. This includes: employee development interviews; competency framework and Officer training plans. There has also been access to a number of e-learning and classroom based courses. The Council holds the Charter for Elected Member Development and Investor in People (IiP). We were also the first Lincolnshire Council to agree to the living wage for lowest-paid employees.

Performance Management and Data Quality

The performance management arrangements provide a framework at the highest level for action planning, performance focus, delivery and achievements – aligned to the Council's strategic objectives and key priorities.

Data quality plays an important part towards contributing to the delivery of the Council's priorities and services and developing and maintaining a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

The data presented in our Annual Report is correct at the time of going to print. Should changes be required as a result of audit or review, they will be published on our website.

Equality and Community Engagement

NKDC is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. As an employer, NKDC is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity within its workforce. NKDC will not tolerate any discrimination, directly or indirectly in relation to the protected characteristics detailed in the 2010 Equality Act. The Council has invested in an e-learning package to ensure that all its employees and Members increase their knowledge and confidence in relation to equality.

The Council actively engages with its communities to gain their opinions and views on a wide range of subjects. We often consult with community and parish groups, tenant representatives, representatives from local businesses, support and voluntary groups, as well as inviting individuals to specific focus sessions. In addition the Council has an active viewpoint panel with over 1,000 residents who give up their time to let us have their opinions on Council services, plans, policies and their local area. During the year, many consultees have completed surveys and taken part in forums, discussions and workshops.

Access to Information

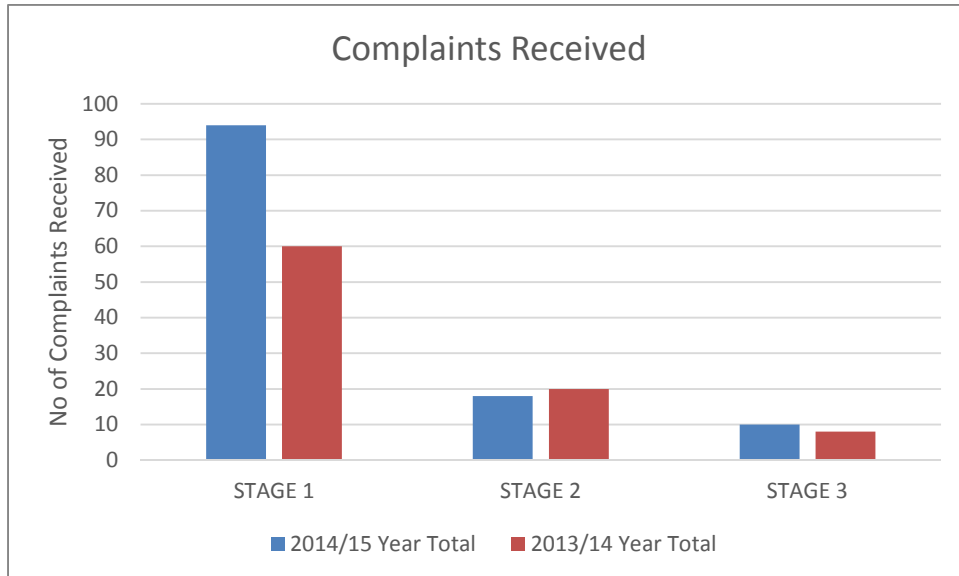
The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 provides public access to information held by public authorities. The legislation/regulation helps the Council promote greater openness and dialogue with its residents and provide increased transparency of decision making, which in turn will help to increase public confidence in the way the Council is operating. Robust FOI and EIR practices will not only enable the Council to meet its obligations, but will also aid the Council in understanding what people are interested in. In addition, The Data Protection Act 1998 applies to the processing of data in relation to the living, identifiable individual and is there to protect personal privacy and uphold the rights of the individual. Under the Data Protection Act 1998, an individual has a right of access to information held about them by any organisation. This is known as the Right of Subject Access.

During 2014/15, the Council received 645 Freedom of Information requests; 249 Environmental Information requests; and 17 Data Protection/Subject Access requests.

