



AGENDA

For a meeting of the
ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL
to be held on
THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2005
at
2.30 PM
in
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNCIL OFFICES, ST. PETER'S HILL, GRANTHAM
Duncan Kerr, Chief Executive

Panel Members:	Councillor Robert Conboy, Councillor Nick Craft, Councillor John Hurst, Councillor Albert Victor Kerr, Councillor Mano Nadarajah (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Norman Radley, Councillor Michael Taylor (Chairman), Councillor John Wilks and Councillor Mike Williams
Scrutiny Officer:	Paul Morrison 01476 406512 p.morrison@southkesteven.gov.uk
Scrutiny Support Officer:	Rebecca Chadwick 01476 406297 r.chadwick@southkesteven.gov.uk

Members of the Panel are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed below.

- 1. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**
To receive comments or views from members of the public at the Panel's discretion.
- 2. MEMBERSHIP**
The Panel to be notified of any substitute members.
- 3. APOLOGIES**
- 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Members are asked to declare any interests in matters for consideration at the meeting.
- 5. ACTION NOTES**
The notes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2005 are attached for information.
(Enclosure)
- 6. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

CATEGORY A PRIORITY ISSUES:

7. E-GOVERNMENT

- Report on Moving Towards a Cashless Office by the E-Government Working Group.
- Notes from the working group meetings on 26th September 2005 and 12th October 2005.
- The Director of Operational Services will report at the meeting on an Update on the Customer Service Centre.

(Enclosures)

8. MEMBERS' USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Notes from the meetings of the working group on 22nd September 2005 and 20th October 2005.
- Notes from the meeting on 8th November 2005 and a report from the working group on members training and broadband for members will be circulated at the meeting.

(Enclosures)

9. LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLIES

- The Chairman and Scrutiny Officer to report on their visits to Spelthorne Borough Council's Area Forums.
- Minutes from the following Local Area Assemblies for information:
 - Bourne – 7th September 2005
 - Stamford – 22nd September 2005
 - Grantham – 28th September 2005
- "Local Area Assemblies: Review of Purpose and Structure" submitted by Councillor Shorrock.

(Enclosures)

CATEGORY B PRIORITY ISSUES:

10. EQUALITIES

- Notes from the working group meeting on 14th October 2005.

(Enclosure)

OTHER ISSUES:

11. ELECTION TURNOUT

To consider methods of encouraging voter turnout.

12. BT PAYPHONES

- Letter from BT dated 10th October 2005.
- Enclosed details on BT Chargecards.

(Enclosures)

13. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

(Enclosure)

14. WORK PROGRAMME

(Enclosure)

15. STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE

Report by the Chief Executive.

(Enclosure)

16. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Representatives on outside bodies to give update reports.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, which the Chairman, by reasons of special circumstances, decides is urgent.



MEETING OF THE ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2005
2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor John Hurst
Councillor Kerr
Councillor Nadarajah (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Radley

Councillor Shorrocks
Councillor Stokes
Councillor M Taylor (Chairman)
Councillor Wilks

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Director of Operational Services
Scrutiny Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Carpenter

16. MEMBERSHIP

The Panel was informed that the Councillor Conboy was being replaced by Councillor Stokes and Councillor Radley by Councillor Mrs Radley for this meeting only and the late Councillor Burrows was being replaced by Councillor Wilks and Councillor M G Williams by Councillor Shorrocks until the next annual general meeting of the council.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

18. ACTION NOTES

Noted.

19. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

Nothing to report.

20. BT PROPOSALS TO RE-ALIGN PAYPHONE PROVISION TO CUSTOMER DEMAND

The Panel welcomed Mr Turner and Mr Seaton from BT, who were at the meeting to discuss BT's proposals concerning re-alignment of payphone provision. This included the removal of four payphones and a number of

payphones being converted to cashless, subject to the outcome of Ofcom's Review of Universal Service later in the year. A letter from BT detailing the proposals had been circulated with the agenda. Mr Turner stated that BT had taken into consideration previous representations of the Council, hence the change in proposals. Payphones identified for cashless conversion had high maintenance costs mainly as a result of vandalism and theft. Those proposed for removal also incurred very high maintenance costs but with no identifiable reason.

The Panel was in general support of the proposals as it was considered that conversion to cashless payphones would contribute to a reduction in vandalism. Members did, however, have a few concerns about specific payphones and these were discussed with the BT representatives. There was particular concern about the Harrowby estate area in Grantham, given that only one payphone in the area could require people in need of a payphone to travel significant distance. This was an important issue given that the area was home to a number of vulnerable people. When questioned, the representatives stated that there were no plans to increase the number of payphones in that area. The Panel asked, however, that they give this consideration.

