

## Annual Report 2015/16

Welcome to the North Kesteven District Council Annual Report 2015/16.

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, 244 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, 108 businesses looking to grow in the District were provided with tailored advice and support.

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 is coupled with further developments at Teal Park and significant improvements to the Hykeham rail services, which have all provided opportunities for local businesses to grow and attract new companies and employers to the area.

There has been further investment in new social housing with 22 homes completed throughout the year, with an additional 76 affordable homes being completed through partnership working. In addition, the Council directly helped to bring back into use 21 empty homes, which have been collectively empty for a total of 124 years.

North Kesteven is officially recognised as the safest place to live in England for the third year running. Official figures for the twelve months up to the end of March 2016 show that there were fewer crimes per 1,000 people committed in North Kesteven than anywhere else in the country.

A substantial £3.6 million refurbishment project for the North Kesteven Sports Centre saw its first three phases being completed in September 2015. This included a new 3G pitch, a transformed gym; and the creation of new dance and spinning studios. Included in the refurbishment was the UK's first ever interactive water selfie flume and a new Magna Carta splash pool, which has been specially designed for younger children.

There was substantial progress during the last financial year in creating 'Otter's Reach Indoor Adventure', at Whisby Natural World Centre. This will provide an all-weather experience and an educational resource for younger visitors aged 3 years and upwards. The area will allow younger children to explore and experience the park's history through imaginative play.

North Kesteven has continued to be a high performing low cost authority and has increased its already high levels of performance during 2015/16. In addition, the Council has 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 2015/16**

### **Vision:**

100 Flourishing Communities

### **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**

- 104 jobs created as a result of council intervention against a target of 75
- 12 new investments in North Kesteven for regeneration projects that the Council has facilitated against a target of 7
- 108 businesses provided with targeted advice and business support against a target of 70
- 244 jobs created and/or safeguarded as a result of targeted support by the Council against a target of 225
- 19 new start up workshops were approved and commenced in the District
- 8.4 hectares of employment land has been developed for the delivery of jobs against a target of 2.50
- Average workshop occupancy level was 99% across the workshop portfolio

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

The region's premier employment location, Teal Park, has become an increasingly popular business growth zone. The Council has responded to need for small, flexible, low-cost start up units and has delivered a £2 million investment to create 19 new unit spaces. Before they were even completed, five tenants signed up, with a further two committed and considerable interest in the remaining units. This has created a portfolio of 102 workshops the length and breadth of the District which, with an occupancy rate close to 100%, are highly-prized by the small flourishing businesses which they seek to support.

The Council has been able to successfully develop discretionary policy to encourage and stimulate economic growth. Therefore, the discounting of business rates (NNDR) has been used during 2015/16 to unlock private sector investment in North Kesteven. This has been undertaken in order to stimulate sustainable investment in land, capital equipment or premises and to safeguard jobs.

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

A project to regenerate the north of Sleaford town centre has been developing throughout 2015/16. The Heart of Sleaford projects aims to create a new destination, for people to meet, eat and work. The site will include a new public right of way between Money's Yard and the Market Place, as well as the creation of a bridge over the River Sleas. This is a private-public-third sector partnership with a shared vision with all sectors focused on promoting the town and attracting inward investment.

To engage local people in the Sleaford Town Centre visionary process, a survey of 1,000 current and potential town centre consumers was undertaken to understand peoples' views on the current experience and required actions to increase patronage. As part of the vision process, a document has been formulated considering all aspects that make for a vibrant town centre, which includes: improved retail mix; relevance of the market; and supporting retail start-ups.

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 delivering the Sleaford Masterplan and is an initial realisation of the Sleaford Car Parking Strategy.

Additional services for Hykeham railway station were undertaken, which were part funded by the District Council. This has seen 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. In addition, the annual passenger journeys have highlighted huge growth, for example, there was a 263.91% increase in the number of passenger journeys in North Hykeham from 2004/05 to 2014/15.

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

Over two days in October 2015, the 'Made in Sleaford' exhibition was the beginning of a new campaign, which promoted the vast range of interesting and innovative output of Sleaford's businesses with more than 30 businesses signing up to exhibit. It took place in and around Navigation Wharf, the National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) and Eastgate Green, celebrating and promoting the quality and diversity of products and services produced, designed and manufactured in the town.

A new interactive locally-developed website was launched to promote the celebration of Sleaford's creativity and productivity, which will evolve over time to detail more about the town's industrial and commercial heritage and become a destination hub for searching out the best in local enterprise. The Council launched the website to help businesses make the most of the free showcase exhibition and to promote the fun and family-friendly event to local people. It also invited businesses to express an interest in being a part of the celebration and allowed members of the public to book onto Saturday's 'Mint to the Maltings' coach tours of Sleaford's key historical sites.

In the north of the District, the 'Grow LN6' partnership 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, for example, significant improvements to the Hykeham rail services and the developments at Teal Park. 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.

## **To provide targeted interventions for employment growth and investment**

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 Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership has been actively engaging support for a wider Strategic Economic Plan, which includes input into the development of an East Midlands powerhouse concept.

North Kesteven has a growing visitor economy, with the latest figures showing 2.3 million tourism visits to the District, which has generated a total economic impact of £48.68 million. Across the 2009-14 period (latest official data), North Kesteven has seen tourism visits grow by 8.2%. In addition, the expenditure and activity of visitors to North Kesteven supported a total of 1,853 full-time equivalent jobs, which is 1.9% higher than the previous year and 8.8% higher than the year prior to that.

What people said:

“It’s absolutely crucial that we have events such as this. It is so important that we celebrate manufacture and innovation to inspire and enthuse. By getting everyone together in the manner of Made in Sleaford, we can hope to highlight the importance of all the industry, big and small, not only to our local communities but also the nation’s standing globally. You guys in Sleaford have really got the right idea because we have got to get manufacturing going and to get the kids interested in it.”

World Speed pioneer and entrepreneur Richard Noble

“It’s been great to be a part of Made in Sleaford, as much as it is to be involved in Bloodhound. We bring customers from all over the world to Sleaford; they often say ‘why Sleaford’ but when they get here they get it and understand why we located here. Sleaford has a long, rich and proud heritage of industry, innovation, and engineering excellence and we are delighted to be just a small part of that developing picture. Made in Sleaford has really focused our minds on the historic importance of the town from the Iron Age through today, and I hope it has inspired our students to feel that they too can be a part of the ongoing story.”

Helen Doughty, owner of SHD Composites

“This is exactly what we wanted, where we wanted it, with excellent transport links and accessibility to other specialist businesses. We tried everyone and everywhere to find a unit that was right for us and this was the best that came up, built to the highest spec and with the best facilities; it’s just perfect. We are very impressed; they are modern purpose-built, secure industrial premises in an ideal location that is very accessible. They are built and finished to an extremely high standard and having viewed several other industrial units around Lincoln, we found North Kesteven District Council at Blackwood Court the best for quality, price and terms. The letting

agent made the process very stress free too, which was a further bonus.”  
New occupant Ian Edwards, EICS Products Ltd

“It has always been a dream of mine to be my own boss and run my business from a workshop space like the starter units Blackwood Court offers. Before I discovered Teal Park, I struggled to find a suitable unit with the cost, size and quality that these units offer. The smaller units here are the perfect place for me to start my enterprise.”

Matt Young, Matt Young Design joinery workshop

“We are excited to be part of the brand new Blackwood Court complex on Teal Park. Being brand new, bigger premises, close to the Lincoln bypass, they offer our clients accessible, enhanced facilities.”