Complaints

The Council takes complaints very seriously and deals with them quickly and efficiently. We are committed to providing excellent customer service, but realise that

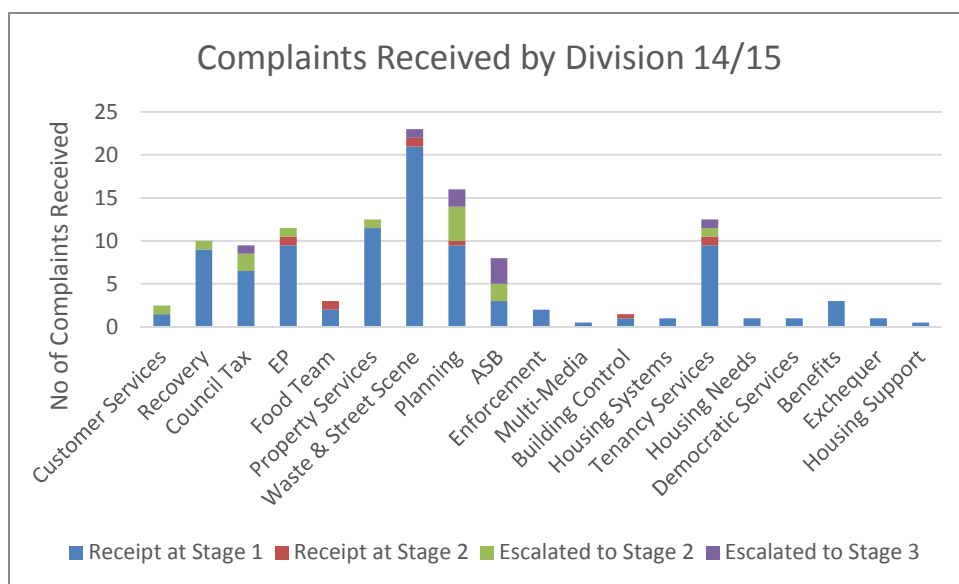
sometimes things can and do go wrong. We want to know if our residents are unhappy or dissatisfied with our service so that wherever possible, we can try to put things right. We value residents' roles in helping us to improve our services. The following table outlines the number of complaints received during the last full year for 2014/15, compared with 2013/14.



The overall number of complaints received in 2014/15 has increased from those received in 2013/14.

The webpage was updated in April with an on-line formal complaint form – this made it easier for customers to log an issue as a formal complaint rather than contact us informally, so although there was an increase in first time complaints received, the majority were not upheld.

The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received by each Division across the year.



When a complaint is closed, the outcome of the complaint investigation (whether the complaint was either upheld, partially or not upheld) is recorded. 27% of the complaints closed during the year have been decided as against the Council and for the complainant (marked as either upheld or partially upheld). This is a decrease from last year (51%). The summary of the outcomes of complaints closed in the 2014/15 is shown below:

Complaint Outcome	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	2014/15 Total	2013/14 Total
Upheld	4	5	4	1	14	22
Partially upheld	8	3	3	3	17	23
Not upheld	27	20	12	23	82	44
Total	39	28	19	27	113	89
Total Against	31%	29%	37%	15%	27%	51%

Political Management

North Kesteven District Council has 43 councillors that represent 26 wards. The role of an elected Member is a rewarding form of public service, where individuals can make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives. Members have to balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political parties and the Council.

The Member's role includes:

- Setting strategy
- Allocating resources
- Monitoring performance
- Representing people within their wards
- Community leadership and engagement.

District council elections take place every four years; with the next taking place in May 2015.

Decision Making in the Council

Ultimate responsibility and accountability for the performance of the Council rests with the elected Councillors. The Political leadership is key to ensuring the Council has the right policies in place. This needs clear vision, a focus on improvement, with personal and collective accountability and all councillors play a vital role, through the Executive Board, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committee.

High-quality council services rely on strong corporate governance from elected members and it is the responsibility of these members to ensure there is an emphasis on providing quality services the public want.

