MINUTES

COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2005
2.00 PM

PRESENT
Councillor John Kirkman Chairman

Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Ray Auger
Councillor David Brailsford
Councillor Terl Bryant
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor Elizabeth Channell
Councillor Nick Craft
Councillor Brian Fines
Councillor Donald Fisher
Councillor Mrs Joyce Gaffigan
Councillor Yvonne Gibbins
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Bryan Helyar
Councillor Reginald Howard
Councillor John Hurst
Councillor Fereshteh Hurst
Councillor Mrs Maureen Jalili
Councillor Kenneth Joynson
Councillor Albert Victor Kerr
Councillor Reg Lovelock M.B.E.
Councillor Mano Nadarajah
Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal
Councillor John Nicholson

Councillor Stephen O'Hare
Councillor Alan Parkin
Councillor Stanley Pease
Councillor Mrs Angeline Percival
Councillor Norman Radley
Councillor Mrs Margery Radley
Councillor Bob Sandall
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor John Smith
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Michael Taylor
Councillor Gerald Taylor
Councillor Jeffrey Thompson
Councillor Frank Turner
Councillor Graham Wheat
Councillor Mrs Mary Wheat
Councillor John Wilks
Councillor Mike Williams
Councillor Avril Williams
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Mrs Azar Woods

OFFICERS

Chief Executive
Director of Regulatory Services

OFFICERS

Corporate Manager, Democratic & Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)
Member Services Manager

[Vice-Chairman – Councillor Gerald Taylor]

Before the formal start of the meeting, the Chairman advised Members that the Chief Executive's role would be taken by the Director of Regulatory Services as part of her professional development.

1. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

(2.00 p.m. – 2.10 p.m.)

Prior notice in accordance with Council Procedure rule 10.3 had been given of the following questions put by a member of the public:-

Question: Mrs. Mary Patrick, 119 Essex Road, Stamford

I notice that you have a motion that you are moving before the Council at Agenda item 6. May I assume that you extend this scope to include both Stamford Hospital and, as importantly, provision for Mental Health services that appear to be being cut. For example – 8 beds at the Stamford Resource Centre are being transferred to Grantham without increasing the provision at Grantham. This leaves Stamford, Bourne and Deepings without direct cover at night putting very vulnerable people in the community with other vulnerable people.

Response: Councillor John Kirkman, Chairman of the Council

Can I thank Mrs Patrick for taking the time and trouble to raise some very important issues concerning health provision in the District. The concerns over acute provision at both Grantham and Stamford are quite rightly, at the forefront of all our minds and feature prominently on today's agenda. Mrs Patrick is right to remind us that the provision of mental health services may not enjoy the same profile, but is just as vital for our residents.

Her question refers to the motion before Council, which was written and submitted several days ago. At that time the events to which Mrs Patrick refers were not known to me and therefore not included in the motion. As members will know there are different providers of health services in Stamford and Grantham and although it is tempting to seek a composite motion dealing with both towns, there is a danger that such an approach has the effect of diluting the message. The situation faced by each community is different and important enough to be dealt with separately. I have therefore spoken to the Chairman of the Healthy Environment DSP and asked him to consider discussing the issues raised by Mrs Patrick at a future meeting.

Supplementary question: Mrs Patrick

The reason I brought this question is that Mrs King has said she can give an assurance that the Stamford centre will be open from eight in the morning to six in the evening, but where is the cover for these most vulnerable people between six and eight when they need the most care? Also, it is proposed that Grantham will only take these people for a very short time – they are overloaded now at Grantham and cannot manage the mental health and also you will be losing that service and it is going to be in the community. It has come to my knowledge that the three PCTs are amalgamating. I was at a meeting when they said they are going to do this in the community. They do damm all in the community now because there is no money. So how can three amalgamate into one to give you a service in the community that is not there now? The carers do not do the job they are paid to do to look after these poor people. I'm having to deal with a case at the moment where they are being bullied – then they end up in prison where they are drugged up. They used to be able to go to Rauceby that had a thousand plus beds. This is not good enough. We pay all this money – we the taxpayer pay this money. We've got to stop and stand our ground.

Response: Councillor Kirkman

Mrs Patrick I think you really answered your own question. As I said earlier, the whole matter will be discussed at the Healthy Environment DSP. That DSP has the authority to seek anyone to attend the meeting and give evidence if they so wish.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman first welcomed Councillor Steptoe, new ward member for St. Anne's ward, to this his first Council meeting. The Chairman expressed the hope that Councillor Steptoe would find the environment he had joined to be interesting and invigorating.