The Panel also queried a number of other issues such as consultation and the Ofcom review. The representatives gave explanation where necessary including details on the number of payment options at the cashless payphones (about which further information was requested) and confirmation that the emergency number 999 could still be dialled from any payphone without charge. They also stated that population per payphone was not a consideration in payphone provision.

The issue of mobile phone coverage was raised and it was suggested that there were still some 'black spot' areas with mobile phone signal, which could be very dangerous. Following discussion, it was considered that as BT was not responsible for mobile phone coverage, the service providers should be contacted regarding the Panel's concerns. The "other possibilities" for partnership working suggested in BT's proposals received general support from the Panel.

Conclusions:

- (1) To request the Access & Engagement Portfolio Holder, in responding to BT's proposals, supports the removals and cashless conversions as an interim measure pending the outcome of Ofcom's Review of Universal Service. To request that the Portfolio Holder also requests BT to consider payphone provision in the Harrowby estate area in Grantham.**
- (2) Given the success of the visit from the BT representatives, to invite rail company representatives to a meeting to consider rail service provision.**

21. TRAVEL CONCESSIONS REVIEW

The Chairman, under the agenda item Any Other Business, allowed consideration of a draft report on the Council's Travel Concessions Review. This item had been included on the recent Forward Plan and would be determined before the next scheduled meeting of the Panel.

A report by the Corporate Director of Operational Services was circulated. This set out the current concessions services and the changes necessary as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget announcement to provide free local bus travel for people over the age of sixty and disabled people from April 2006. The report proposed various changes within the Council's existing policies and guidance.

Having considered the report, the Panel considered that good past performance of the travel concessions service provided confidence in the officer's recommendations. The recommendations appeared sound, especially as an increase in demand of bus services should improve business for the providers. Members did have a few specific concerns, however. These included the limitations of operating the service at district level, the County Council's responsibility for public transport and difficulties in providing cross-authority concessions.

Conclusion:

To support the recommendations concerning travel concessions:

- (1) Due to the cost and the current categorisation of the service, it is recommended that the service is introduced within the Council's existing policies and guidance.**
- (2) The free bus pass should be introduced from April 2006. Customers will be written to informing them that the bus pass will be half fare from January to March and free from April to December. Those customers wishing to change from vouchers to a bus pass will need to change from January.**
- (3) The additional funding required to introduce the free bus pass be allocated.**
- (4) Travel vouchers should be ordered.**
- (5) There should be no time restrictions imposed, except where the bus operator had indicated that this would impact negatively on particular service routes, which may then result in significant additional expenditure for the Council. All services will be included from the minimum 9.30a.m. start time. It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Operational Services should be allowed discretion to negotiate these expectations with operators.**
- (6) Authority should be given to the Corporate Director of Operational Services to assess and agree generation factors with respect to individual bus routes with operators.**
- (7) Reimbursement arrangements with operators should be agreed in conjunction with the portfolio holder.**

- (8) Current recipients of travel vouchers should receive future voucher issues via the post upon receipt of a valid application form.**

22. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Fire Services Working Group

The Chairman reported on the meeting of the working group. It had been considered that a scrutiny review was not required as the decision had already been taken by the Government. Instead, a letter had been written to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on behalf of the DSP. A copy had been circulated with the agenda. Unfortunately, although this letter had been written over a month ago, no response had been received. This was very disappointing to the Panel. Members also recounted that no response had been received from the Ambulance Control Centre in Lincoln regarding the invitation to visit their premises.

Conclusions:

- (1) To write again to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister insisting on a response to the original letter on the basis that in a democratic society, elected members should not be ignored.**
- (2) To write to the Lincoln Ambulance Control Centre following up the invite to visit the premises. *[Afternote: This is now within the remit of the Healthy Environment DSP].***

E-Government Working Group

Notes of the working group meetings of 20th July 2005 and 25th August 2005 had been circulated with the agenda. The Corporate Director of Operational Services gave additional information at the meeting. He explained that this issue had been very well scrutinised and supported by the working group who had concentrated on improving customer service by the customer services centre. Successes and lessons learnt from the initial stages of this project were shared.

The working group had also been active in looking at reducing cash payments at Council Offices to support a sustainable service with enhanced customer focus. Two key areas under investigation were the introduction of "All Pay" sites for Council payments at local outlets and increasing the offer of direct debit payment days. The Council's website and the Best Value Performance Indicator for on-line services were also discussed. A member of the newly-formed Members' IT working group informed the Panel that the group had held its first meeting that morning. A report would be submitted at the next meeting of the DSP.

Conclusion:

To support the work and recommendations of the E-Government Working Group.

23. MINUTES FROM LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLIES

The minutes of the meeting of the Rural North Local Area Assembly meeting on 12th July 200 were circulated. All other minutes of the last round of meetings had been circulated with the agenda. The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the Chairman and himself were soon to visit one of Spelthorne Borough Council's Area Forums. Contact had also been made with South Ribble Borough Council.