Brian Brogan – Studio 2212 photographers

“We are delighted to be involved in the promotion and letting of business startup and growth units on behalf of North Kesteven District Council and especially in relation to the new venture at Blackwood Court. To have let five before their completion and to have had only four of the 19 left two months in vindicated our and the Council’s confidence that these units would be of particular interest to new and expanding businesses. It is a real delight to be able to assist new and growing businesses as they flourish within a strongly business-minded District.”

Marie Gutteridge, Partner at Hodgson Elkington



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**

- 417 new homes constructed against a target of 320
- 76 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
- 3,653 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 has been completed to submission stage, and has been submitted for examination to the Planning Inspectorate. It has established policies for the growth and regeneration of Central Lincolnshire over the next 20 years. The Local Plan is underpinned by an aspiration of sustainable growth in homes, jobs, services and facilities, which is aiming to attract new businesses and jobs. There are also significant policies, which aim to ensure all infrastructure is provided at the same time as new houses, play areas, schools and roads. This will ensure local communities are sustainable, accessible and inclusive and will be adopted in December 2016, subject to the examination.

### **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 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.

In addition to the Sleaford South Quadrant, which has an outline planning permission for 1,450 dwellings, a masterplan has been developed for Sleaford West Quadrant where an outline planning application for up to 1,400 dwelling has been submitted. In addition, there is up to 1,200 dwellings permitted at Witham St Hughs within the District. There has been ongoing partnership working with SUE promoters for further development at Lincoln South East Quadrant, Lincoln South West Quadrant and the Western Growth Corridor in Lincoln.

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

In total, 76 affordable homes have been completed through partnership working in 2015/16, which includes a range of property types. This included houses built by the Council at North Hykeham, Helpringham and Sleaford. There has also been further

affordable homes developed through an assisted partnership working with Registered Providers at at Billingham and Waddington. Overall, 417 housing completions have occurred in the District during 2015/16.

### **To increase the supply of homes for people with specific needs**

During 2015/16, there were 76 Disabled Facilities Grants completed in private sector properties to a value of £370,248.44 and 83 Disabled Adaptations were completed in Council properties to the value of £316,546.66. This ensures residents 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.

In addition, there is an ongoing discussion with Lincolnshire County Council to deliver extra care within the District, and proposals for a care village/older persons accommodation in Sleaford West Quadrant.

There has been a requirement for higher accessibility standards within the Local Plan with proposals for six or more dwellings to meet higher access standards.

### **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 2015/16, which have collectively been empty for a total of 124 years. This has generated a total of £98,191 in New Homes Bonus over six years, with £18,672 generated during 2015/16. The Council is also actively engaging with a number of owners of long-term empty properties in locations including Ruskington, Branston, Welbourn and Thorpe on the Hill to find appropriate solutions, such as, development opportunities, renovation and potential sale.

### **Implement the Housing Business Plan**

The Council continues to deliver new social housing through the Housing Revenue Account. In the last twelve months, 22 new homes have been delivered comprising twelve at Greylees, two in North Hykeham, six in Helpringham and two in Sleaford. This has ensured development has been undertaken in areas of need across the District on 21 individual sites. A further 57 properties are in various stages of construction, of which 48 will be completed in this financial year.

In addition, various procurement options for the delivery of new homes are being pursued, which include traditional design and delivery, and develop and construct options. The adoption of turnkey partnership arrangements has allowed the Council to negotiate for the delivery of two houses in Heckington which, when complete, will be the first certified Passive Houses in Lincolnshire. The significant energy savings offered by this type of construction will have considerable benefits to the new tenants. The Council will closely monitor the performance and costs associated with this form of construction to establish the viability of adopting the benefits for future developments.

The Council has also completed 134 new homes since 2010 which has established the organisation as a pioneer of social housing expansion in the East Midlands. In 2015/16, the Council was identified as having replaced 187% of properties sold through right to buy legislation, the highest replacement as a percentage in England.

The Council has also commenced a significant investment programme at Hutson Drive, North Hykeham, and St Johns Square, Bracebridge Heath. This has provided for essential structural property improvements following the discovery of faults relating to the construction of the flats in the mid-1960s.

Over the next three years, the Council will be undertaking a major improvement project in Newfield Road, Sleaford. This includes looking at the refurbishment and improvement of existing properties and the opportunity to build new Council properties within the area. Tenant views were sought to help the Council make sure the improvements and refurbishments were what was needed by those who live there.

What people said:

“Despite the upheaval, we’re all really pleased with what’s going to be done with the Newfield Road regeneration. We are all on board, we feel like we’ve had an input and a say and reckon it’s better this way. We all know it’s progress and we’re looking forward to seeing the end product and getting back together again.”

Housing tenant on the £9m Newfield Road regeneration

“We have really valued the opportunity to be involved in this development – the Council’s largest ever capital project; being a partner in helping the Council to deliver a much improved street scene as well as additional housing provision for local residents. It’s been a thrill and an honour to be a part of that.”

Craig Pygall, Construction Director at Woodhead Group

“This is a pioneering approach by the Council which will benefit tenants and the environment and undoubtedly showcase the benefits of the technology to others. A robust approach to the design of these homes results in properties with minimal heating and cooling demands and robust construction techniques makes them extremely airtight. They will be insulated to exceptionally high standards significantly reducing heat loss and the only requirement for conventional heating will be a heated towel rail in the bathroom and toilet. Through this project North Kesteven District Council is embracing the future full on.”

Matt Carter, Lindum BMS

“Throughout the past 12 months, we have seen the District Council show a strong commitment to deliver on different types of schemes including housing, industrial and commercial projects. We have been involved in delivery for the 22 housing units at Heckington, 19 industrial units at Teal Park and also looking to deliver the 33 units at Hykeham for the District over the coming year.”

Mitul Shah, Development Manager

“The construction of 12 new bungalows at Kesteven Court North Hykeham has been Carmalor's first project for North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) and the community that they serve. During the project it has been a pleasure working alongside the NKDC new build team who offer a fair and no nonsense approach to dealing with the various day to day contracting issues that may occur. Working as a team with NKDC, Carmalor will deliver 12 new beautiful dwellings and hopefully many more for the local community, for many years to come.”  
Mark Brown Joint Managing Director, Carmalor Group

“D Brown Building Contractors Limited are excited to be extending our working relationship further with North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) in partnering with them to deliver the regeneration of their largest capital investment plan at Newfield Road Estate in Sleaford. The scheme which consists of the refurbishment of 63 dwellings, re-modelling of the roads as well as the creation of 18 new homes commenced in April of this year. It is very clear from our commencement on site that Newfield Road Estate has a close knit and thriving community with strong tenant representation that we will embrace working with to deliver their new homes. As part of the Scheme we are committed to providing working opportunities for the local community and surrounding area as well as assembling a Lincolnshire based and local supply chain. We are sure there will be challenges with this project over its duration, but working in partnership with NKDC and the local residents we are positive of a successful outcome in the regeneration of this area together with the expansion of this community.”  
Kurt Mason, D Brown Building Contractors

“Taylor Pearson Construction is based in North Kesteven, employs local people and are proud to work with North Kesteven District council to provide quality social housing to support the community through the provision of affordable homes. Thus ensuring employment of our local workforce and bringing inward investment into the North Kesteven district with construction related income.”  
Mark Robertson, Taylor Pearson Construction.

