

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

Welcome to the North Kesteven District Council Annual Report 2013/14.

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, 2013/14 saw the construction of the Straw Burning Power Station. The project, run by ECO2, has seen £150 million invested in the development of the plant, creating 250 jobs during construction and 80 during the plants operation. The development has also seen significant community benefits including a district heating system, apprenticeships and various community funding pots.

In the north of the District, the 'LN6 – A Plan for the Future' was completed. This has resulted in the 'Grow LN6' partnership, which is gathering momentum, bringing together organisations active in the area. 'Grow LN6' seeks to develop opportunities to make the area the prime employment growth area in the north of the District. The partnership sees the potential afforded by development sites at Teal Park and the surrounding area. This is coupled with the road transport links and improving rail services to provide opportunities for local businesses to grow and to attract new companies and employers to the Lincoln area.

Overall, 218 jobs were created and/or safeguarded during the last financial year as a result of targeted support by the Economic Development Team. An example of success was shown by the direct support given to a business in Metheringham resulting in the company increasing its workforce by 20 people. In addition, 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. As a result 90 start-up and small businesses have used this service.

There has been further investment by the Council in new council housing with an additional 47 council properties started to be built in the District with completion in this coming year. This is in addition to 51 properties built in 13 locations over the past four years. 53 affordable homes have been completed, which includes a range of property types and homes for older persons. In addition, the Council directly helped to bring back into use 27 empty homes through a variety of measures. On the housing register, there are 1,374 people who want to live in North Kesteven, of which 586 are considered to be in housing need. This means that affordable housing delivery for 2013/14 is 9% of those in housing need and 4% of those on the overall register.

North Kesteven rose to 19th as the best place to live in a national bank's list of Britain's 405 local authority areas and 11th most peaceful. This is in addition to North Kesteven being the number 1 safest place in the country.

There has been a commitment of £600,000 towards the countywide rollout of improved access to superfast broadband, known as OnLincolnshire. OnLincolnshire Phase 1 Broadband project was completed with 19,840 households within the County enabled by 31st March 2014. The Onlincolnshire Project was awarded a further £2.35 million grant to enable 95% of premises to access Superfast Broadband by the end of 2017.

There has been a £2.85 million refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, which was delivered on time and on budget after a 12 month programme. This expanded facilities securing six significant awards for building excellence and promoting a 300% plus uptake in use and memberships than before its closure in 2012. Sleaford Leisure Centre has seen over 82,054 visitors over 6 months compared with 56,060 in the 7 months prior to closing in 2013. In the north of the District, there has been agreement to invest a further £3.6 million refurbishing the North Kesteven Centre.

The National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) celebrated its 10th Anniversary during 2013 with a range of events. In addition, the Whisby Natural World Centre was named within the top 10% of top-performing businesses world-wide, based on visitor reviews through the TripAdvisor website.

North Kesteven has continued to be a high performing low cost authority and has increased our already high levels of performance during 2013/14 with 76% 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.

The Council is also implementing the largest capital programme that it has ever had – a £20million programme focused on new council homes, the redevelopment of NK Sports Centre, a new waste depot and investment in regeneration and economic development.

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.

Councillor Marion Brighton OBE
Leader of the Council

Ian Fytche
Chief Executive

Purpose	<p>Our purpose statement describes what we are here for:</p> <p><i>To deliver effective and efficient public services that meet the needs and priorities of local people and support growth in the district</i></p>
Vision	<p>Our vision describes what we are trying to achieve:</p> <p><i>100 Flourishing Communities</i></p>
Objectives	<p>Our strategic objectives and our values identify how we work, and they underpin everything we do:</p> <p><i>Facilitating the delivery of new jobs, homes and infrastructure to support long term growth</i></p> <p><i>Working in partnership to improve the quality of life, economic performance and environmental sustainability of North Kesteven.</i></p> <p><i>Inspiring community participation in the delivery of public services and the achievement of community aspirations</i></p> <p><i>Transforming services to meet the changing needs of North Kesteven</i></p>
Values	<p><i>Customer Focus;</i></p> <p><i>Can do attitude;</i></p> <p><i>Clarity, integrity and transparency;</i></p> <p><i>Care, respect and valuing diversity;</i></p> <p><i>Cost conscious and efficient</i></p>
Priorities	<p>Our priorities reflect the main challenges facing the district over the next five years which will need to be addressed if our vision is to be achieved</p> <p><i>Our Economy – to promote the economic and employment growth of North Kesteven</i></p> <p><i>Our Homes – to promote housing growth that meets the current and emerging needs of North Kesteven</i></p> <p><i>Our Communities – to promote the sustainability, wellbeing, safety, and health of North Kesteven’s growing communities</i></p> <p><i>Our Council – to be a high performing and value for money Council that is prepared for the future</i></p>

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

Investing in development and regeneration

The Council invested in a workspace scheme at Bracebridge Heath. This has provided 14 new start up units which were let within 10 months of completion safeguarding and/or creating 28 jobs to date.

Kerching Consultancy has been appointed to work with the Economic Development Team to deliver a Retail Vision for Sleaford Town Centre.

The Sleaford Regeneration Group has met quarterly throughout the year focusing on key topics for delivering the Sleaford Masterplan. It has also been a valuable consultee on the Sleaford Transport Plan and large housing developments within the town.

Creating and sustaining job opportunities

The economic development action plan was adopted in 2013. This forecasts in the region of 13,000 new jobs over the next 20 years, with growth forecast in both growth and resilient sectors of healthcare, construction, leisure, food and farming and professional services. This also includes strengthening engineering and retail.

Via the Economic Development Team's Sites and Premise service, 2013/14 saw the construction of the Straw Burning Power Station. A site search started for this in 2004/05 looking at a number of sites across the District until the site on Boston Road, Sleaford was put forward as the preferred location, with the planning the application approved in 2008. The project, run by ECO2, has seen £150 million invested in the development of the plant, creating 250 jobs during construction and 80 during the plants operation. The development has also seen significant community benefits including a district heating system, apprenticeships and various community funding pots.