North Kesteven District Council has adopted a Leader and Executive system. The Executive comprises five members plus the Leader of the Council. The Executive meet regularly and make key decisions on behalf of the Council, which include

approval of the Council's vision and key strategies, allocation of Council resources and initiating and implementing key Council policies.

The most important policy decisions must be considered and taken by the whole Council, which is attended by all Councillors. For example, the council's annual budget must be approved by the Full Council, as must key policies and strategies.

In addition, the Council has three committees, known as Overview and Scrutiny Panels, drawn from those councillors who are not Executive Board Members. They contribute to the Council's development, monitor and review council policies and procedures. They also monitor the performance of the services and review performance targets.

The Council also has regulatory powers and responsibilities, and has established committees to carry out these key functions relating to development control, enforcement, and licensing.

There are also specific committees – the Audit Committee and the Standards Committee – to ensure the council operates prudently, and meets effective standards of governance.

In addition, the Council is committed to working in partnership with regional bodies and the other local statutory agencies including the police, NHS, fire service and with local businesses and community organisations, towards shared community goals. During 2014/15 the Council was a key partner in PartnershipNK, the Local Strategic Partnership.

Organisational Management

NKDC employed approximately 340 people during the year. The Chief Executive, Ian Fytche, has overall responsibility for the management of the Council. There are also two Corporate Directors, Alan Thomas (also the Deputy Chief Executive) and Karen Bradford; and a further five Heads of Service managing broad service areas. However, there will be a revised Senior Management Team from the 1 June 2015. The Senior Management Team has reduced by 27 percent since 2008 and the Council has one of the smallest senior management teams within the county.

Overview and Scrutiny

Communities and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Chairman: Councillor Peter Burley Vice-Chairman: Councillor Ian Carrington

During 2014/15, the Communities and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered many topics, some of which are detailed below:

Strategic Housing

Strategic Housing is principally concerned with the delivery of more homes and more affordable housing. The delivery of affordable housing is a key priority for the Council, so the Panel decided to look more closely into its provision within the District.

Through a programme of reports and questions, the Panel gained a detailed picture of affordable housing within the District. The Strategic Housing Manager explained that the delivery of sufficient housing to meet the District's needs has involved working very closely with the Local Plans Team, developers and site promoters.

Members of the Panel also wanted to know more about the Council's progress with bringing empty homes back into use. It transpired that 21 empty properties had been back into use to allow for development of the site for more homes. This has generated a total of £96,304 in New Homes Bonus paid over six years, with £16,050 generated during 2014/15.

Local Authorities continue to be faced with many challenges in maintaining the delivery of affordable housing, in the current economic climate, and many of the traditional delivery routes have changed significantly. Despite this, the Council continues to employ a range of flexible delivery mechanisms, in order to optimise supply.

Utilities Provision

Members had expressed concern about a perceived lack of infrastructure to provide for the projected growth for the District. To find out more, they invited two representatives from Western Power to talk about the strategy for new connections to the power grid. The guest speakers provided an overview of the infrastructure covering the Sleaford area including the location of the main transformers, and cable routes, and explained that a new supply could be connected either by Western Power or by an Independent Distribution Network provider.

Members of the Panel raised a number of questions. In response, it was learned that a new supply could only be installed when a formal offer had been accepted by the customer, and the time scale for connection would depend on a number of issues, such as distance from the grid, and whether a new transformer would be required. The Panel was informed that the procurement of a new 33kva transformer could take up to twelve months. Furthermore, capacity issues in and around Sleaford were not an issue, as new supply could always be provided, but with cost and time involved.

The Panel asked questions about how closely Western Power worked with local authorities to monitor future development proposals. Although it was acknowledged that new infrastructure could not be installed until a formal offer had been accepted, it was pointed out that if a new supply was being installed it was normal for additional capacity to be built in, in anticipation of future development. The new customer would only be charged for that part of the infrastructure required for their supply and any future customers would then be charged pro-rata for their supply.