The Chairman then advised those present that Councillor Howard had achieved a remarkable seventy years service with the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade as of 23rd October this year. Councillor Howard was presented with a gift by the Chairman's Lady to mark this achievement. Councillor Howard responded by thanking the Chairman and pointing out that today was also his birthday. He said that his work on the Council and his abiding interest in serving the community was what had kept him going, particularly over recent years.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chivers, Conboy, Hewerdine, Martin-Mayhew, Shorrock, and Waterhouse. Apologies for late attendance were also given on behalf of Councillor Helyar and Councillor Lovelock. Councillor Lovelock's late attendance was due to his attendance at the funeral of Bill Cook, a former Treasurer of this authority.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH SEPTEMBER 2005.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2005 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to

(1) the minutes reflecting that the Vice-Chairman is Councillor Gerald Taylor having regard to the reference before minute 65 indicating that the Vice-Chairman assumed the chair;
(2) the list of attendees showing Councillor Bisnauthsing and Councillor Gerald Taylor in correct alphabetical order.

The Chairman stated that although it had not been past practice to do so, he had asked for the minutes to indicate "Vice-Chairman" alongside the name of the holder of that office in the future.

The Chairman drew members' attention to the fact that, apart from the above minor details, the minutes had been very competently prepared for the first time by the Trainee Democratic Support Officer, Miss Jo Toomey. The Council expressed its appreciation of Miss Toomey's efforts.

6. COMMUNICATIONS (INCLUDING CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS)

(1) Chairman's Engagements

An addendum to the list was the Chairman's and His Lady's attendance at the Bourne branch of the Royal Naval Association's Battle of Trafalgar dinner on 21st October 2005. The Chairman's own transport had been used.

(2) Fun Run on 2nd October 2005 at Wyndham Park, Grantham

The Chairman reported that Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright took part in the Fun Run and raised £150 for Children with Leukaemia. She had also raised £150 for the Chairman's Charity LIVES. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Councillor Mrs Cartwright commending the effort she had made to enter into the spirit of the event. He suggested members might wish to help increase her sponsorship total.

(3) Correspondence

The Chairman reported on the following letters which had been received, relating generally to the question of health provision within the district. In view of the importance of this issue, he read out the contents of each of the letters:

(a) Letter dated 3rd October 2005 from a representative of the

Department of Health responding to the Chief Executive's letter addressed to Patricia Hewitt seeking a meeting with the Minister and the Council's Health Scrutiny Committee. The letter stated that it would be inappropriate for the Minister to attend such a meeting before investigations into the Lincolnshire NHS Recovery Plan had been concluded.

(b) Letter dated 13th October 2005 from the Chief Executive of Peterborough & Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to acknowledge the resolution passed by the Council on 8th September 2005 (minute 60 refers);

(c) Letter dated 14th October 2005 from the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire, Councillor Mrs M.W. Davidson updating the Council on the outcome of the latest meeting of the scrutiny committee held on 13th October.

(d) Letter dated 11th October 2005 from the Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council seeking support for a resolution passed by that authority concerning the funding of the Air Ambulance Service by central government. The Chairman explained he had brought this letter to the attention of this Council as Lincolnshire faced a similar situation.

(4) Leader's announcement: Portfolio changes

The Leader thanked the Chairman for allowing her to raise this matter at short notice. She advised the Council that, owing to Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew's continuing personal difficulties, she had made some changes to his portfolio responsibilities which she was required to report to the Council. With immediate effect Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright would assume portfolio responsibility for all Housing related matters, to include private housing, care services, affordable housing and homelessness. Councillor Martin-Mayhew's would continue to hold the remaining responsibilities under his Community Safety portfolio, which included such key issues as tackling anti-social behaviour.

(5) Health Provision in Lincolnshire

The Chairman advised that Lincs FM had contacted him about his motion before the Council meeting. Representatives of the radio station would be conducting interviews in the offices to be broadcast today. In connection with this matter, Councillor John Hurst had agreed that the Council consider the Chairman's motion first before his own.

The Chairman then referred to a document that had been circulated within the Council Chamber. This document related to a situation at Grantham Hospital on 8th October 2005 that had consequences for a particular employee of the hospital and subsequently covered by the local press. He stressed this document had not been circulated by the

Council and was not part of the agenda.

The Monitoring Officer advised that, on the face of it, the document appeared to be confidential. During consideration of the Chairman's motion, he urged caution about referring to the individual concerned. Councillor Avril Williams stated she had circulated the document which she did not believe to be confidential. The Monitoring Officer further advised that the document concerned an employee of another organisation outside the Council. Members could refer to the document in general terms, but not to a specific individual or individuals.

7. NOTICES OF MOTION GIVEN UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

(1) by Councillor John Kirkman, Chairman of the Council

DECISION:

(1) This Council deplores the proposed reduction across all services at Grantham & District Hospital and other hospitals within the County managed by United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

(2) That this Council requests Trent Strategic Health Authority find extra funding in order to overcome the current crisis looming over Grantham & District Hospital and other hospitals within the County. We also request that an investigation be carried out into the management of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust that has led to the current critical situation.