Planning for the future

The LN6 – A Plan for the Future was completed. This has resulted in the 'Grow LN6' partnership, which is gathering momentum, bringing together organisations active in the area. This includes the three Councils, the LN6 Business Group and the Town and Parish Councils. Working together, 'Grow LN6' seeks to develop opportunities to make the area the prime employment growth area in the north of the District. The partnership sees the potential afforded by development sites at Teal Park and the surrounding area. This is coupled with the road transport links and improving rail services to provide opportunities for local businesses to grow and to attract new companies and employers to the Lincoln area. The partnership has been reinvigorated and, following the publication of the LN6 – A Plan for the Future Study, is now developing an Action Plan to co-ordinate work on identifying the opportunities,

developing an offer to businesses to attract them or retain them in the area, as well as co-ordinating better how the opportunities are marketed.

The Grow LN6 partnership has updated its website to better reflect what is happening and provide a 'must go to' resource for those interested. In addition, further information and momentum is being gathered through use of Twitter. Following a successful breakfast event in March 2014 to highlight and disseminate progress achieved more widely to interested stakeholders, a further event to launch the action plan is anticipated to take place in late 2014. All this shows that the partnership is dedicated to working together for the benefit of LN6 having all acknowledged the key characteristics of this strategically important development area.

In the south of the District, approval has been given for significant planning applications to progress regeneration within Sleaford and there has been an agreement in principle to use a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to progress the link road. In addition, agreement has also been reached to develop a co-ordinated approach amongst the key landowners to deliver a through pedestrian link between Market Place and Money's Yard.

Growth agenda

In January of 2014 the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) resolved to proceed with a new Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire, encompassing the administrative boundaries of North Kesteven, City of Lincoln and West Lindsey. The Local Plan will contain planning policies and identify locations for growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire over the next 20 years, and will be underpinned by an aspiration for sustainable growth; growth in homes, jobs, services and facilities.

A timetable (Local Development Scheme) for the production of the new Local Plan has been agreed by the Joint Committee, and which will see the Plan adopted by the end of 2016. In addition, a consultation and engagement plan (Statement of Community Involvement) has been formulated by Officers and agreed by Members, and which will provide a framework for engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders. As part of the early stages of consultation, a Local Plan Launch event was held in central Lincoln, attended by both Officers and elected Members.

Engaging with businesses

Two business breakfasts were held with over 100 businesses in attendance, the first event was held in May in Sleaford with presentations on Access to Finance and the second was held at Turbine Efficiency located on Network 46 focusing on the Engineering Sector.

Throughout the year 14 business visits were arranged and hosted by businesses within North Kesteven. These visits are vital to informing the main Members and Officers of the key issues that businesses face and helps to inform the work programme.

A procurement event focusing on construction was held in the Council Offices in October, which attracted approximately 80 businesses with extremely positive feedback.

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. As a result 90 start-up and small businesses have used this service. In addition, Business Support is being offered directly to businesses via the dedicated Business Support Officer and through the Account Management programme that is now in place engaging with the top growth businesses within North Kesteven.

Overall 218 jobs created and/or safeguarded in 2013/14 as a result of targeted support by the Economic Development Team. An example of success through the Account Management service was shown by the direct support given to Business in Metheringham resulting in the company increasing its workforce by 20 people.

Growth in the visitor economy

There has been a growth in visitor numbers to 2.6 million visitors a year which is an annual growth of 5.6%. This is worth £108m a year to the local economy, which is a 6.7% annual growth in value (Indexed) and employs 1,818 full-time equivalent employees.

Our Economy Performance Indicators

- 110 jobs created as a result of council intervention against a target of 50
- 10 new investments in North Kesteven for regeneration projects that the Council has facilitated against a target of 5
- 90 businesses provided with targeted advice and business support against a target of 70
- 218 jobs created and/or safeguarded as a result of targeted support by the Council against a target of 100
- Average workshop occupancy level was 98% across the workshop portfolio

All Our Economy Achievements

- 14 new start up units safeguarding/creating 28 jobs to date in a workspace scheme at Bracebridge Heath
- Continuing to deliver a Retail Vision for Sleaford Town Centre
- The economic development action plan forecasts 13,000 new jobs and growth in healthcare, construction, leisure, food, farming and professional services over the next 20 years
- Construction of the Straw Burning Power Station creating 250 jobs during construction and 80 during plants operation
- The LN6 – A Plan for the Future was completed bring together organisations in the area seeking to develop opportunities to make the area the prime employment growth area in the north of the District
- In the south of the District, approval has been given for significant planning applications to progress regeneration within Sleaford

- Two business breakfasts were held with over 100 businesses in attendance, with presentations on Access to Finance focusing on the Engineering Sector
- Throughout the year 14 business visits were arranged and hosted by businesses within North Kesteven
- A procurement event focusing on construction attracted approximately 80 businesses with extremely positive feedback
- 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 90 start-up and small businesses using this service
- There has been a growth in visitor numbers to 2.6 million visitors a year, which is worth £108m a year to the local economy and employs 1,818 full-time equivalent employees
- Two retail regeneration initiatives continue to be worked on in Sleaford with a view to refurbishing and providing new retail floor space in the town
- New business relationships continue to be established across the District

What people said:

“It was an excellent taster session and a good opportunity to network”.

“It was an excellent introduction into public sector contracting and I am keen to find out more”.

“It was well attended which indicates the need for such events. The break-out sessions were a good idea”.

“Our principal was to introduce ourselves as a local business and network with other local businesses. It was also important for us to establish an initial contact with North Kesteven Council in the hope of developing a working relationship”.

Business representatives at the ‘Meet the Local Buyer Event’ held in October 2013

“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 learn of the efforts the District Council is making in trying to boost the town’s retail fortunes and regenerate buildings like the Bass Maltings”.

Toby Dennis, resident in Rowston, on Economic Development in Sleaford

“From their inception we were always confident that the new units at Bracebridge Heath Park would perform very well, even in a difficult market. However I don’t think anyone would have anticipated full occupancy in fewer than nine months. The combination of modern premises, in the right location, at an affordable rent and on flexible lease terms has clearly proved very appealing; full marks to North Kesteven District Council”.