## **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**

- Number 1 safest place in the Country
- 613,572 people attending the Council's indoor sports and leisure facilities against a target of 428,000
- 26,073 visitors attending the Council's outdoor and countryside facilities/events
- 378,924 visitors attending Council cultural venues and ArtsNK programmes
- 91% of tenants very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by the Council against a target of 90%
- 936 homeless cases prevented through use of housing advice and prevention tools against a target of 675
- 100% overall satisfaction levels for anti-social behaviour cases reported to the Council

## **To encourage residents and businesses to commit to a sustainable future**

The Low Carbon NK Partnership recognises that to reduce emissions, those in the District must work together. Therefore, the Charter offers businesses, organisations and communities the chance to show their commitment, of which 54 have taken this opportunity and become signatories. In conjunction, the Low Carbon NK Plan also contains an aspirational target for a fall in district emissions of 20% by 2020. The Plan monitors emissions data annually, with Charter signatories using it to showcase what they are doing to contribute to continually falling emissions. The Council has supported Charter signatories with onsite visits to offer advice, conduct audits, calculate carbon footprints and produce action plans. Community groups have also been supported, for example, by helping them in their ambitions to incorporate environmental sustainability into Neighbourhood Plans.

Each year a business breakfast is held to invite organisations to become a Partner; to celebrate what is being achieved; and to provide an update on emissions performance. In 2015/16, talks from various experts was undertaken followed by a tour of the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant of which there were 64 attendees representing 37 businesses and organisations.

A total of 1,080 individual residents received support and advice from the Council at local events via a variety of communication means. The SustainNK newsletter continues to be produced quarterly promoting incentives, initiatives and competitions. It is also used to highlight support available with regards to efficient and affordable use of natural resources (for example, energy and fuel), advice on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and how to improve environmental impact.

In total, District emissions have fallen by 12%, putting the Council ahead of target for 2015/2016. This is a reduction of 102,500 tonnes of carbon emissions, which would otherwise have increased air pollution, and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The emissions saved are equivalent to travelling around the world 13,000 times in an average petrol car.

The Council continued to work on lowering its own carbon footprint towards a 40% reduction by 2020. A significant reduction in emissions at the Council offices has been achieved by the implementation of numerous energy saving projects. Connection to the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant also provides a huge proportion of the building's heating needs. To 2015/16, the emissions from this site alone has reduced by 40%. We continue to work closely with our contractors to ensure our services are delivered in an energy and fuel efficient, and environmentally sustainable way.

### **Work in partnership to ensure safe and cohesive communities**

North Kesteven was officially recognised as the safest place to live in England for the third year running. Official figures for the twelve months up to the end of March 2016 show that there were fewer crimes per 1,000 people committed in North Kesteven than anywhere else in the country.

Crime and anti-social behaviour levels within North Kesteven remain the lowest in Lincolnshire, and continue to decrease on an annual basis. This has been achieved by early intervention and positives steps being taken to work in partnership to address existing and emerging issues within the District.

The 'It's That Easy' scheme is being administered through the 'Safer Schools Scheme' and has continued to receive positive feedback. The project originated in North Kesteven secondary schools and was extremely well received by the students who took part. 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 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is embedded into everyday working, with all employees trained who can utilise the powers within this legislation. The legislation is proving to be effective, quick and simple to use, and the benefits are being felt by a number of departments and partner agencies.

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

North Kesteven Social Strollers health walk scheme is a Public Health funded project, accredited with the national 'Walking for Health' initiative. The current programme consists of 20 regular health walks across the district, which are led by a qualified walk leader. They also encourage social interaction, by providing refreshment opportunities after the walks. All health walks are free and are designed to be accessible regardless of age, income, location and ability, and are within the physical capabilities of most people.

The Spires and Steeples Challenge is a successful charity run/walk following the public footpaths and bridleways along the Spires and Steeples Arts and Heritage Trail. This runs from Lincoln Cathedral to St Denys' Church, Sleaford, and brings together history, heritage and local stories of the area.

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. There are also other programmes, such as, 'Exercise Referral' and 'Sow, Grow, Cook', which all exceeded their targets. This has culminated in over 8,000 instances of people being actively engaged and supported in multiple programmes over the past twelve months.

A new project called 'Sociability on Prescription' has been created that pulls together all existing health and wellbeing referral methods to make the process easier for residents. This makes referring to the Health Trainer service, Health Walks programme, Wellbeing Service and other social activities much simpler for people who ask for support or advice at a GP surgery. By making signposting easier, people's health and wellbeing are improved, whilst also reducing the feeling of loneliness and isolation that some people in the District may experience.

The Council is the only District authority amongst four UK local authorities hand-picked to participate in Public Health England's three year pilot. The pilot is developing new ways of responding to the rising international problem of obesity through a 'whole systems' approach. The Council was selected from 60 applicants to work with Leeds Beckett University, based on its established reputation for excellence in sports, arts, leisure and cultural services. By sharing strategies which work well locally and identifying and testing a range of opportunities for collaboration, a range of challenges and solutions will be worked through.

## **Promote opportunities for residents in sports, leisure and health activities**

A substantial £3.6 million refurbishment project for the North Kesteven Sports Centre in North Hykeham began in June 2014, with the third phase being completed in September 2015. This included a new 3G pitch, which meets both Football Association and Hockey Association standards; accessible changing rooms; and a transformed gym, plus the creation of new dance and spinning studios.

Included in the refurbishment was the UK's first ever interactive water selfie flume, which lets children select music, lights and race each other as they make their

descent. There is even the opportunity for a photograph to be taken, which can be emailed as a souvenir. Furthermore, there is a new Magna Carta splash pool, which has been specially designed for younger children, where shallow pools lead to a water 'confidence building' kingdom with a Magical Castle, Horse Slide and King John Island.

Furthermore, there is 'ArtsNKDance', which is a weekly youth dance programme focusing on young people aged 5-25. This provides a unique way to get active, whilst putting on events and performances, and also providing career guidance and mentoring for young people. There have been 4,149 participants delivering 16 performances with over 8,000 people in attendance during 2015/16.

### **Encourage community participation in cultural activities**

The National Centre for Craft and Design (NCCD) continued to hold a range of events, which included its 'Gifted 15' event, which is a contemporary Christmas market presented by two of the UK's leading craft and design organisations. The market offered a day of craft, live music, entertainment, practical workshops, demonstrations and local specialist food.

The Council continued to celebrate Armed Forces Week with reflection and celebration of their efforts at two Armed Forces Day events. During 2015/16, this event attracted over 150 people in Sleaford, the south of the District.

Little Darters Wildlife Adventure Area at Whisby Natural World Centre provides an opportunity for children to watch wildlife, go underground in the earth tunnel and climb up the nature exploration towers. Currently, work is ongoing to feature an assault course with balance ropes and a new lookout tower with completion due in June 2016.

There was also substantial progress towards creating the 'Otter's Reach Indoor Adventure', which was completed in April 2016, and provides an all-weather experience and an educational resource for younger visitors aged 3 and upwards. The area allows younger visitors to explore and experience the park's history through imaginative play and includes a gravel plant with hands on features, bullrush stilt posts, spiders web climb, raptors' nest and more.

### **Support our local communities with the impact of Welfare Reform**

The action plan supplementing the Welfare Reform Strategy for the Revenues and Benefits shared service between North Kesteven and City of Lincoln Councils, continues to be delivered and has flexibility to ensure any new initiatives are scheduled into the plan and delivered. The 'UCan' communications brand for welfare reform utilised by the shared service, and West Lindsey District Council, has been widely publicised to help residents and partner organisations identify key messages. However, the shared service continues to provide more targeted advice and assistance to individual customers, where appropriate.