(3) That this Council gives its full support to the staff at Grantham Hospital.

(4) That the Chief Executive write a further letter to the Secretary of State for Health inviting her to meet the Health Scrutiny Committee and advising that this time the Council will continue to request such a meeting until it is held.

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Kirkman:

(1) This Council deplores the proposed reduction across all services at Grantham & District Hospital and other hospitals within the County managed by United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

(2) That this Council requests Trent Strategic Health Authority find extra funding in order to overcome the current crisis looming over Grantham & District Hospital and other hospitals within the County. We also request that an investigation be carried out into the mismanagement of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust that has

led to the current critical situation.

(3) That this Council gives its full support to the staff at Grantham Hospital .

In presenting his motion, the Chairman gave notice that he wished to make a small amendment – to delete the letters "mis" from the word mismanagement in the second part of the motion. To refer to mismanagement would give the appearance that the Council sought to prejudge the issue. Subject to this amendment, the motion received a seconder.

A Stamford member asked the Chairman if he would agree to include Stamford Hospital within the wording of his motion. The Chairman declined to do so but stated he would accept an amendment to that motion. An amendment was so moved and seconded that the first part of the motion read: *(1) This Council deplores the proposed reduction across all services at Grantham & District Hospital, Stamford Hospital, and other hospitals within the County.*

Support was expressed for the amendment on the grounds that it would send a clear message to residents and the government about the community's united front. Whilst expressing sympathy for the problems faced in the south of the district, other speakers felt that the Grantham hospital issue should be kept separate to avoid danger of clouding the issue; two distinct health authorities were involved and combining the different circumstances of both hospitals in one motion could dilute the message. It was pointed out that the Council was already in dialogue with the Peterborough & Stamford Hospitals Trust and therefore that issue was at a different stage to Grantham. The mover of the amendment was asked to withdraw her proposal but she declined. Accordingly, a vote on the amendment was taken and lost.

A further amendment was then proposed: *This Council condemns the appalling behaviour of the United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust Executives when they suspended a member of staff and we demand his immediate reinstatement.*

After the amendment was seconded, the mover of the motion stated he considered that the Chairman's motion was "tame" and that the Council should be united in supporting both Grantham and Stamford hospitals. He referred to recent treatment he had received at Grantham Hospital and warned of the danger of losing such valuable community services. He began to make mention of the press coverage about the hospital employee who had recently been suspended and suggested he had been made a scapegoat. The Monitoring Officer immediately reiterated the advice he had given earlier in the meeting in relation to publicly speaking about individual staff in other organisations and the inherent dangers of doing so. The amendment was then put to the vote and also lost.

There followed an impassioned debate on the original motion. Very strong concerns were expressed about the threat to local health services and the effect this was having on the morale of those employed in the NHS. The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire was due to meet again on 9th November and both Councillor Mike Williams and Councillor Mrs Radley would be attending. Fears were expressed that Grantham was gradually being reduced to a cottage hospital status with taxpayers' money being used to fund more managers than frontline staff where it was needed most. A comment was made that the Government was implementing a nationwide policy on the NHS but the country was made up of very different areas where local solutions ought to apply.

Councillor John Hurst stated that the crisis in health provision went to the heart of the issue of democracy, whereby the community had to find a way to make a difference. He had recently been permitted a meeting with the Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt at which she had asked what could be done to restore confidence in Grantham hospital and the NHS. Councillor Hurst's response to this question was for the present Chairman of the NHS Trust Board to be replaced; the community could not engage in a meaningful dialogue with someone they did not trust. The case put forward for a centre of excellence at Lincoln was, he asserted, a lie – there was only an aspiration for a centre of excellence. A further lie was that safe services could be provided at a remote location; they were not safe because they were not accessible. He called for the Council to join with the other 28% of those who lived in rural areas to form an irresistible resistance to the notion that a rural health service could be run in the same way as city hospitals. The Secretary of State has the power to resolve this issue.

Comment was made that in an increasing affluent society, how much money was allocated to the NHS had always be a bone of contention whichever government was in power. This was not a party political issue and has united all sections of the community for a return to the principles on which the NHS was founded in 1945-46. A call was made for the government to reorganise its thinking; hospitals need to be accessible by the majority of those who need them. It was suggested that one of the problems lay in the targets set by the Government and the fact that funding was dependent upon these targets being met. Hospitals should have flexibility so that services can be driven according to the local need.

A member expressed anger that the Secretary of State had stated she was unable to meet with the Council's DSP, yet had time to meet an individual Councillor from this authority. He asked if he could make an addendum to the motion to ask that another letter be sent to the Secretary of State for her to attend the DSP meeting and that the Council would not accept another refusal.