The Panel was satisfied with the information presented, and the responses to questions.

Update on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

It is a statutory responsibility for councils to scrutinise the work of the CSP on an annual basis. In 2014/15, Members were particularly keen to learn more about the effects of the implementation of the recent restructure; namely the Police and Crime

Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel. Members also had the opportunity to scrutinise the Police and Crime Plan, running up until 2017. The Plan outlines how the Police and Crime Commissioner will work with Lincolnshire Police, the public and partners towards reducing crime and improving levels of safety. The Police and Crime Plan spans a huge range of issues, from crime prevention, anti-social behaviour, community engagement, restorative justice, CCTV, and national funding. The Councils 'It's That Easy', campaign with local schools, is cited as an example of best practice, in educating and diverting young people away from crime.

The Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership, (LCSP), has identified the County wide priorities for 2015-18 as being: substance misuse, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour/hate crime, sexual violence, organised crime and reducing re-offending. Overall reported crime levels had once again reduced for North Kesteven, whilst anti-social behaviour levels also decreased year on year.

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Chairman: Councillor Chris Goldson Vice-Chairman: Cllr Ron Oxby

During 2014/15, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered many topics, some of which are detailed below:

Food Safety Performance

The Environmental Health Manager presented a report about the progress of the Environmental Health Team following a recent restructure. The report included a breakdown of premises that had been categorised and profiled, and Members were also interested to learn about the new Primary Authority Agreements. These were formally recognised relationships with companies where advice provided by the authority was given legal status. The aim of this scheme was to provide consistent, robust advice when conducting inspections. The Panel were also pleased to hear of existing agreements with premises in the District and noted that the Team fully publicised their service, whilst promoting the positive message of the work they undertake.

Current initiatives and developments relating to food fraud and food hygiene inspections were explained. Members asked a number of questions, which lead to the following information: the Environmental Health Manager confirmed that the objective of the food cart was to visit schools and communities, to educate people in safe and healthy cooking. In partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Group, the Team had taken the cart to some of the more deprived areas of the district. The Panel noted the developments, and anticipated a further report in due course.

Swaton Litter Plan

Several Members had expressed an interest in new approaches to litter collection, and as a result, the "litter Tsar", was invited along to a Panel meeting, to talk about the 'Litter Walks' project in Swaton. All Parish Councils in the District were invited along to share experiences, and there was a good take-up for the event.

The guest speaker described and demonstrated the visual impact of litter in rural Lincolnshire. He explained that there had been 64 voluntary litter collections around the village of Swaton on a voluntary basis. An overview of the extensive volunteer

work was given, and the guest speaker emphasised the importance of getting local councils involved, in order to reduce the overall cost of cleaning up litter, including suggestions as to how perpetrators could be identified.

The report concluded by suggesting various actions, for example, that all Parish Councils consider organised litter walks in their local area; the use of signs on walks to promote correct litter disposal; and features in newsNK to illustrate the issue. The Panel agreed that there was great merit in such events, but felt it was vital to be aware of safety whilst taking part in litter walks. It was also important to emphasise the fun and social value of such schemes.

The Environment Manager confirmed that there were still a number of 'hot spots' where litter was picked regularly by the District Council, and fly tipping had been monitored in these areas. It was also explained that the equipment used for the removal of fly tips had not proven efficient in the wet weather conditions, so the Team were looking at ways to improve the service. The discussion concluded with the Environmental Health Manager confirming the use of surveillance around regular fly-tipping areas, such as, the entrances to household waste sites.

Dry Recyclables Task and Finish Group - Contamination in Dry Recyclables

With the Council's recycling contract due for renewal in the coming spring, it was agreed that this would be an ideal time to conduct a review. The scope for the Dry Recyclables Task and Finish Group was to oversee and ensure compliance with the new TEEP 'Technically Environmentally and Economically Practicable' regulations, coming into effect in January 2015, and to look at contamination rates going forward, into the new arrangement with Lincolnshire County Council.