Surveyor Lewes Cove on the new business units in Bracebridge Heath

“This initiative is not just another 'good suggestion' this is another example of PartnershipNK 'rolling up its sleeves' and offering real support! There are (young) entrepreneurs out there with good ideas, worthy of support and PartnershipNK is

providing the money to help these entrepreneurs make a difference; to beat this recession and to create jobs and future wealth”.

Herman Kok on the Partnership NK initiative to support young entrepreneurs

“We are now making good progress with the delivery of new-build opportunities at Teal Park where we have worked successfully with both North Kesteven District Council and the County Council in bringing forward an existing opportunity, which not only secured the retention of Siemens to the City, but also provided the area with the East Midlands leading Employment Park. North Kesteven District Council has a very proactive approach to economic development and we look forward to continuing to work with them”.

Robin Taylor, Taylor Lindsey Ltd

“Sleaford has a great business community, especially where we are at the Enterprise Park, and we are really proud to be growing our business here.”

Steve Doughty, Business owner, on Sleaford Regeneration

“It is without question that Fragrances UK would certainly not have survived the last 4 years without the support of our landlord and North Kesteven District Council”.

Fragrances UK

“With the delivery of the Link Road being so critical to us achieving the full potential of the Sleaford Malting’s physical and economic regeneration, we are delighted to be working so well with the Council in achieving this. North Kesteven District Council is as committed as we are to ensuring the Maltings resumes its economic and civic importance and together we are working to secure its preservation as an important heritage asset to Sleaford and its future use through sustainable renovation. The Council’s pro-active approach towards acquiring the land to enable this without continued delay is most welcome”.

Simon Cocks, Development Manager at Gladedale, owners of nearby Bass Maltings

“We are delighted to be entering into our third contract with North Kesteven District Council to manage the Council’s commercial portfolio. We have embraced over the last 12 years the full management of the Council’s commercial property portfolio, and which we have helped to develop over this period of time, and which now comprises a current portfolio of new-build and converted commercial premises totalling 77 units. We acknowledge that workspace provision is a vehicle through which the Council’s ambitions can be delivered, in terms of the creation of new jobs, regeneration of areas, encouraging and sustaining new and existing businesses”.

S. J. Elkington, Hodgson Elkington LLP

“We have been very pleased with the success of the fourteen 7-0-7 business units where we worked with and let to North Kesteven District Council at Bracebridge Heath. The scheme has satisfied a demand for starter units to the south of the City centre”.

Robin Taylor, Taylor Lindsey Ltd

“We enjoy a positive and professional working relationship with North Kesteven District Council and hold the Officers of the Council in high regard. We provide town planning and landscape architecture advice to a number of Local Authorities, but it is particularly rewarding to be able to work with the District Council in the area in which we are based”.

Robert J C Doughty MRTPI, Managing Director, Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited

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

Building more council houses

A further 47 council properties has started to be built in Sleaford, Ruskington and Metheringham, with completion in this coming year. This is in addition to 51 properties built in 13 locations over the past four years. The Council is on track to deliver an additional 63 council houses by the end of 2014/15.

Delivery of the Growth Agenda

Delivery Groups have been established for each of the eight SUES proposed. SUES are 'Sustainable Urban Extensions' located near the edge of a city or town and contribute to the development of that area. These groups include the Joint Planning Unit, Lincolnshire County Council, City of Lincoln Council, West Lindsey District Council and North Kesteven District Council, as well as the developers. In addition, free support has been utilised from the Advisory Team for Large Scale Applications (ATLAS) who are part of the delivery groups. In addition, an agreement has been created to deliver a Central Lincolnshire Local Plan by November 2016.

More affordable homes

53 affordable homes have been completed during 2013/14. This includes a range of property types and homes for older persons, including six bungalows in Billingham and three bungalows in Navenby.

Bringing back empty homes into use

The Council directly helped to bring back into use 27 empty homes through a variety of measures. This has supported a broader achievement of a reduction of 98 private vacant long-term empty properties. Measures now include a loan scheme and help and advice assisting owners to bring them back to affordable use.

Continually improving our properties

Within the Council's social housing stock many housing improvements have been made, which include 832 heating system and boiler renewals, 269 kitchen replacements and 37 bathroom replacements. Also, re-tendering the Repairs and Servicing contracts has provided an approximate saving of £200,000 to the Housing Revenue Account.

Launch of Lincolnshire Homefinder

There was the formal launch of the Lincolnshire Homefinder. This is a partnership between the City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey District Councils and the Acis Group Ltd. They have created an initiative for choice based lettings to give applicants more choice on where they wish to live in Lincolnshire. By giving greater

choice to members of the scheme it is hoped to build more settled and sustainable communities within the area.

Our Homes Performance Indicators

- 263 new homes been delivered against a target of 320
- 53 affordable homes delivered against a target of 30
- 27 private sector empty homes brought back into use for residential occupation purpose against a target of 20
- 3,066 properties achieved the NK Homes Standard against a target of 2,855

All Our Homes Achievements

- A further 47 council properties has started to be built in Sleaford, Ruskington and Metherringham
- Delivery Groups have been established for each of the eight Sustainable Urban Extensions (areas located near the edge of a city or town and contribute to the development of that area)
- 53 affordable homes have been completed, which includes a range of property types and homes for older persons
- The Council directly helped to bring back into use 27 empty homes through a variety of measures
- Within the Council's social housing stock many housing improvements have been made
- Re-tendering the Repairs and Servicing contracts has provided an approximate saving of £200,000 to the Housing Revenue Account
- An agreement has been created to deliver a Central Lincolnshire Local Plan by November 2016
- Working with land agents to bring forward a Masterplan and application for Sleaford West by November 2014
- 7 rural communities surveyed for housing needs
- Community land trust scheme supported by the Council is under construction
- Negotiated and secured Section 106 planning obligations for affordable housing on a number of sites
- Formal launch of the Lincolnshire Homefinder

What people said:

"It couldn't have been easier to register and use. I was on there every day looking to make a match and when I linked up with someone wanting to swap with me the Council was so good in making sure everything was in order."