The shared service has been extremely proactive in promoting the availability of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), to assist those most in need of help with



their housing costs. A proactive review of procedures and guidelines has also taken place, with a view to helping customers change their financial situation where applicable and reduce long-term dependency on DHP.

National welfare reforms have had significant impacts on the way in which the shared service operates. The Council works on a range of digital inclusion, financial inclusion and employment-related projects to assist residents affected by these changes.

### **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', of which there have been 3,247 referrals to date. The service provides direct intervention and referral into other appropriate agencies and continues to contribute to savings achieved by the NHS and Adult Social Care, for example, assessment for provision of Telecare Equipment can contribute to earlier hospital discharge and improve safety at home.

Successful partnerships with East Lindsey and the City of Lincoln Councils have further enhanced service delivery for customers by reducing cost of Lifelines for residents in the District and providing early intervention for Fire Safety. It has also provided small aids for daily living, such as, handrails, key safes, and raised toilet seats.

### **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 (94 percent); rent (94 percent); last repair (92 percent); and overall service provided by the Council (91 percent).

### **Promote digital inclusion for residents in North Kesteven**

Outcomes and decisions made in a broad range of meetings are now communicated 'at the moment' through web and social media to residents and the local press.

In addition, a full website redesign has resulted in it being fully device responsive. In addition, the rollout of self-service PC's at partner locations across the district have supported communities to 'get online'.

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 21,160 households where >2mbps broadband has been enabled by OnLincolnshire, which has surpassed its target of 20,000 households.

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

The NK Champion Awards were held in September 2015, recognising the level of community contribution and achievement across the District. 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 and community businesses. During 2015/16, the Council was pleased to include more finalists than ever before.

The Council also responded to 2,478 service requests, which included 129 cases of food poisoning, 44 work place accidents, 573 noise complaints and 194 reports of stray dogs. In addition, 100% of all food hygiene inspections due were carried out. The Council successfully brought about 14 waste prosecutions making the organisation the tenth best local authority for food hygiene inspections and the most proactive local authority in the East Midlands for dealing with fly tipping offences.

Welbourn's Neighbourhood Development Plan was the first to be adopted in North Kesteven after 88% of the voting population voted in favour of the plan, with a 48% voting turnout rate.

The Council has also launched 'Safe as Houses' during 2015/16, which is a fantastic new resource for landlords and private sector tenants by ensuring properties meet the required standards for conditions, safety and energy efficiency.

What people said:

"We were really struck by North Kesteven's bid, its direction, vision and ability to bring partners together".

Professor Paul Gately, Academic lead on the project, NKDC's participation in Health England's Obesity Pilot

"We are very proud to play a part in delivering the NK Community Champion Awards with the District Council. As a long term sponsor it is a delight to applaud and award some of the many unsung heroes who give so much through their voluntary and charitable endeavours, through their selfless motivation and quiet inspiration. I am so often struck that it such quiet, tireless and selfless voluntary work that forms a foundation to the District's flourishing communities and makes such a difference to everyone's lives."

Neil Coote, Lindum Group, Community Champion Awards

"I thought the night was a lovely way to celebrate all the volunteers and everything they do." The warmth and love we felt in the room at the awards and the standing ovation we received when Ken's name was announced really touched me."

Gini Smith, Heckington, wife of an award recipient

"Armed Forces Week events are an opportunity for the public and services to celebrate the contract that exists between them in the defence of national security and support of personnel and their families who are forced to move around from place to place for operational reasons. We are grateful for the understanding, and for the acts of kindness and giving that the community show to our men and women in

the Armed Forces, and especially to our families, the silent heroes. Armed Forces Day is a reflection of the contract that binds us and I am grateful for the efforts of North Kesteven District Council for all that it does in promoting that.”

Air Commodore Chris Luck MBE, Station Commandant at RAF Cranwell

“Forces personnel feel such genuine warmth, from the people of Lincolnshire and North Kesteven in particular, at all times. There is a genuine connection between local people and the RAF, Army, Air Force, Navy and US Marines based at Digby, without which I would not have been able to do my job. The way North Kesteven District Council marks Armed Forces Week gives us every opportunity to say thank you to the communities which support us and to feel more of that warmth.”

RAF Digby’s former Station Commander Wing Commander Sam Watts

North Kesteven District Council pioneered two particular projects in support of crime reduction, which have been adopted county-wide – ‘It’s That Easy’ which helps teenagers to make positive choices to stay on the right track and a programme of emotional, practical and psychological support for victims of anti-social behaviour. They are unique, of immense value to both victims of crime and in prevention and are a real testimony to what can be achieved through partnership working. North Kesteven has demonstrated strong leadership, in driving forward projects which are both innovative, as well as recognising the needs of their community, and shows what can be achieved through a preventative approach.”

Lincolnshire Police & Crime Commissioner at the time, Alan Hardwick

“The classes are much better, with more space and much improved bikes’ than before the overall £3.6 million redevelopment programme introduced the change. We were really excited about going in there and certainly weren’t disappointed; it was really energizing and will be an undoubted success.”

Malcolm Sanders, from Nettleham, user of One NK

“With the lighting, the music and the pictures surrounding you, the environment was great. It’s a tremendous step forward.

Paul Smith, from Thorpe on the Hill, user of One NK

“This is brilliant and the response has been really positive. You can easily lose yourself and feel that you’re at the heart of it all, which increases your motivation and makes it all a bit more challenging.”

Nicki Littlefair, instructor at One NK

“You’ve got great facilities here for people to come and train on and to build up their strength and stamina for endurance cycling.”

Hannah Walker, Cycling Professional

“Not many people are as lucky as your local residents in having such great facilities as these. My advice to people is to get involved and come and see these new facilities.”

Beth Tweddle, Olympic Bronze Medalist gymnast

“I think the whole thing is absolutely fantastic, It’s a tremendous asset for the school and the community and when it’s all finished I know that people will absolutely love it.

It's a credit to everyone involved and their tenacity; it's all truly outstanding and the art works are a touch of genius."

Martin Connor, Headteacher of the North Kesteven School

"I thought I'd never paint again but these classes have made it possible."

User of the community art classes, as part of the NK Wellbeing Service

"The NK Wellbeing Service has been a great help in maintaining independence and keeping active, setting up audio books through the Kesteven Blind Society, establishing companionship and advising minor adaptations that will help me function better on my own."

John Bowden, NK Wellbeing Client

## **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**

- 95% of customers found it easy to access the services they require against a target of 80%
- 98% of customers were satisfied with the way their request was handled against a target of 80%
- 70% of residents feel the Council provides good quality services
- 73% of residents believe the Council offers value for money
- 72% of residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things
- 99% of invoices for commercial goods paid within 30 days of receiving the invoice
- 6,322 residents participated in consultation and engagement activities against a target of 5,000

### **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 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 2018/19.

The Council has developed a Customer Access Strategy for 2014-2016, which has been introduced to enhance ways of accessing services. In addition, the Council's corporate website is now live, which will improve accessibility, as the new look website will adapt to devices, such as, mobile phones and tablets, which was not available on the previous website. There is also an improved search engine, which will help people find information easier. Furthermore, the website will continue to be managed based on analysis, evidence and feedback in relation to what people search for most, which will ensure that only key relevant information will be available on the home page.