The Chairman advised that this was not permissible under the Council procedure rules. However, he was willing to accept a proposal to suspend procedural rules in accordance with rule 23.1 for this matter. A vote was taken on suspension of procedure rules and supported by more than two thirds of those present.

An additional motion was proposed and seconded that the Chief Executive write a further letter to the Secretary of State for Health inviting her to meet the Council's Healthy Environment DSP and advising that this time the Council was not prepared to accept a refusal. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was unanimously carried.

In his summing up, the Chairman stated he was putting his motion to the Council on behalf of the Council; this was a non-political matter. He was confident that members would give it their full support so that the Council could do whatever it could to ensure proper health care for its residents. A vote was taken on the original motion and again unanimously supported.

[The meeting was adjourned at 3.35pm and resumed at 3.52pm. Before moving to the next item of business, Councillor Selby made a public apology to the Council for comments he had made during debate on the Chairman's motion. He acknowledged that he had made the comments contrary to the advice previously given by the Monitoring Officer.]

(2) by Councillor John Hurst

<u>DECISION:</u> To not support the motion proposed by Councillor John Hurst.

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor John Hurst:

"This Council considers that a policy of gradual and large-scale selling off of the provision of services – together with human and physical resources – would not be in the interests of the people of South Kesteven; of the employees of SKDC or of local and effective democracy: that a Council with merely "strategic" powers would be a denial of democratic local government."

Speaking in support of his motion, Councillor Hurst stated that it concerned the issue of effective, non-partisan democracy. Although he acknowledged that tenants would have the right to vote on how the Council's housing stock was to be managed, he was aware of rumours within the authority that there was a firm intention to sell off virtually all services, assets, and human assets the Council has. He asked the Cabinet to deny those rumours. He asserted that if services were sold off, Councillors would no longer have the same responsibilities and powers. The essence of his motion was about having those powers to take effective action on behalf of the people whom the Council represents. The motion received a seconder.

A debate ensued during which support for and disagreement with the motion was expressed. In support of the motion, speakers agreed with Councillor Hurst's statement that this was a fundamental principle of local democracy; the transfer of the Council's housing stock representing an attack on this concept and local accountability. It was no surprise that there was a very low turnout in local elections as local accountability was being eroded through turning local authorities into merely commissioners of services. It was therefore legitimate and vital to defend Council services, including housing. The fear was expressed that if the Council disposed of its physical assets it would become an organisation that only dealt with agencies. It was difficult to encourage people to stand as Councillors now with the services the authority did provide; this situation could only get worse as more services are outsourced. Concern was also voiced over proposals to pursue handing over the leisure and cultural services to a Trust. The Council provided excellent services in these areas which had a role to play in preventing anti-social behaviour. Concern had been raised at the Stamford LAA about the future of the Arts Centre; here was an excellent facility in which the council had made significant investment. A plea was made for the Council to not lose sight of the things it did well. The motion therefore sought to draw attention to the increasing loss of control over services to unelected bodies. If the Council only retained a strategic role, this effectively would trample over democracy.

Speaking against the motion, the Portfolio Holder for Large Scale Voluntary Transfer stressed that democracy extended to the council's tenants who would have the opportunity to vote on the issue. If transfer was the preferred option, staff would not only be protected but could have opportunities to further their careers. Other views were expressed that the Council had a duty to ensure value for money in the delivery of its services. It could not fund all the services it would like and some may benefit from being outsourced. Any savings achieved could be redirected to other areas and give better value for residents.

In responding to Councillor Hurst's request to deny rumours, the Leader began by emphasising the need to consider what is best value for money for each particular service. There was no policy on the part of the administration to outsource all the Council's services. She stated she was disappointed to hear what had been said about LSVT. It had been the Stock Option Appraisal Commission who had undertaken the detailed work and analysis to arrive at the recommendation to transfer the housing stock. The Council was a good landlord but it underestimated tenants' aspirations for their homes, particularly in the area of security. Members had been given the opportunity not to support the SOAC recommendation but had concurred with it. The process was now moving forward to investigate the possibility of transferring the housing stock. The Council had given tenants the opportunity they had asked for. This process would be conducted as fairly as possible.

In his right of reply, Councillor Hurst re-asserted that the Council would face the situation of responsibility without power; it was not solely about housing or money in particular, but the throwing away of democracy. He requested a recorded vote in accordance with Council procedure rule 16.4. This was supported by more than ten members.

The vote on the motion was as follows.