Karen Simpson, resident in Ruskington, on the homeswapping scheme

"It was really good being able to see exactly what was available and our chances of getting it. It was really easy and straightforward; just like shopping and we felt really involved in the process".

Emma Jones, resident, on Lincs Homefinder

“It’s really nice to have choices rather than have someone make them for you and to have the flexibility and transparency associated with those choices. We’ve felt really well protected by the Council and valued all the way”.

Max Fisher, resident in North Hykeham on Lincs Homefinder

“We are so grateful that we’ve been able to get a council house at all and to get one of these new ones, and one so suited to our son’s disability needs is amazing. It means so much to us, and especially because it gives Scott a bit more independence to shower himself and get about more easily. It’s a new start for us all”.

Carol Blackwood is among the new tenants at Billingham

“I’m so very grateful to the Empty Homes Project Officer for his help in guiding us through the many elements involved in bringing back into use an empty property my son inherited. If it wasn’t for him highlighting a tax-saving scheme I think we’d have missed it, and it made such a difference. I’m not sure we’d have made it through the paperwork hurdles without his support either. The Council has been such a great help”.

A resident who received support and advice on empty homes

“Our priority in North Kesteven is to work with tenants and North Kesteven staff to achieve a first-class service that we can all be proud of”.

Pat Mollart, Kier Regional Area Manager

“Fantastic Property. No complaints. Service has been top-class”.

“I love it. Very happy”.

New tenants at Fossey Court, North Hykeham

“North Kesteven District Council should be applauded for their resolve to invest in new homes for their District. It is commendable that they are pressing on with building more houses and adopting enhanced standards to make them warm to live in and low cost to run”.

Glenn Slater, Business Development Director of Council house builder Robert Woodhead Limited

“There is a clear understanding of the issues and the respective roles we should take in the development process; but most of all it is about making a contribution and facilitating investment together, as a team”.

Paul McSorley, Group Property Director, Lindum Homes

“Officers and Members at North Kesteven are committed to working in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, the Greater Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership, the housing association and developer partners to maximise opportunities to jointly plan for housing and economic growth and to provide both affordable and market housing. Officers are easy to work with and are proactive in exploring new initiatives and partnerships to increase housing supply”.

Jane Tricker, Homes and Communities Agency

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

Safe place to live

North Kesteven rose from 83rd to 19th best place to live in a national bank's list of Britain's 405 local authority areas; 11th most peaceful and the number 1 safest place in the country. The Council has been awarded a county wide contract for supporting victims of anti-social behaviour, following the successful scheme run in North Kesteven over the last year. There has also been a series of prevention activities in operation, including: Extreme NK; Football schemes; Shop watch; and Pub Watch. County-wide mediation services have been introduced and training has been delivered to Officers regarding counter terrorism.

Restoring local landmarks

The Council made a contribution of £30,000 to support Heckington Windmill's restoration.

Focus on health and wellbeing

The Council's first Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been launched, whilst a District Health and Wellbeing Network has been created that will provide an effective information 'link' from all Districts to the Health and Wellbeing Board. There are now 16 Health Walks in place: one monthly, four bi-weekly and 11 weekly. There are also eight surgeries/health organisations in the Sleaford area and 13 in the North Hykeham area, which continue to refer into the Health Trainer, Fit Kids, Health Walks and Exercise Referral programmes. There were 327 clients on the Exercise Referral programme delivered from four facilities: Carre's Grammar School, North Hykeham Leisure Centre, Harpers in Sleaford and Billingham Village Hall. 70% of referrals have completed the 12 week programme.

Commitment to superfast broadband

There has been a commitment of £600,000 towards the countywide rollout of improved access to superfast broadband, known as OnLincolnshire. BT has been appointed as Superfast Broadband Supplier for Lincolnshire. OnLincolnshire Phase 1 Broadband project was completed with 19,840 households (largely around the Spalding area) enabled by 31st March 2014. This was delivered early with a target of 15,665. The OnLincolnshire Project was awarded a further £2.35 million grant to enable 95% of premises to access Superfast Broadband by the end of 2017.

There has been greater focus on introducing more online forms via the website with 50% of customers signing up for the new brown bin collection service via online services. The NK Champion Awards was promoted through the web, with one-third of all nominations made online. New online forms have been released for missed bins, garages, food business, building control, visitor guide and wellbeing service, plus redeveloping the Tourism and Leisure web presence.

Leisure Centre improvements

There has been a £2.85m refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, which was delivered on time and on budget after a 12 month programme. This expanded facilities securing three significant awards for building excellence and promoting a 300% plus uptake in use and memberships than before closure in 2012. Sleaford Leisure Centre has seen over 82,054 visitors over 6 months compared with 56,060 in the 7 months prior to closing in 2013. There are 1,100 full memberships and 196 swim only memberships. The new Triathlon club is well established and very popular with over 35 people attending each week and a new junior triathlon club is to be launched. The Community Mosaic was completed on time and installed at the Leisure Centre with 300 people taking part. In addition, the Leisure Centre received six awards, including being crowned the winner of a prestigious civic trust award.

In the north of the District, there has been agreement to invest a further £3.6 million refurbishing the North Kesteven Centre in North Hykeham.

Focus on cultural activities

The National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) celebrated its 10th Anniversary during 2013 with a range of events. There have been 86,563 visitors from April to December 2013, which is a 2% increase on last year. One of the events during 2013/14 culminated in the Zygote festival, which included 12 artists, 200 workshop participants (schools), 90 workshop participants (community), 5 new performances created, 6 new artworks created and a total audience attendance of 3,000. In addition, the 'Gifted13' Christmas market attracted 2,754 visitors to the NCCD in November, which was a 15% increase on 2012. From this, 25% of visitors attended one of the exhibitions.

The Whisby Natural World Centre was named within the top 10% of top-performing businesses world-wide, based on visitor reviews through the TripAdvisor website. Their Christmas Crafts fair in November attracted a record 5,000 visitors and 1,200 people attended the Christmas market on the 15 December. Also, the Spires and Steeples challenge attracted 348 participants in the worst weather conditions since the event started.

Success in environmental health

There were a number of successful environmental health prosecutions, including fines of £11,000 against a baker; £2,000 for dog breeders operating without a licence; £1,000 for littering; £1,000 for unsafe waste disposal; and £5,000 each in two food hygiene cases.