The Council's 2012 contract for recycling dry recyclables made significant savings for the local authority, but levels of 'contamination', or unacceptable items, remains at around 14 percent, which is higher than the target figure of 5 percent. This additional level of unacceptable items in the green lidded bins leads to financial penalties for the Council, in the region of £150,000 per annum

Secondly, TEEP requires the Council to check whether its recyclable waste needs to be collected separately or is the combined collection demonstrably just as efficient. The Task and Finish Group were able to oversee the positive outcome of this process. It has now been confirmed that it is not cost effective for the Council to collect dry recyclable streams separately, and the current system of mixed or 'co-mingled' collection has passed the test. In summary, the Council found the majority of 'contamination' was not due to dirty objects, but often due to large objects not included in the recycling contract, such as a plastic hose pipe, or a child's toy. In light of this, the Group investigated possible causes, and benchmarked against other authorities.

The Task and Finish Group produced a final report, which included six conclusions. These included: that a sticker, summarising typical unacceptable items, be affixed to the green lidded bin; that the Group would support all current/future education projects for residents undertaken by the Environment Manager, and that the Group endorsed the work undertaken by the organisation 'White Young Green' into whether the Council would be compliant with TEEP or not. This work ran

concurrently with the Task and Finish Group, and the ensuing report demonstrated that NKDC's waste collection service is indeed compliant with the new regulations.

Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Chairman: Councillor Geoffrey Whittle DFM Vice-Chairman: Councillor David Dickinson

During 2014/15, the Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered many topics in addition to the quarterly finance and performance reports, some of which are detailed below:

Welfare Reform

Members were keen to gain an understanding of how welfare changes were impacting on the Council's finances. Members learnt how the Council's Discretionary Housing Payments policy had been tested and found fit for purpose, and that Welfare claimants affected by the changes had all been provided with benefit support.

Members of the Panel also asked how many residents had been affected by the introduction of the under occupation changes, and were provided with appropriate detail.

Members of the Panel were provided with information about the Council Tax Support Scheme. It was pointed out that effective consultation took place with all those affected by the change, including those working age customers in receipt of Council Tax Support, stakeholders and third party organisations. Again, a comprehensive report was provided, summarising consultation, support and the financial position.

Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

The Panel Members had requested an annual update on the shared Revenues and Benefits service for North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council, against the backdrop of major changes to the benefits system.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service explained the employment structure which had been in place since 1 June 2011. Since that time employees had been based over two main sites at Sleaford and Lincoln, as well as performing some customer-facing work at North Hykeham, in addition to a welfare/money advice surgery at Metheringham.

The original business case indicated potential revenue savings for the two authorities had been exceeded following the successful implementation of the new employment restructure. Some of the challenges of the previous 18 months were summarised, such as TUPE transfer and restructure. In order to set the national context, the report summarised the relevant key changes, from Localised Council Tax Support, and Social Sector Under Occupation, to the introduction of Personal Independence Payments, and Universal Credit. It was felt that despite all these major changes, the service had responded well and achieved some commendable levels of performance whilst delivering savings to the partner local authorities.

The report also highlighted the high collection levels for Business Rates and Council Tax, (in excess of 99 percent over the past three years), and also the speedy processing of new benefits claims and changes to claims.

In a bid to further increase efficiencies and improve service delivery to customers, the Shared Service had also recently introduced a self-service system for North Kesteven customers, entitled the 'MyInfo' product, which had been in place at the City of Lincoln Council for a number of years. Using the MyInfo product, North Kesteven Council tax payers were now able to manage several elements of their account on line via the corporate website.

An independent review has taken place during the first full year of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Shared Service. The review was undertaken by the Institution of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV). The subsequent report concluded that the shared service had delivered considerable savings to both partner authorities, and gave an assurance that the changes forming an agreed improvement plan would not affect the level of savings as set out in the original business case. Also, the provision of additional funding from central government to reflect additional burdens undertaken by each council (for example, due to welfare reform changes) would support the financial savings expected from the shared service.