FOR	**AGAINST**	**ABSTAIN**
Councillor Bisnanuthsing	Councillor Auger	Clr Kirkman
Councillor Miss Channell	Councillor Mrs Bosworth	
Councillor Mrs Gaffigan	Councillor Brailsford	
Councillor Gibbins	Councillor Bryant	
Councillor Fereshteh Hurst	Councillor Carpenter	
Councillor John Hurst	Councillor Mrs Cartwright	
Councillor Howard	Councillor Craft	
Councillor Mrs Jalili	Councillor Fines	
Councillor Joynson	Councillor Fisher	
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Helyar	
Councillor O'Hare	Councillor Lovelock	
Councillor Selby	Councillor Moore	
Councillor Steptoe	Councillor Nadarajah	
Councillor Thompson	Councillor Mrs Neal	
Councillor Wilks	Councillor Nicholson	
Councillor A. Williams	Councillor Parkin	
Councillor M. Williams	Councillor Pease	
Councillor Wood	Councillor Mrs Percival	
Councillor Mrs Woods	Councillor Mrs Radley	
	Councillor Radley	
	Councillor Sandall	
	Councillor John Smith	
	Councillor Mrs Judy Smith	
	Councillor Stokes	
	Councillor G. Taylor	
	Councillor M. Taylor	
	Councillor Turner	
	Councillor G. Wheat	
	Councillor Mrs Wheat	
19	**29**	**1**

The motion was lost.

8. MEETING BETWEEN SKDC REPRESENTATIVES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PETERBOROUGH & STAMFORD HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

DECISION: To note the summary of the meeting held on 27th September 2005 between representative of this Council and representatives of the Peterborough & Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

The Chairman presented the notes of the above meeting that he had attended with Councillor Joynson and the Director of Community Services. As mentioned earlier, the issues raised would be taken on board by the Healthy Environment DSP.

A member stated that, whilst not being critical of the SKDC representatives, she could not see that anything definite had come from this meeting. A view was expressed that written assurances should come forward that there was to be no reduction in health provision. Members were advised by a local Stamford member that local residents were so concerned over the future of the hospital that they would be prepared to set up a trust to run the facility.

The Chairman acknowledged that the notes of this meeting were brief and orally expanded on some of the issues discussed which included day care cases, the closure of Hurst ward, contingencies for pandemics and population growth, reduction in demand for hospital beds. The Trust representatives had stated there were no plans to sell off land or close the hospital. The Chairman reminded the Council that these issues would now go forward to the DSP who would subject them to robust scrutiny.

9. MEMBERSHIPS: COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PANELS

DECISION:

(1) To note that no changes are required to the number of seats held by each political group following the uncontested by-election for the St. Anne's ward;
(2) To approve the appointment of Councillor Joynson to the Resources DSP;
(3) To approve the appointment of Councillor Wilks to the Engagement DSP;
(4) To approve the appointment of Councillor Mrs Jalili to the Licensing Committee and the Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee.

Members had before them report number CEX303 by the Chief Executive which detailed vacancies which had arisen on the Resources DSP and the two Licensing Committees following notification of resignation by Councillor O'Hare from these committees. The report also made reference to the un-contested election for the St. Anne's ward as a result of which Councillor Lee Steptoe had become a member of the Council. Councillor Steptoe had joined the Labour Group. The resultant calculations on political balance demonstrated that no change was required to the number of seats held by each political group. There was currently one vacancy on the Engagement DSP to be filled by a member of the Independent Group.

Following nominations submitted, the Chairman advised that any additional changes to committee and panel memberships would require prior approval of the Council.

10. MODERNISATION AGENDA: AN UPDATE

<u>DECISION:</u>

(1) To thank Councillor Nadarajah for his informative presentation on the extent of the work undertaken to date in moving forward the E-Government modernisation agenda;
(2) To note that the issue of investment in Broadband for members is under consideration.

Before Councillor Nadarajah began his presentation, the Portfolio Holder for Access & Engagement gave a brief introduction to the substantial changes which were needed in order to meet the e-government targets. A modernisation programme had been approved by the Council in December 2004. Although a subsequent Gateway review had concluded no noticeable changes at the front end, this belied the significant amount of work that had gone on to lay the foundations for the future. As with any major construction, the initial building blocks were not immediately visible. The Engagement DSP had set up an e-government working group led by the Chairman, Councillor Kirkman to oversee the development of the work.

Councillor Nadarajah began by emphasising that the slides he was about to show did not convey the huge amount of background work that had been done, much of which had been delivered in-house. He commended the staff of ICT services for their hard work.

A detailed overview followed during which Councillor Nadarajah explained progress made with the creation of the Customer Service Centre, the introduction of new customer based software, and the modified accommodation to provide a dedicated telephony centre. He also outlined current progress with the electronic records management system which was running as a pilot for Environmental Health & Licensing services and how all this would translate into new methods of working and thinking for the Council. The authority was now on target to meet 100% electronic service delivery by the end of the year. The presentation also covered the development of on line web forms, enhanced website content, and an analysis of payment activity to determine ways of achieving savings in this area.