Rent arrears reduction

The year-end current rent arrears total was £62,235, compared to a target of £82,996, making this the seventh consecutive year that the target was exceeded. For the second year running, there were no evictions for rent arrears.

Tenant satisfaction

The re-let time for void properties target was exceeded, achieving an average of 19.5 days, beating the target of 21.5 days. These are properties that do not have a tenant and can become void if, for example, a previous tenant has given notice and vacated the property. As a landlord, the Council was awarded the RSPCA Gold Footprint Animal Welfare standard, one of only twelve landlords to achieve this. New tenant satisfaction throughout the year remained strong, with 95.6% satisfied or very satisfied with their new home. The Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey (STAR) has yielded some very positive returns, including: satisfaction with the overall service at 92%; satisfaction with overall quality home at 88%; and satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live at 92%.

Supporting local communities and vulnerable residents

The Council has adopted a Welfare Reform Strategy to give clarity about its approach to welfare reform issues in the District. Work on a North Kesteven District Council Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework has commenced with several local organisations involved in preliminary discussions about how to best deliver one person's 'journey' for Universal Credit. In addition, homelessness and housing benefits service has been linked together to ensure that Discretionary Housing benefits are provided effectively.

The Families Working Together Service was established at NK and located at the District Council Offices. The service is designed to work with families meeting requirements and providing solutions to their needs. Voiceability Advocacy has been appointed at a County level (following trials in the NK area) for victims of ASB who have been identified as being high risk vulnerable persons to provide additional support. A contract has also been signed with Lincolnshire County Council for a two year North Kesteven Wellbeing Service, which has created a new generic support service for anyone over the age of 18. Combining practical support and advice with provision of small aids and equipment will help towards people retaining their independence.

Continued community support

Four funding grants have been approved, one for FundNK and three for Eco2, plus four applications from North Kesteven to the Armed Forces Community Covenant receiving approval. An audit of community groups and facilities has been undertaken with several gaps identified. Areas include: Asgarby, Aswarby, Boothby Graffoe, Burton Pedwardine, Doddington, Haceby, Kirkby La Thorpe, Newton, Rowston, Stapleford, Threkingham and Whisby. In addition, the Council has supported seven communities with their business plan application to take on a Community Hub (library).

Sustainable future

The Council is continuing to promote and secure signatories to the Low Carbon NK Charter alongside giving bespoke advice and support. As requested by businesses,

the Council is investigating the feasibility of group purchasing of energy efficiency technologies with Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce. The Council's carbon emissions have reduced by 22.4% over 4 years. In addition, 27 organisations have now signed up to the Low Carbon NK Charter and committed to contributing to the district emissions reduction, plus 1,450 residents have received advice from the Sustainability Team.

Global Corporate Challenge

The Global Corporate Challenge (GCC) is designed to boost the health and performance of employees by aiming to walk 10,000 steps a day. Organisations signed up to GCC in teams of 7 and are joined over 57,000 teams from 1,500 of the world's largest employers. In 2013/14, 78% of North Kesteven Council employees signed up to GCC with a daily step average of 14,820 walking 436,922,342 steps and a total distance of 173,754 miles over a four month period. NKDC were the 9th most active organisation in the World out of all the Government teams. It was the most active organisation in the UK out of 352 Government teams and had 5 teams in the top 11.

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 8
- 467,475 people attending the North Kesteven Sports Centre, Sleaford Leisure Centre and Northgate Sports Hall against a target of 432,000
- 26,968 visitors attending the Council's outdoor and countryside facilities/events against a target of 23,000
- 420,890 visitors attending Council cultural venues and ArtsNK programmes against a target of 388,000
- 92% of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by the Council against a target of 90%
- 88% of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the overall quality of their home
- 92% of tenants very or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live
- 822 homeless cases prevented through use of housing advice and prevention tools against a target of 325

All Our Communities Achievements

- Number 1 safest place in the Country
- There has also been a series of prevention activities in operation
- The Council made a contribution of £30,000 to support Heckington Windmill's restoration
- The Council's first Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been launched with 16 Health Walks in place
- There were 327 clients on the Exercise Referral programme
- There has been a commitment of £600,000 towards the countywide rollout of improved access to superfast broadband, known as OnLincolnshire, with Phase 1 completed with 19,840 households

- Greater focus on introducing more online forms via the website
- A £2.85m refurbishment of Sleaford Leisure Centre, which has seen over 82,054 visitors over 6 months with 1,100 full memberships
- Agreement to invest a further £3.6 million refurbishing the North Kesteven Centre in North Hykeham
- There have been 86,563 visitors from April to December 2013 at the National Centre for Craft and Design
- The Whisby Natural World Centre was named within the top 10% of top-performing businesses world-wide, based on visitor reviews through the TripAdvisor website with their Christmas Crafts fair in November attracting a record 5,000 visitors
- There were a number of successful environmental health prosecutions
- The year-end current rent arrears total was £62,235, compared to a target of £82,996, making this the seventh consecutive year that the target was exceeded
- Continuing to promote and secure signatories to the Low Carbon NK Charter alongside giving bespoke advice and support
- The Council's carbon emissions have reduced by 22.4% over 4 years
- 1,450 residents have received advice from the Sustainability Team
- 'It's That Easy' has been delivered to seven of the secondary schools in the District focusing on various areas, such as, anti-social behaviour, fire safety and internet safety
- The artist Michael Condron has carried out a number of community workshops and events, which contribute to the development of the Sleaford Renewable Energy Public Art Commission
- Armed Forces Day Concert is organised and being promoted
- The Council has adopted a Welfare Reform Strategy to give clarity about its approach to welfare reform issues in the District
- Homelessness and housing benefits service has been linked together to ensure that Discretionary Housing benefits are provided effectively
- Progress is ongoing to deliver the new Wellbeing Service by April 2014
- The Families Working Together Service was established at NK and located at the District Council Offices

What people said:

"I think it's fantastic. I get so many emails and texts from people concerned that their local council wants to close their pools, so for a council to be investing in its facilities is really impressive. After finding that it couldn't fulfil its initial plans for a £6m rebuild, North Kesteven didn't stop there; it looked at how it could still roll forward with something for the good of its community and has achieved this, which is excellent. That's working for the good of the community and many other councils could learn from that.