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

The Council has an excellent track record of transformational improvement that has ensured strong service delivery performance and financial sustainability. The Council's approach to transformation has shifted to a more medium term effectiveness (and sustainable long term efficiencies) focus rather than a more short term delivery of immediate efficiency savings. This has enabled the Council to

deliver a transformation agenda that has negated any requirement to subsidise the General Fund with New Homes Bonus monies.

The Corporate Plan was also refreshed with fewer and smarter ambitions to underpin the Council's four Corporate Priorities. Alongside this, the Council is finalising its F.I.T. Strategy – Future Planning, Improve, Transform, in readiness of its implementation in 2016/17.

In addition, Equality and Diversity training was provided to all Councillors. 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 NK Plan for 2016-19. 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**

Consultation and engagement forms the basis of delivering and developing our Corporate Priorities and services to meet the needs of all our communities. During 2015/16, 1,297 residents and stakeholders were consulted with via a variety of methods, such as, household survey, online survey, social media and stakeholder focus groups. These provided the context for the NK Plan and proposed refinement of the supporting ambitions and key activities.

In addition, NK Plan and Budget Workshops were delivered in December 2015 using an innovative method of engagement. The unique concept aimed to educate and provide an experience of the Council budget setting process by utilising a board game devised in-house. Following this, further events were held providing a question and answer session with Members of the District Council.

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

A further democracy event organised by the Council in September 2015 provided post-16 year students from the local area with the opportunity to debate with eight professionals on a variety of topics. 50 students attended the event, which was hosted and compered by Melvyn Prior from BBC Lincolnshire.

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. In addition, 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.

What people said:

“The new Question Time event really highlighted the enthusiasm and engagement among 16 and 17 year olds for politics and voting. Their level of participation, incisive questions and challenges to all panel members and their clear understanding was inspirational. It was clear that the young people got a lot from it. For me the great achievement was in getting people to think, understand and appreciate that politics isn’t boring, but that it impacts on all of their lives and futures. I congratulate North Kesteven District Council for rolling this initiative out and hope to see it continue.”  
Martin Connor, Headteacher of the North Kesteven School

“Absolutely brilliant day! Student feedback very positive. Excellent planning and accessible for targeted audience.”

“Thank you for a very enjoyable day. The feedback was very positive from the students. The material from the pack last year enabled us to set up our own mock election.”

Teachers at Local Democracy Week

“It was really enjoyable and I learnt a lot.”

“The day was very informative – the officers/councillors were very friendly and helpful. I think this event should carry on for a long time. Thank you.”

“I really liked today I think the staff were really helpful and I really enjoyed it.”

“It was great, loved it.”

Students at Local Democracy Week

## **Financial Review of the Year**

## Financial Environment

The financial year began with the setting of the budget on 26 February 2015, when a challenging balanced budget was set. The following sections describe the actual performance against this budget.

## 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, contributions from Business Rates and Council Tax and income received.

The table below provides a summary of the final outturn position for the General Fund against the original budget for the year and an explanation of the major variations:

	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
<b><i>Corporate Priority - Service Expenditure</i></b>			
Our Council	3,909	3,802	(107)
Our Communities	5,830	9,467	3637
Our Economy	681	471	(210)
Our Homes	(1,696)	(1,748)	(52)
Drainage Rates	365	369	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>9,089</b>	<b>12,361</b>	<b>3,272</b>
Capital Charges, Interest & Debt Management	90	(4,118)	(4,208)
Transfer to / (from) reserves & balances	2,441	3,792	1,351
<b>Total Council Expenditure</b>	<b>11,620</b>	<b>12,035</b>	<b>415</b>
Payments to parish councils	2,503	2,503	0
Footway Lighting	153	153	0
<b>Total Spending Requirement</b>	<b>14,276</b>	<b>14,691</b>	<b>415</b>
<b>Funding:</b>			
Council Tax	(7,531)	(7,531)	0
Non Domestic Rates	(4,533)	(4,975)	(442)
Revenue Support Grant and other grants	(2,176)	(2,185)	(9)
Surplus/deficit on Collection Fund	(36)	0	36
<b>Total District Council Financing</b>	<b>14,276</b>	<b>14,691</b>	<b>(415)</b>
<b>(Surplus)/ Deficit for year</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## 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.



For 2015/16, the approved net expenditure budget for the year showed a deficit of £499,600. The actual net expenditure for the year reflected a deficit of £542,420. The table below provides a summary of the final outturn position for the HRA against the net budget.

<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>	<b>Approved Budget £'000</b>	<b>Actual Outturn £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>
Repairs and Maintenance	3,150	2,722	(428)
Supervision and Management	1,803	2,361	558
Rents, Rates, Taxes and other charges	307	340	33
Bad Debts provision	55	75	20
Principal Repayments	3,998	3,936	(62)
Interest repayments	2,488	2,315	(173)
Debt management expenses	25	31	6
Other expenditure	1,056	801	(255)
Revenue contribution to Major Repairs	3,616	3,616	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>16,498</b>	<b>16,197</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Rental Income	(15,886)	(15,666)	220
Other Income	(43)	(290)	(247)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(15,929)</b>	<b>(15,956)</b>	<b>(27)</b>
<b>Appropriations &amp; Contribution to/ (from) Reserves</b>	<b>(69)</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Net Operating (Surplus)/ Deficit</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>43</b>

As at 31 March 2016, the Council held £556,794 as a working balance for the HRA to cover any unforeseen expenditure in the operating of the Councils housing stock and any unforeseen financial risks.

### Capital Expenditure

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.

Capital expenditure in the year amounted to £11.831 million compared to the approved capital programme budget of £14.235 million, representing a net underspend of £2.404 million. The Council's capital expenditure and funding position for 2015/16 is summarised as follows:

<b>Capital Programme</b>	<b>Approved Budget £'000</b>	<b>Actual Outturn £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>
Housing Capital programme	6,299	5,090	(1,209)
Non-housing Capital programme	7,936	6,741	(1,195)
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>14,235</b>	<b>11,831</b>	<b>(2,404)</b>

Financed by:			
Capital Grants and Contributions	(899)	(641)	(258)
Council Reserves	(7,188)	(6,182)	(1,006)
Contribution from Major Repairs Reserve	(4,985)	(4,549)	(436)
Capital Receipts	(940)	(418)	(522)
Prudential Borrowing	(223)	(41)	(182)
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>(14,235)</b>	<b>(11,831)</b>	<b>(2,404)</b>

The Council's capital programme has resulted in the construction of new industrial units at Blackwood Court, North Hykeham, continued investment in the Councils refuse vehicle fleet, the completion of the comprehensive refurbishment of the North Kesteven Sports Centre and commencement of the Refuse Depot relocation scheme.

The Council delivered 22 additional new council dwellings and 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.

### **Earmarked Reserves**

The Council began the year with £14.3million in Earmarked Reserves for specific purposes across the Council's General Fund, HRA and Capital programme. The largest of these relates to the New Homes Bonus (£4.0 million), Major repairs Reserve (£4.6 million), Greater Lincolnshire Transport Strategy (£0.6 million), Capital (£0.9 million), Income Volatility (0.6 million) and Regeneration (£0.6 million) all of which the Council is planning to invest into infrastructure, growth and its asset base.

During 2015/16, the Council received a further New Homes Bonus amount of £2.3 million. It also contributed £7.8 million to the HRA Major Repairs Reserve from the HRA to fund the capital expenditure on its housing stock and new build programme. Other contributions to reserves totalled £1.1 million.