Councillor Nadarajah concluded by referring to the Members' IT Working Group set up to help iron out issues and encourage greater use of ICT by members. The future plans focused on transferring all services to the Customer Service Centre where 80% of customers could be dealt with at the first point of contact. The timescale included for the Banking Hall to be relocated in January 2006 and the Customer Service Centre to be opened in July 2006.

[During Councillor Nadarajah's presentation the meeting reached the point of being in progress for three hours. In accordance with Council procedure rule 9, the majority of members present voted for the meeting to continue until 6 pm.]

11. ALIGNING COUNCIL AND LSP PRIORITIES

DECISION:

(1) To adopt the new corporate planning calendar as follows:

	2006
Residents' survey	**February**
Update of area profile	**March**
Gateway reviews by LSP and Council	**April**
Review of LSP priorities	**May**
Review of Council priorities	**June**
Approval of Service Planning pro-forma	**July**
Budget Preparation	**August to December**

(2) To promote Affordable Housing and Communications from Category B to Category A.

(3) That contingency plans are prepared to secure savings, if required, from Category Y services.

[The following Councillors requested that their vote against part (3) of the above decision be recorded: Councillors Mike Williams, Avril Williams, Ian Selby, John Hurst, Fereshteh Hurst, Joyce Gaffigan, Lee Steptoe, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Jeff Thompson, Vic Kerr, Angeline Percival, Ken Joynson, and Maureen Jalili.]

The Council had before it the Cabinet's recommendations from its meeting held on 10^{th} October concerning the adoption of a new corporate planning calendar and proposed revisions to the priority categorisation of services. Members had also been previously circulated with a copy of the Chief Executive's report CEX300 to the Cabinet.

The Economic Portfolio Holder submitted the Cabinet recommendations, subject to two amendments to minute CO73(3):

- to delete the words "that scored 12 points or less" following the reference to Category Y services.
- to remove reference to the Citizens' Advice Bureau in the table at page 6 of report CEX300 in connection with the Grants to Voluntary Bodies service on the grounds that it was considered inappropriate to single out one grant recipient from the others.

Subject to these amendments, the motion was seconded.

A member addressed the Council to express his strong concern about the relatively low priority being given to leisure and cultural services, particularly having regard to the significant contribution these services made towards a healthier environment – a shared national priority. He suggested that this categorisation should be rethought especially in the light of the next Olympic games being held in this country where Centres of Sporting Excellence would be required. As an amendment, he moved that part (3) of the recommendation concerning contingency arrangements to secure savings from Category Y services be deleted. The amendment was seconded.

Several speakers indicated support for the amendment. The Leader then advised that it would be foolish to remove making contingencies plans. She referred to how the balance between authorities' mandatory spend versus discretionary spend had shifted from about 50:50 to now 80:20; for some authorities, the spend ratio on discretionary services was less than 20%. The threat of capping still remained and it would place the Council at risk if it failed to have such plans in place. The Economic Portfolio Holder stated he did place great importance on the role of leisure and cultural services but the Council must strive to operate as efficiently as it could. The work currently in progress was examining whether a leisure trust option would enable the Council to achieve this and accrue savings. The new corporate plan would enable priorities to be reviewed over the year; it should not be too prescriptive about savings as it may be that savings within Category Y services could be made without a reduction in the level of service.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost. A further vote took place on the original motion and subsequently carried.

12. PROPOSED NEW PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS

<u>DECISION:</u> Noting the extensive consultation undertaken, to

endorse and accept the new Protocol for Member and Officer Relations as appended to report DLS46.

Members had before them the Corporate Manager, Democratic & Legal Services' report number DLS46 which appended a copy of the suggested new protocol for Member and Officer relations.

The Chairman drew members' attention to the fact that the document had been the subject of extensive consultation and when recommended by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 5th September 2005, had not been subject to a call-in. Adoption of the new protocol was so moved and seconded.

Questions were put to and answered by the Corporate Manager on paragraphs 29 and 98. A member expressed concern at the implications of paragraph 125 about the seeking of advice from the Council's Public Relations unit when a member wished to issue a press release. He suggested that no member should have their statements vetted in this way as it could lead to the appearance that the public were being kept in the dark. An amendment was proposed and seconded to remove the third bullet point from paragraph 125 that referred to PR advice in relation to press releases.

The Corporate Manager explained that the paragraph did contain a proviso that excluded party political statements from the requirement to seek PR advice. The Chief Executive clarified that the words which the amendment sought to delete concerned occasions where a member wants the Council to issue a factual press release. The mover of the amendment had interpreted this as meaning when an individual Councillor wants to issue a press release. A vote on the amendment took place and was lost. A further vote on the original motion to adopt the new protocol as presented was carried.

13. STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE AND EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING: 8TH DECEMBER 2005

DECISION:

(1) To approve the proposals for the format of this year's Annual Stakeholders' Conference as detailed in report CEX302 and the Engagement DSP be asked to finalise the arrangements by its meeting on 17th November 2005;
(2) That an Extraordinary meeting of the Council be held at 2.00 pm on Thursday 5th January 2006 to consider the strategic choice of landlord.

In his report CEX302, the Chief Executive referred to the scheduled meeting of the Council's Annual Stakeholders' Conference on 8th December 2005. He went on to outline proposals for the conference to adopt the format of a Citizens' Jury charged with the responsibility to investigate whether the Council delivers value for money to its residents. Details were given as to how such an event could run and the anticipated outcomes.

The report contained a further proposal to hold an Extraordinary meeting of the Council at 4pm later the same day to consider the strategic choice of landlord. Members' attention was drawn to a paper circulated at the meeting by the Director of Regulatory Services. In this paper, she explained that a key feature of the decision on the strategic choice of landlord would take account of the feedback from the visits to other organisations and the resulting views of tenants, members and staff. Mention was made that the ability of other organisations to receive the SKDC party had been delayed, which left little time between visits for detailed discussion by the interested parties. Whilst officers believed that a decision on 8th December could be achieved, members may prefer that there is more opportunity to discuss the issue within their political groups before the matter comes before the full Council. An alternative date for the Extraordinary meeting of 5th January 2006 was suggested. Acceptance of the proposed Citizens' Jury theme of the conference and 5th January 2006 for an Extraordinary meeting of the Council was moved and seconded.

14. COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

<u>DECISION:</u> That the Council acknowledges the public commitment and actively supports elected member development within the Improvement & Development Agency Councillor Development Charter Framework.

Members had previously been circulated with report number HR&OD80 by the Training and Development Manager. This report referred to the Non Key decision made by the Deputy Leader on 7th March 2005 to support the Councillor Development Charter and authorise the Leader and Chief Executive to sign a statement of commitment to works towards the Charter. One of the requirements of the Charter Statement of Commitment was to make a public announcement in the Council of the intention to achieve the Charter. This announcement also served to ensure all Councillors were aware of the continued support for elected member development within a good practice framework.

15. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES:

DECISION:

(1) That Councillor O'Hare being appointed to fill one of the two vacancies as this Council's representative on the South Kesteven Citizens' Advice Bureau;
(2) Noting that one vacancy on the South Kesteven CAB remains unfilled;
(3) That Councillors Alan Parkin and Mrs Mary Wheat be appointed to serve on the Grantham TCMP Strategy Group once the new structure has been effected;
(4) That Councillor Nick Craft be appointed to serve on the Grantham TCMP Project Group once the new structure has been effected.

Before nominations were considered, the Monitoring Officer drew the attention of members to new guidance received from the Standards Board about the declaration of interests for members who had been appointed by the Council to sit on an outside body. The guidance stated that a member appointed to an outside body could report back on its activity and take part in general discussion about that organisation. However, if the matter concerned assets and other financial aspects, that member should declare a personal and prejudicial interest and act accordingly.

Only one nomination was put forward and seconded for the two vacancies on the South Kesteven Citizens' Advice Bureau, that of Councillor Stephen O'Hare.

[Before consideration of nominations to the positions on the proposed re-structured Grantham TCMP, the Chairman indicated that it was now 6 pm and that he proposed a further 10 minute extension to the meeting in order to conclude the business on the agenda. The members present indicated their agreement.]

The Monitoring Officer explained that the existing membership of the Grantham Town Centre Management Partnership (TCMP) had been suspended pending the re-arrangement of the management of its structure and operations. To effect the new structure would require a Non Key decision by the Economic Portfolio Holder. Any appointments made at this meeting would therefore not take effect until this matter had been resolved by way of a Non Key decision.

For the two vacancies on the TCMP Strategy Group, two nominations were forthcoming, Councillors Alan Parkin and Mrs Mary Wheat.

For the vacancy on the TCMP Project Group, both Councillor John Wilks and Councillor Nick Craft were proposed and seconded. The Chairman instructed members to vote for only one of these two candidates. On being put to the vote, Councillor Craft received the higher number of votes.

16. OUTCOME FROM THE MEMBERS' FORUM ON COMMUNICATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

DECISION: To note the report.

The Chairman referred to report DCS30 prepared by the Director of Community Services summarising the events which took place at the recent Members' Forum on Communications and the Community Strategy. The Chairman stated that the forum had been extremely informative and the presentation given by Mr Ben Page, Director of MORI was probably one of the best heard in the Council Chamber.