There has been a pool here for 141 years; people have got used to coming here to swim and there's terrific continuity in that. By engaging children in swimming at an early age they develop a habit that lasts a lifetime and that's why the Woodland Splash is such a great thing.

It's very short sighted to close leisure facilities down. Exercise is so good for maintaining health, fitness and helping to fight obesity and is has to be better and cheaper in the long run to keep people healthy".

Sharron Davies, Olympic Swimmer

"Fantastic refurbished facility by an inspiring team of people to promote a fit, fun and healthy life style in a lovely community".

Nikki Fletcher, GB Olympic Triathlete and Tri3 Organiser

"As spokesperson for the group, can I say how pleased we at the Sunday Morning Swimming Group are with the way the refurbishment of the Sleaford Leisure Centre has turned out. The whole place has been re-vitalised and is obviously proving popular with all members of the public from far and wide.

Having been involved for many years and been able to take part in the consultation process, I must say I am pleased that the points raised about things like the retention of the Sauna and Steam, as well as the incorporation of the Kiddies Area were listened to and implemented. Once again, a big thank you to you and to all involved in keeping our Leisure Centre alive and well".

Alan Collick, Sunday Morning Swimming Group and daily swimmer

"It's fantastic. My girls loved the Woodland Splash which is perfect for the area. The pool is better with deck-level water and better access and it all seems a lot brighter, warmer and welcoming".

Katy Williams, regular user at the Sleaford Leisure Centre

"The new pool is awesome, so clean and smart and I love the extra adult sessions, so thank you NKDC for such a great facility. I know it'll be a huge success".

Steve Mason, regular user at the Sleaford Leisure Centre

"The refurbishment of the Sleaford Leisure Centre recently undertaken by North Kesteven Council is a first class example of how to change an older swimming pool into a more modern, user-friendly and financially sustainable facility. An innovative concept that more local authorities should emulate."

Dennis Freeman-Wright, ASA Facilities Team, Loughborough University

"I was blown away by the quality of work and performance on show, it really brought home to me just how important this resource is. The National Centre for Craft and Design is a huge asset not only to Sleaford but the whole of Lincolnshire".

Stephen Philips MP QC

"I single out for praise the arts, leisure and sports facilities which are generally excellent. I do feel enriched by living in this District. Sleaford's National Centre for Craft and Design and Terry O'Toole Theatre in North Hykeham are well worth visiting. The Nature Park at Whisby is great for walks and so too the Stepping Out Walks. North Kesteven does what it does well so very well!"

Cliff Baxendale, resident in Nocton on cultural activity in the District

"It's great that so many really inspiring people have been recognised in this way. It has been a privilege to meet them and to be a part of the recognition being given to

their efforts to make their communities a better place to live. Each one has shown such selfless commitment to others, often at some personal expense of time, energies or even health. They are all winners in my eyes and I think we should also thank the people who nominated them all”.

John Marshall, Host at the Community Champion Awards

“Although we don’t use it so much now as we are able to compost and recycle a great deal ourselves. I do think the refuse service is excellent and it seems to me as though there is less countryside litter which I know NKDC works hard on in partnership with Hill Holt Wood”.

Toby Dennis, resident in Rowston on the Council’s Refuse Service

“I often have to report fly-tipping on my land or in the local ditches but it’s always dealt with really quickly and cleared up and I appreciate that”.

Farmer Chris Godson, Asgarby

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

Cliff Baxendale, resident in Nocton, on the Council’s Refuse Service

“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”.

Andy Dunlop, resident in Swaton

“I know we’re not alone but NK has always been so good to us; it supports Billingham well and involves us in so many projects. We’ve pioneered Neighbourhood Plans and have really enjoyed the opportunities offered by ArtsNK. The mosaic we made on village history is so magnificent”.

Juneta Wilson, resident in Billingham

“We are hoping to secure enough funding for our 'dream skate park' by September, which will provide a dedicated, safe area for local children and teenagers to practice their skills. It has involved five funding applications and the support of NK’s Community Initiatives Officer has been constant with lots of guidance and advice on the complexities of grant application forms”.

Mrs Sarah Stead, Branston and Mere Parish Clerk

“The design is bold and striking and the whole of the interior provides a pleasant and stimulating environment for users. It is a splendid addition to the resources and facilities of the town, both visually and functionally, and is well up to the Trust’s high standards in these matters”.

Chairman Eddy Double, Civic Society who awarded Sleaford Leisure Centre the Sleaford Civic Society’s Annual Award

“Lincolnshire Police is committed to working in partnership with North Kesteven District Council with the aim of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in North Kesteven. The excellent working relationships we have developed has helped us in many ways, examples of this are the ability to fund initiatives such as bike security

marking schemes and improving security at vulnerable locations such installing CCTV at business parks where there have been repeat victims of crime. There are many other examples in which we work together to resolve issues and we will continue to do so to help improve the quality of life for our local communities”.

Inspector Marc Gee

“The county has had another successful year in respect of safeguarding our people, creating a safe environment and developing a cohesive community. I applaud North Kesteven, the local authority and the wider community, for their work across partnerships in tackling issues that matter to the community. Last year we have made significant headway in respect of managing and tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing victims, helping communities and diverting young people away from crime. We have reduced crime and this year I look forward to working with North Kesteven to ensure the District continues to be one of the safest places in the UK to live”.

**Superintendent Mark Housley, Assistant Director Community Safety,
Lincolnshire County Council**

“Having taken part in a number of Armed Forces Day Parades around the country over the years, I felt Sleaford really showed true appreciation toward the RAF College Cranwell as we performed their parade. The festivities that were organised by the Council Officials afterwards were perfectly pitched and both communities really benefitted”.

Sergeant R C Nauyokas, RAF College, Cranwell

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

Providing high quality and value for money services

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. This is the first time that all services have been categorised as such.