Use of reserves, mainly on the housing capital programme, totalled £15.3 million which gave a position at 31 March 2016 of £11.7 million in Earmarked Reserves.

### **Future Financial Plans**

#### **Corporate Plan and Vision**

The NK Plan responds to the main challenges facing the district, ensuring that the Council, either directly or in partnership with others, uses its resources and influence to deliver priorities and services needed by communities across North Kesteven.

The Council has recognised that the conflicting pressures of significant growth within the district over the next 20 years alongside the significant revenue grant reductions from Central Government will have a considerable impact on the way the Council will need to operate in the future.

#### **Impact of Further Government Funding Reductions**

The Council continues to face an unprecedented and extremely challenging short to medium term financial environment as it responds to the Government's spending review and reductions in Revenue Support Grant that it pays to the Council. Indications experienced during recent years of greater economic activity gives the confidence that its income levels have returned to pre-recession levels on a sustainable basis and with changes in the way Business Rates now retained by the Council, growth in businesses being experienced help to fund the Council's General Fund.

This challenge is not new for the Council which has been required to demonstrate efficiency savings for a number of years and because of the responsible action the Council has taken in managing its budgets previously, it stands in a good position to ensure any new savings are achieved in a considered way in order to help protect the delivery of the frontline services it provides to the public.

### **Housing Revenue Account Spending Plans**

The HRA Self Financing system came into effect on the 1 April 2012 and marked a significant change in the way the Council budgets and plans for the future management, maintenance and development of its housing stock. HRA Self Financing has released the Council to a large extent from central government control through a one-off payment of £56.8 million to buy out of the previous Housing Subsidy finance regime. The Council has a well-established and robust 30 year business plan and financial plan charting its long term aspirations in the provision of local government housing.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the July 2015 Budget Statement that social rent levels with effect from 1 April 2016 be subject to an imposed 1% per annum reduction for four years. The compound effect of this imposed income reduction meant that the Council had to change the way it planned for component replacements and its new build unit delivery target to deliver a viable 30 year business plan.

### **Capital Spending plans**

#### **Housing Capital Programme**

The Council's extremely successful New Build programme has continued during 2015/16 with a further £42.395 million approved planned investment from 2016/17 to 2025/26. The Council's existing stock continues to be enhanced to 'Fabric First' homes standard with a further £31.673 million planned investment from 2016/17 to 2025/26.

#### **Non-housing Capital Programme**

The Council will deliver Market Housing for sale within the General Fund. It is anticipated that this scheme will have a positive impact on the Districts housing requirement shortfall.

The Council will also create a new Housing Company named 'Lafford Homes Ltd', this will deliver Market Housing for rental within the District.

In addition, the Council will continue to support Disabled Facilities Grants totalling £0.456 million in 2016/17. The non-housing capital programme 2016/17 - 2018/19 also includes an investment of £0.750 million in a Regeneration Fund, a £0.6 million contribution to help facilitate improved Broadband within the County and Refuse Depot Relocation and workshops budget of £4.08 million.

The following table summarises the Council's proposed capital expenditure plans for housing and non-housing schemes and how it plans to fund these:

<b>Capital Programme</b>	<b>Approved Budget 2016/17 £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Budget 2017/18 £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Budget 2018/19 £'000</b>
Housing Capital programme	12,350	9,161	10,810
Non-housing Capital programme	13,959	433	997
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>26,309</b>	<b>9,594</b>	<b>11,807</b>
Financed by:			
Capital Grants and Contributions	677	333	333
Council Reserves	4,370	74	644
Major Repairs Reserve (HRA)	4,012	6,416	4,459
Capital Receipts	1,271	671	671
Prudential Borrowing	15,979	2,100	5,700
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>26,309</b>	<b>9,594</b>	<b>11,807</b>

## **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 2015/16 and highlights areas to continue to strengthen governance, quality and internal control in 2016/17.

## **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; structured one-two-one's 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**

The Council is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity. As an employer, the Council is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity within its workforce. The organisation 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.

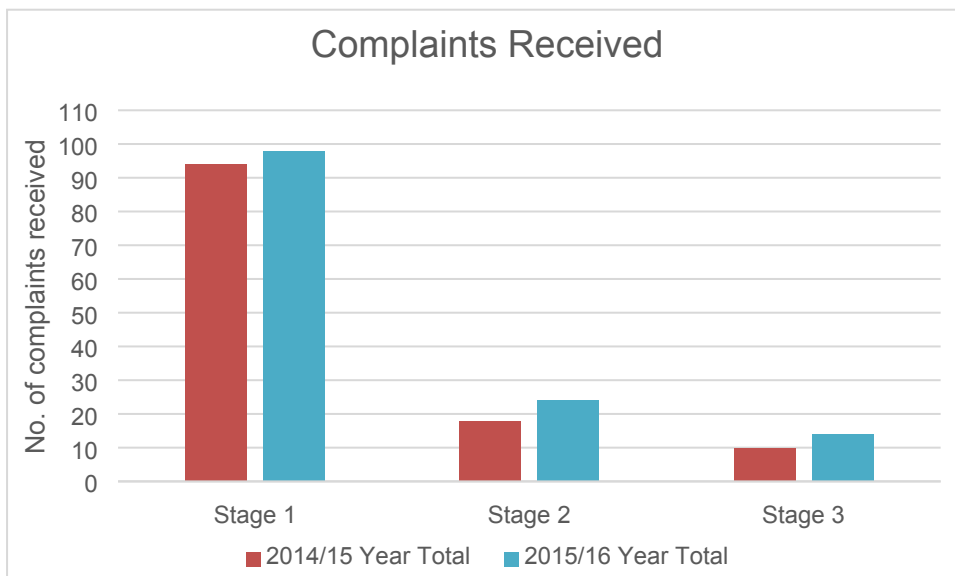
### Access to Information

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 2015/16, the Council received 586 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests; 361 Environmental Information (EIR) requests; and 20 Data Protection Act (DPA) requests. 99% of FOI requests were responded to in time (20 working days); 98% of EIR requests were responded to in time (20 working days); and 100% of DPA requests were responded to in time (40 calendar days).

### Complaints

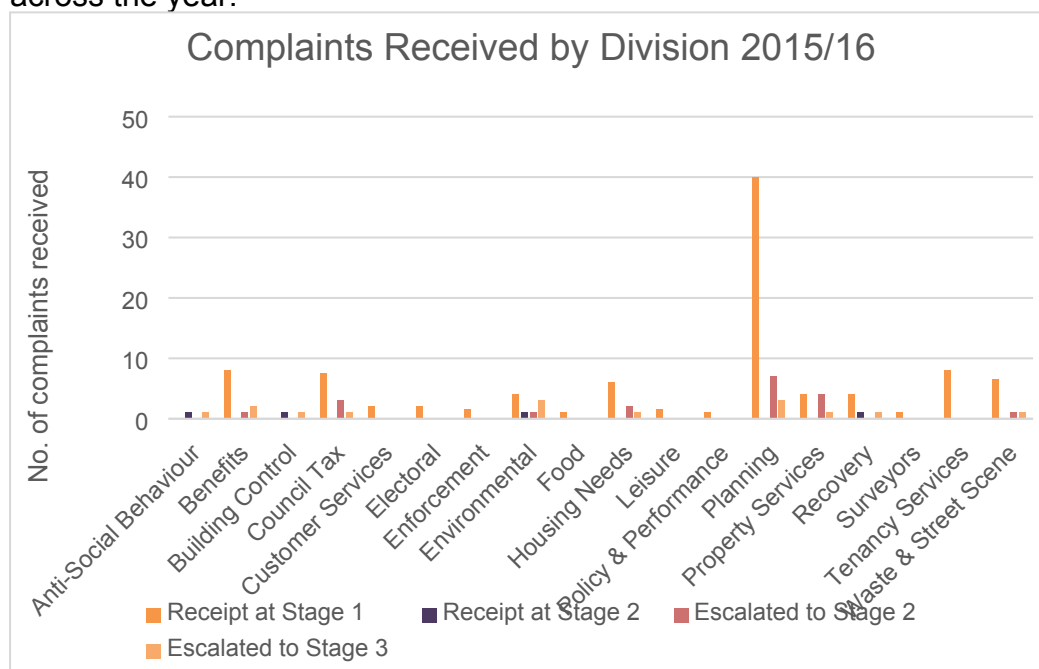
The Council takes complaints very seriously and deals with them quickly and efficiently. We are committed to providing excellent customer service, but realise that sometimes things can and do go wrong. We want to know if our residents are unhappy or dissatisfied with our services so that wherever possible, 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 2015/16, compared with 2014/15.