The Chairman said he was very disappointed the event had been attended by only 28 of the Council's 58 members. He expressed the view that when the authority was able to secure speakers of such high calibre like Mr Page, members should make every effort to attend. In response to these comments, a member asked if more notice could be given for these events.

17. QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

Three questions had been submitted prior to the meeting.

Verbatim details of the questions, together with supplementary questions and responses, are set out in the appendix to these minutes.

18. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.08 p.m.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX TO COUNCIL MINUTES: 27th OCTOBER 2005

MINUTE 88: QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION

QUESTION 1

TO: COUNCILLOR JOHN KIRKMAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Mr Chairman, do you like me feel that any member who resigns from all DSPs and fails to diligently represent his or her electorate at every opportunity available to them, should at the very least, refuse to accept his/her full salary and should only accept a pro rata payment, as happens in the commercial world.

COUNCILLOR M. D. TAYLOR

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

Is it not really appropriate for me to respond as the role of your Chairman requires me to be impartial in such matters. However, I should point out, that it is the right of every elected Member to represent the community he or she serves in a way which that Councillor sees fit. There is no legal requirement for a councillor to serve on a committee, panel or working group. The only requirement is for that Councillor to attend a minimum of one meeting every six months.

The only comment I feel able to make is that it is a matter ultimately for the judgement of the electorate who will indicate their views when a future election takes place.

COUNCILLOR JOHN KIRKMAN
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mike Taylor

Thank you for your response Mr. Chairman – and I hope that the comment at the end, the people of Stamford take note.

Whilst I don't wish to stifle the right of people to speak, I hope you will assure the membership of this Council, in light of what my first question was, you will not allow the member concerned to monopolise Council meetings with questions which could well have been answered at the DSPs.

Response from Councillor Kirkman:

I think I said earlier in the day that one of the jobs of the Chairman is to ensure that the rules of this organisation are consistently and fairly applied and I do try quite hard to do that – even though some people may believe I do not do so. The rules by which this Council works are laid down in our Constitution and in our Standing Orders. There is nothing within those that would allow me to curtail any member speaking in the manner you suggest. Standing Orders in the pre-Cabinet era did allow, at the Chairman's discretion, for any matter that came referred during the Council meeting to him – to be referred to a relevant committee if he believed it was within the remit of that committee's business. Unfortunately, our Constitution does not allow that and perhaps it should.

QUESTION 2

TO COUNCILLOR LINDA NEAL, LEADER

Can you tell me if South Kesteven District Council is intending to withdraw fully, or even partially, Rate Support for Village Halls, and if the Council is to withdraw any amount of Rate Support, have you considered the implications for this action?

COUNCILLOR IAN SELBY

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 2

Although this area of work is not within my portfolio I do know, as you should, that discretionary rate relief was approved by Council as an area for disinvestment at its meeting last February following the rigorous priority setting work and the necessity to release resources from some areas in order to invest further in the priorities. South Kesteven District Council will however offer a scheme, but with less financial resources. The new scheme has not yet been set which makes it impossible for me to predict what effect there will or will not be on village halls.

Personally, within the new scheme I would like to see village halls protected as I believe they are more often than not the lifeblood of our many rural communities, but as you doubtless know the decision is not mine to make.

COUNCILLOR LINDA NEAL

Supplementary Question from Councillor Selby:

I would just like to say, in the nicest possible way, you say "as you should know" but us Councillors, its difficult to remember everything from all the information that is given to us. So, obviously if I had known the answer to the question, I wouldn't have asked it in the first place.

As to my supplementary, you mention a new scheme that has not yet been set. Can you tell me when will it be set and will the general public have the opportunity to express their views regarding the new scheme – and if not, why not, especially if you genuinely believe in local democracy?

Response from Councillor Mrs. Neal

I'm sorry it's not my portfolio work so I just do not know the answer to those questions.

QUESTION 3

TO COUNCILLOR FRANCES CARTWRIGHT

Does she believe that the glossy colour leaflet entitled Your home your choice Issue 1

October 2005, sent to all tenants and councillors, presents matters in a fair, impartial and unbiased manner?

COUNCILLOR STEPHEN O'HARE

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 3

I don't just think it, I know it is!

COUNCILLOR FRANCES CARTWRIGHT

Supplementary Question from Councillor O'Hare

Does she believe it is fair, impartial an unbiased then for that document to publish a false statement, namely, "A working Group is due to make a recommendation to an Extraordinary meeting in December" as we just know that decision has not yet been made?

Response from Councillor Mrs Cartwright

Sorry I don't understand that. We are having a working group; we are going to make a decision; and we are going to bring it to Council at the appropriate time. The fact that it has now been moved to January is of little interest.