The Council has gone into partnership with West Lindsey regarding joint ICT Services saving £160,000. In addition, Members ICT was implemented successfully, with 41 of the 43 members now using IT to access committee papers, emails and other communications saving £32,000 per year. We have also reduced our partnership costs for the provision of the Council's hosted website by £1,500. The Council has maintained external accredited Gold standard for the councils Local Land and Property Gazetteer and achieved accreditation under the Governments new Public Sector Network (PSN) systems and data security compliance.

Start, Stop, Improve Do Differently (SSIDD) Tranche 1 transformation projects have been completed, and anticipate savings of £307,000 for 2014/15. In addition, the Council has shared service arrangements in place to deliver services, which has saved the Council £5.7 million over the past six years.

The Council has initiated an agile working programme which will allow staff to work more flexibly both throughout the District and at customer sites. For example, agile working project has commenced with the new Wellbeing Service to equip field workers with tablet technology to assist the assessment of customers requiring assisted support in their homes.

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.

There was an improved turnaround in processing of new benefits claims from 15.94 days in 2012/13 to 12.66 days 2013/14. Also, processing claimants' circumstance changes improved from 10.98 days in 2012/13 to 2.92 days in 2013/14. There was improved collection of Council Tax, up by 0.1% to 99.2% achieved in 2013/14. 99.5% of Business Rates collected in the year – both among the county's highest.

The Council has achieved reduced corporate energy and fuel use – achieving a 22% carbon reduction and saving £125,000 in a single year.

Communicating and engaging with our residents

The Council is continuing to develop ways in which its customers can contact us. The Council now 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 NK Champions Award was held in September to celebrate community and individual achievements through the year and was deemed a great success. The Council was also shortlisted for the PR Week Awards Best marketing campaign (public sector) under £10k for its innovative Dead Pheasant Recycling Campaign alongside notable organisations such as the British Library and London Underground.

A new Housing Complaints process was implemented, which included an appeals process in line with new Government Housing regulations.

Many different pieces of consultation were undertaken through 2013/14 to engage with our residents. Some examples include establishing how effective the Dead Pheasant campaign was in re-educating and informing residents on effective recycling. The Access to Services consultation with customers to identify how they want to interact with the Council and evaluating their use of modern communication technology, such as, social media and mobiles. There was also consultation with Council Tax Benefit recipients on changes due to Welfare Reform; consultation with Parish and Town Councils on the street sweeping service and Council Tax and Budget Events informing the setting of Council Tax levels.

Key corporate information

The Council's Annual Corporate Plan for 2014/15 was approved and identified detailed activities for this year sitting within a five year overall plan. The Annual Communication Plan was produced to show major communication events and activities over the year. In addition, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was adopted for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

Our Council Performance Indicators

- 98% of customers found it easy to access the services they require
- 87% of residents feel the Council provides good quality services against a target of 80%
- 81% of residents believe the Council offers value for money against a target of 80%
- 75% of residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things against a target of 70%
- 98% of customers found it easy to access the services they required against a target of 80%
- 59% of people easily found public interest information on the Council and its decision-making against a target of 50%

All Our Council Achievements

- The elections for the County Council were successfully delivered

- The Annual Report to Tenants has been published, which demonstrates that all housing services are considered to be both delivering high performance and at a low cost
- The Council has gone into partnership with West Lindsey regarding joint ICT Services saving £160,000
- Reduced our partnership costs for the provision of the Council's hosted website by £1,500
- The Council maintained external accredited Gold standard for the councils Local Land and Property Gazetteer
- Start, Stop, Improve Do Differently (SSIDD) Tranche 1 transformation projects have been completed, and anticipate savings of £307,000 for 2014/15
- The Council has also taken on apprentices and is paying a Living Wage to its lowest paid employees
- Improved turnaround in processing of new benefits claims
- The Council has achieved reduced corporate energy and fuel use – achieving a 22% carbon reduction and saving £125,000 in a single year
- 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
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- The Annual Communication Plan was produced to show major communication events and activities over the year
- In addition, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was adopted for 2014/15 to 2016/17

What people said:

“There's no one service that stands out above all others but I appreciate the work done by the Council's staff; their efficiency, helpful attitude and dedication to the people they serve”.

Andy Dunlop, resident in Swaton

“A wonderful insight for the students giving them plenty of opportunities to take part”.

“The day was a success! It was split into small enough chunks to keep the students engaged. At first I thought all the facts and figures were going to be hard for the age group selected, but was proved wrong and the students were all involved and fully understanding”.

Teachers comments from the Local Democracy Week Event held in October 2013

“I really enjoyed it, I hope I can come back next year”.

“Enjoyed the day a lot”.

“I enjoyed the whole day it was a great pleasure”.

“Amazing day! Councillors were lovely and friendly”.

“Very informative”.

“Perfect”.

Students comments from the Local Democracy Week Event held in October 2013

“I feel the YouthNK has allowed me to feel more confident around new people, and it has also allowed me to make new friends”.

“The work of YouthNK enabled me to win the community champions award for young achiever”.

“It has made me more aware of subjects that influences my generation”.

“The council has taken a proactive role in developing the ability of young people to express their views”.

YouthNK Members comments in relation to the North Kesteven Youth Council

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 NNDR received – 50% is paid over to Central Government and the remaining 50% remaining locally between the District Council and Lincolnshire County Council.

The Government has announced 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 Governments main grant to support the Council) with the Council receiving £1.5million in 2013/14, which means that the Reserve now stands at £3million.

For 2013/14, the approved net expenditure budget for the Council's General Fund was £11.65 million which included budget savings of £636,000.

The gross expenditure of the Council against the General Fund for the year was £39,095,000. A surplus of £721,203 was likely to accrue on the Council's General Fund for 2013/14 after allowing for £115,300 of project costs to be transferred into the Earmarked Reserve in order to be finalised during 2014/15. An Executive Board report has recommended that the surplus is transferred to Early Retirement and Redundancy Reserve (£50,000), ICT Reserve (£50,000), Renewals Reserve (£100,000), Uninsured Claims Reserve (£21,000) and the balance to the Regeneration Reserve within the Council's accounts.