The overall number of complaints received in 2015/16 has increased slightly from those received in 2014/15.

This is due to the high number of stage 1 complaints received in Quarter 4 directly related to one planning application 15/1174/FUL which resulted in a number of residents complaining.

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. 29% 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 slight increase from last year (27%). The summary of the outcomes of complaints closed in the 2015/16 is shown below:

Complaint Outcome	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	2015/16 Total	2014/15 Total
Upheld	6	8	3	7	24	14
Partially upheld	10	3	1	2	16	17
Not upheld	25	21	14	39	99	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Total Against</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>

## 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 2019.

### **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, Karen Bradford (also the Deputy Chief Executive) and Philip Roberts; 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.

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

### **Communities and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Chairman: Councillor Peter Burley    Vice-Chairman: Councillor: Terry Boston**

During 2015/16, the Communities and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered many topics, some of which are summarised below. In addition, Members were given the opportunity to take part in a workshop during October 2015 which enabled them to discuss and decide work programming priorities.

### **Update on Health**

As this is a statutory area for local authorities, North Kesteven District Council has elected representation on the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire, of which a report is given at each meeting of the Panel.

At the meeting in July 2015, the Panel noted the latest information in relation to the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS), Neighbourhood Teams and the appointment of 'looked after children / care leaver representatives'. Other developments were noted in relation to the Joint Ambulance Conveyance Project (JACP) and the good collaboration work between EMAS and LIVES (Lincolnshire Integrated Voluntary Emergency Service).

In January 2016, the Committee reviewed the financial position for the service. Concerns were noted in relation to EMAS' 'drift' work outside the area, and the Panel were assured that the committee would be monitoring this area. Further successes were also acknowledged, with Councillors expressing high praise for LIVES and their contribution as responders in the local area.

### **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan**

This overview included the key challenges faced by the Council; the priorities for tenants; and the key actions ahead; which gave Members the opportunity to ask a number of wide-ranging questions.

Key challenges included a 1% rent reduction and the extension of Right to Buy to housing associations, with the Council expected to pay an annual levy to government. Members learnt

about further implications of new legislation, and that the Housing Team had been working closely with tenants and colleagues to put together a range of solutions.

Consultation had been undertaken with residents across the District, and questionnaires had received a 25% response rate. This resulted in the Housing Team having a list of priorities set by the tenants, one of which was for the Council to review refurbishment times. Further priorities were the building of new homes, and support for vulnerable tenants. Another key finding was it was felt not enough engagement with young people was being undertaken. The Panel then discussed engagement with younger people in detail, and learnt that the tenant participation service was developing a community engagement function in partnership with other parts of the Council.

Key actions were noted and aligned with the corporate ambition to increase the supply of housing; maintain and improve housing in North Kesteven; and to provide high quality services. The Head of Housing and Property highlighted that it was also important to have good stock condition information, and the aim was to carry out a survey of every property owned.

Members sought the latest customer feedback from the Kier contract, and the Head of Housing and Property assured Members that these figures would be forthcoming very soon.

The Panel discussed homelessness figures in the District, as the Head of Housing and Property explained there had been many more approaches to the Council for the care and support of vulnerable people; the private sector financial assurance scheme; and further help through the wellbeing service.

In relation to Universal Credit, it was noted it was still in the early stages, and a bigger impact would be seen as the scheme was rolled out, however the Panel were reassured that work was being carried out to look at new ways of supporting different users.

The Head of Housing and Property noted the work of Tenancy Officers in auditing the vulnerability of tenants and residents and the support of Credit Union and other ethical lenders.

### **Broadband across The District**

The Broadband Programme Manager at Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) provided a detailed overview of the Lincolnshire broadband programme; the current status of the project; and the programme's context in North Kesteven. The latest position for Phase 2 of the programme and the outlook for the future were also explained.

In relation to the project in North Kesteven, ongoing work with BT had been taking place with various exchange areas in the district including Methringham, Heckington, Waddington, Swinderby, Billingham and Swaton. These areas had experienced delays which were disproportionately high compared to the rest of the country. The Broadband Programme Manager explained the Phase 2 funding options and the Panel noted that a contract had been signed with BT in May 2015.

BT would deliver an additional 4,801 superfast premises by the end of 2017 and overall superfast broadband would exceed 93% of all premises. An additional 2,000 premises would

benefit from fibre connectivity and better speeds. The premises list was still being finalised and would be released in the autumn.

In relation to the future it was explained that project teams were meeting on all levels. The Broadband Programme Manager explained that the programme was accruing ‘claw back’ revenue from take up for reinvestment in future improvements. Any underspend would be apportioned based upon numbers, viability and cost. Members were assured that the process would be fair, consistent and transparent. Members noted that information on areas not covered by the end of the programme would be provided (when defined) during phase two of the programme. This would include details of any underspend. In addition, solutions to reach residents in the Skellingthorpe area were discussed.

The Broadband Programme Manager encouraged Members to contact him with any further individual enquires, and Panel Members agreed to do so.

### **Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Chairman: Councillor Chris Goldson Vice-Chairman: Councillor Kate Cook**

During 2015/16, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered many topics and, during July 2015, Members took part in a workshop, in order to discuss and prioritise issues. This in turn enabled them to all participate in forming the Work Programme for the coming year. The following is a brief summary of just some of the issues examined.

In June 2015, the Panel called-in a decision made in connection with ‘Money’s Yard Toilets’, as Members had expressed concern at the possible closure of this facility. Members noted the views of Executive Board Members present, and the Panel were assured that the location of the public conveniences and the response from residents and visitors had been acknowledged. The wider plans for the site were highlighted and it had been considered by the Executive Board that a one year licence with a peppercorn rate was the most appropriate approach. Executive Board Members considered a three year licence would be too long taking into account that Money’s Yard was fundamental in wider plans, such as the Sleaford Masterplan.

One Member expressed his concerns regarding investment into a property for only a year, and the advantages of a longer licence to allow for extensive works to the facility. On balance it was confirmed that the exploratory works were now known and the drainage system was in working order. The Panel acknowledged points raised about future development of the town and discussed the location of the facility, the impact of the decision and the importance of its availability for visitors to the town and for the district as a whole.