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 £57million. 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. Over the next 10 years the Council have detailed plans in place to build 500 new homes within North Kesteven.

The gross expenditure of the Council against the HRA for the year was £12,120,000. For 2013/14 the HRA showed an additional net operating surplus of £444,500 against an approved budgeted surplus of £600,400. This includes budget carry forward requests relating to the HRA totalling £113,400 received for projects to be finalised in 2014/15.

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 £12,300,000. The Council's Housing Capital Programme showed an under spend of £1.1 million. The main reasons for these variances are due to delays on the Council's new build programme due to third parties which is outside of the Council's control. Most of this outstanding expenditure is planned to be incurred in 2014/15. The General Fund Capital Programme showed an underspend of £717,000. This is predominantly due to delays around purchase of land and finalising proposals with regard to the regeneration fund. As with the housing capital programme this relates to difficulties with third parties and 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. For 2013/14, the Council has been able to use the money that would have previously been paid over in the form of housing subsidy to assist in funding its new build schemes resulting in an additional 6 new build properties during 2013/14. The housing capital programme for 2014/15 to 2023/24 has £49.8 million to increase the Council's housing stock and £50.3 million for improvements to existing stock.

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.

The Council will continue to support Disabled Facilities Grants totalling £379,000 per annum and is investing £1.5 million in a Regeneration Fund. The non-housing capital programme 2014/15 - 2016/17 also includes £0.6 million contribution to help facilitate improved Broadband within the County, Refuse Depot Relocation of £2.8 million and £2.5 million for North Kesteven Sports Centre Refurbishment.

Earmarked Reserves

The Council began the year with £6.3million 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 (£0.6m), Capital (£0.6m), New Homes Bonus (£1.6m) and Refuse Vehicle Replacement (£0.4m) all of which the Council is planning to invest into infrastructure, growth and its asset base.

During 2013/14, the Council received a further New Homes Bonus amount of £1.5 million which has initially been allocated to the reserve and contributed £6.8 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 £2.5 million.

Use of reserves, mainly on the housing capital programme, totalled £6.3 million which gave a position at 31 March 2014 of £10.8 million in Earmarked Reserves.

The Accounts

The Council's accounts for 2013/14 was approved by the Deputy Chief Executive as the Council's Chief Finance Officer at the end of June 2014 with the Full Council approving the final audited version by the end of September 2014. 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 2014/15 and 2015/16 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 2013/14 and highlights areas to continue to strengthen governance, quality and internal control in 2014/15.

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, takes a council-wide view and leads 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). In addition, the Council has taken on seven apprentices in-house, contributed towards two more working on Sleaford Leisure Centre and secured agreement for seven more at the renewable power station. 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 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.

Please see the statistics below in relation to Freedom of Information Requests:

	April 2010 - March 2011	April 2011 - March 2012	April 2012 - March 2013	April 2013 - March 2014
A) FOI Requests received	400	448	458	646
B) Information disclosed in full	95%	91%	92%	97%
C) Information received within 20 working days	95%	98%	99%	98%

Please see the statistics below in relation to Environmental Information Requests:

	April 2010 - March 2011	April 2011 - March 2012	April 2012 - March 2013	April 2013 - March 2014
D) EIR Requests received	6	52	71	131

Please see the statistics below in relation to Data Protection/Subject Access Requests:

	April 2010 - March 2011	April 2011 - March 2012	April 2012 - March 2013	April 2013 - February 2014
E) DPA/SAR Requests received	2	4	7	12

Complaints

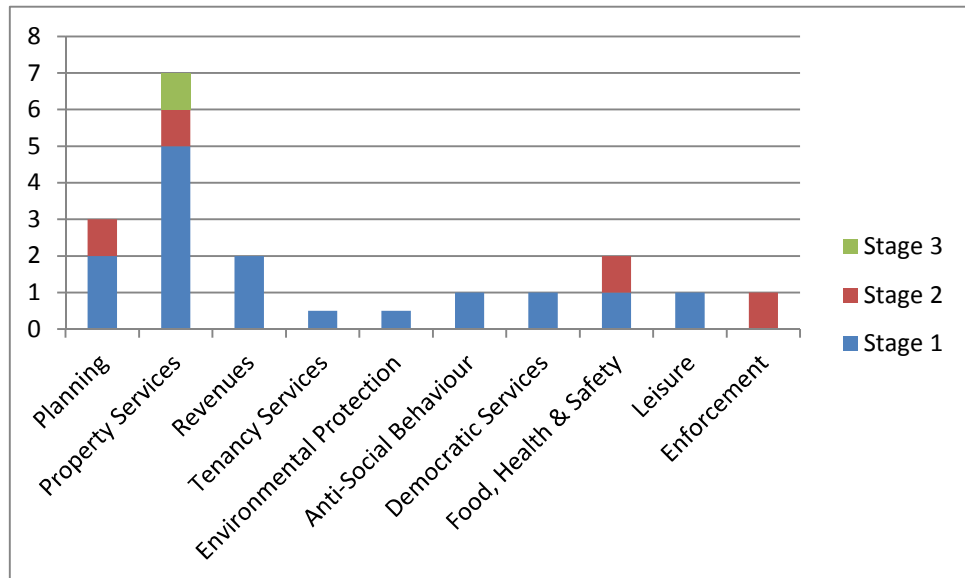
The Council takes complaints very seriously and deals with them quickly and efficiently. We are committed to providing excellent customer service, but realise that sometimes things can and do go wrong. We want to know if our residents are unhappy or dissatisfied with our service so that wherever possible, 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 and closed during the full year for 2013/14.

Total First Time Complaints Received	11	24	14	16	65	58
Total Escalations (stage 2 or 3)	5	6	9	3	23	15

When a complaint is closed, the outcome of the complaint investigation (whether the complaint was either upheld, partially or not upheld) is recorded. 51% 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 increased slightly from last year, at 50%.

The table below illustrates the number of complaints received (both as new complaints, or escalated complaints) by service area during the quarter. Service areas not shown in the table did not receive any complaints during this quarter:



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 2013/14 the Council was a key partner in PartnershipNK, the Local Strategic Partnership.

Organisational Management

NKDC employed approximately 371 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. 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.