The Panel discussed alternative available public conveniences in the area and the need for such a service. Some Members questioned the challenging circumstances and rationale for the option of a three year lease as well as the importance of maintenance at the site. However, it was suggested that it would be prudent at this time to keep an agreement of one year in the interest of North Kesteven. Therefore, it was proposed that no further action be taken, which was duly seconded. Members voted on the proposal, and the majority agreed that the original decision made the Executive Board on the 4 June 2015 be accepted with no further action.

## **Anglian Water**

Members of Billingham Parish Council attended the November 2015 meeting to brief the Panel on sewerage problems experienced by residents in Billingham, and a perceived lack of constructive action from Anglian Water. The Panel duly offered their support on the matter, and Members also noted that other wards in the District had experienced similar problems. Members agreed that Anglian Water should be invited to attend a meeting so that concerns could be addressed.

With the projected growth and development detailed in the Local Plan, it was agreed that the Panel would also ask Anglian Water how they planned to meet the demands of current and projected population numbers. In addition, it was agreed that the Policy Review and Scrutiny Officer would liaise with Members of the Panel, and Anglian Water to ensure questions were submitted for all affected parishes, and to arrange an extraordinary meeting in early 2016.

Anglian Water duly attended an extra meeting on in March 2016, and after that meeting, it was noted that Anglian Water were aware of the many capacity issues, but that a comprehensive response had not yet been forthcoming for all relevant issues. With agreement of the Panel, the Chairman wrote to Anglian Water, detailing all issues raised.

## **Taxi Licensing**

Following on from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, Louise Casey's Report, published in February 2015, found that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council was not fit for purpose. In particular, it was failing in its duties to protect vulnerable children and young people from harm; additionally there were weak and ineffective arrangements for taxi licensing which left the public at risk.

Following publication of this report, the Environment and Public Protection Division carried out a review of its own taxi licensing function and an action plan was formulated. The purpose of this review was to ensure sufficient and effective controls were in place to ensure the same situation could not be repeated at North Kesteven District Council. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel played a role in 'rubber-stamping' the action plan, as part of a corporate response to the Rotherham report.

Furthermore, the Environment and Public Protection Division has been keen to ensure the Panel were involved in monitoring progress with the Taxi Licensing Action Plan. This resulted in a new Taxi Licensing Policy being approved in February 2016 and coming into effect in April 2016. This included an approved 'Code of Conduct for Drivers', which aimed to protect both passengers and drivers and ensured that concerns, suspicions of abuse, neglect or exploitation can be reported appropriately and minimise the risk of misunderstandings. In addition, drivers are expected to comply with the Code and failure to comply could lead to suspension or revocation of their licence.

## **The Local Plan**

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager presented a report which outlined the latest draft Local Plan document and provided an update on the Local Plan consultation process. He advised there had been a good take up during recent Parish briefings, and that over 65 people had attended in Skellingthorpe. It was noted that formal consultation would close on in November 2015.

The Panel discussed the dissolution of curtilage boundaries, and agreed their main concern was to prevent over development of settlements in the future. The Panel considered that it was important to ensure villages and towns that were not limited to the 10% or less growth criteria as listed in LP4, would still be protected from any development that could negatively affect their character.

The Panel were in agreement that a fine balance had to be found between the anticipated demand, the development required to meet those demands, and the protection of existing settlements, whilst ensuring any growth was still sustainable. It was noted that the Draft Local Plan would face inspection and must not be seen to be limiting growth without just reason.

The Panel's second concern was that new development could place further demands on existing infrastructure. It was considered that facilities, such as, healthcare and education already faced problems with the current demand of North Kesteven's residents. However, it was also noted that new development could bring new infrastructure with economic growth.

### **Waste Policy**

The Head of Environment and Public Protection presented the report to the Board. The new policy was a single document that, for the first time, brought together all the policies and service standards that related to the waste collection service.

Although the document primarily gathered together existing policies, there were two matters included which required a decision. The first of which was the banning of soil from garden waste bins. Allowing soil in the bins could make them extremely heavy and difficult to move and could contribute to injuries that had been experienced by employees. There was currently no prohibition and it would be most appropriate to include such a ban from April 2016, when the next garden waste charge was applied. The second related to continuation of collecting 'side waste' in the period immediately after Christmas, as, usually, the Council operates a 'no side waste' policy. The only exception to this was at Christmas when it was acknowledged that residents would have more waste, and the Council would collect additional side waste on the first collection after Christmas for both the black and green lidded wheeled bins.

### **Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Chairman: Councillor Geoffrey Whittle DFM Vice-Chairman: Councillor Sue Howe**

**Chairman: Councillor Sue Howe Vice-Chairman: Councillor G Hazelwood, post January 2016**

During 2015/16, the Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered topics in addition to the quarterly finance and performance reports, some of which are detailed below:

#### **Revenues and Benefits Shared Service**

The Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits presented a report to the Panel which provided an update on the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service between North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council.

The report highlighted the key challenges which had faced the shared service over the past year and how those challenges had been overcome. The report further highlighted the

significant savings made through the shared service and the improvements in performance and service delivery to customers.

Members queried the access and payment of universal credit and how recipients would budget for the future. It was explained that the shared service's Welfare Team provided a high quality money and benefits advice service and possessed an effective working relationship with other organisations, such as, Citizens Advice Bureau and Lincolnshire Credit Union.

Furthermore, it was noted that 99.25% of council tax had been collected at North Kesteven for 2014/15. Members congratulated the shared service's proactive approach and resolved to note the report and await a written response to questions, following the meeting.

### **General Fund and Target Budget**

At this dedicated meeting in January 2016, the Head of Finance and Resources gave a presentation, which provided Members an overview of the Council's General Fund Target Budget for 2016/17 and forecasts for 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The key areas noted by the panel were:

- Central Government indicated a four year financial settlement, but it was important to note this was subject to conditions which might change within that time.
- It was also noted that Revenue Support Grant had a reduction of 38% from 2015/16 to 2016/17.
- It had been indicated that, by 2019/20, Revenue Support Grant would be eliminated.
- The trigger for Council Tax increases that can be applied by local authorities where a referendum of local taxpayers would be necessary remained at 2% or more.
- The amount received from Retained Business Rates could be volatile due to reliance on growth of businesses and appeals.
- It was noted that being part of the business rates pool offered the opportunity to retain a larger proportion of the income generated through business rates.
- It was noted that the Council would receive £3 million in the form of New Homes Bonus in 2016/17.

Even though the Council had been prepared for a severe financial settlement, a number of new developments had been proposed within the base budget over the next three years. These included new competitive swimming equipment; provision of cycle link; business start-up advice; LN6 funding; EU Leader Fund contribution; and a new stepping out walk in Heckington. These developments were viewed as long term 'invest to save' proposals.

It was also noted that the four year financial settlement was not guaranteed and was subject to change. In addition, the funding received by Revenue Support Grant to each local authority is now largely on their income generated from business rates.

Members were advised that the Council was in a strong position financially, but due to increasing volatility there was a need to manage spending on contracts and monitor income generation through new developments. It was noted that there had been a significant investment in Leisure facilities and the contracts were constantly being renegotiated with a significant return on the investment being expected post 2018.

In addition, the Council will continue to support and attract growth in local business through the progression of the Local Plan; ensuring there is sufficient land allocated to supporting growth, there is a greater focus on tourism; and the continuation of providing advice to small businesses.

As part of the consultation process the Panel note the proposed 'Target Budget for 2016/17' and 'Forecasts for 2017/18 and 2018/19'. The comments of the Panel would be advised to the Executive Board at their meeting in February 2016.