24. DRAFT SCRUTINY HANDBOOK

Members considered the draft Scrutiny Handbook as circulated with the agenda. The Scrutiny Officer stated that reference to the call-in process on page seventeen would be clarified.

Conclusion:

To support the draft Scrutiny Handbook.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

26. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members were informed that the only 'red' indicator, number 157, had risen from 74% to 83% since publication. This was noted.

27. VOTER TURNOUT

The Chairman, following recent district council by-elections, had become very concerned at the level of apathy amongst voters. He asked for this to be considered by the DSP. It had been agreed with the Chief Executive that provision could be made within the district council's newsletter to include a questionnaire on resident's opinion of voting.

The Scrutiny Support Officer had undertaken initial research on other authorities' scrutiny reviews and academic work on the same issue. Members thought it was very important to look into this and it was agreed that more research was required. It was suggested that a local college student may wish to assist in this research as part of coursework or work experience.

The Panel also discussed the important of parish newsletters. Some of these had sections on district council issues and it was agreed that this should be encouraged.

Conclusions:

- (1) To include this issue on the agenda for the next meeting and to invite the newly appointed Communications Manager to the meeting.**
- (2) To request the appropriate Portfolio Holder gives approval to the DSP to make enquiries into offering a place of work experience to a local college student in the assistance of research into voter apathy.**

28. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 4.35p.m.

Moving Towards a Cashless Office **Paper by the E Gov. Working Group**

The E Gov. Working Group have studied the above subject and have produced the attached report for further consultation.

Their meeting of the 12th October made the following recommendations:

(1) To recommend to the Engagement DSP that they recommend to Cabinet that:

- **Cash payments stop before the opening of the Customer Services Centre;**
- **Allpay be introduced and direct debit payment dates be increased;**
- **A Council decision be made on this by mid December 2005.**

(2) This recommendation be presented by the Working Group to the DSP at its meeting on 17 November 2005.

(3) The Resources and Assets Portfolio Holder be involved in the preparation of this recommendation when final Gershon savings are calculated.

(4) The Corporate Director of Communications and the Communications Manager be invited to the next meeting of the Working Group to consider potential consultation and communication requirements.

MOVING TOWARDS A CASHLESS OFFICE

Paper by the E Government Working Group:

Councillor John Kirkman

Councillor Mike Williams

Councillor Mano Nadarajah

Councillor John Wilks

Moving towards a cashless office

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2005, a cash payment discussion paper was presented to the e-Government Steering Group outlining the current position on cash payments at South Kesteven District Council. It was agreed the E-government Working Group (EWG) should be asked to develop and bring back an appropriate strategy for payments in the future.
- 1.2 In July 2005 the EWG and officers visited High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council, two Councils who have moved to a cashless office. Appendix 1 includes notes from that meeting.
- 1.3 Investigations have included:
 - accurate analysis of cash payment costs at present
 - alternatives for car park revenue collection
 - alternatives to cash payments at Council offices
 - increased number of direct debit payment dates
 - cost benefit analysis.

2. Current position

- 2.1 Currently the Council provides a number of methods for the payment of council tax, rent, business rates and other associated income. These include direct debit, standing order, debit / credit card and bank giro, automated telephone payment, on-line payment and cash payment.
- 2.2 Approximately £22 million (cash and cheques) is collected and processed by our cash payment facilities at Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping. This represents:
 - 115,000 Council Tax and Business Rate payments
 - 61,000 Rent payments
 - about 18% out of a total revenue of approximately £90 million.
- 2.3 Automated telephone and on line payments were introduced in March 2004. £1.1 million was paid by these methods for the financial year 2004/2005.
- 2.4 Currently 33,000 customers pay their council tax, business rates and rent by direct debit. For council tax this represents nearly 65.2% of those customers who pay council tax (certain customers do not pay due to benefits and exemptions). For business rates 43.4% is paid by direct debit and 17.8% for rent.

3. Alternatives available

Car Parking

- 3.1 Currently South Kesteven District Council staff empty car park tins at the 12 car park sites in Grantham and Stamford. 6,240 tins are emptied each year. Two quotes have been received for collecting car park cash but both would result in higher costs than currently incurred – at least an extra £15,000 per annum. Quotes can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 An alternative method to reduce the amount of cash being handled would be to introduce machines that would accept debit / credit cards. These cost £3,000 each and therefore to introduce these to all our car parks would cost £72,000. This has been included in the service plan for car parks and the car parking manager will investigate the feasibility and demand for such a change.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reduced health and safety liability▪ More secure▪ Staff time saved could be better deployed in more productive enforcement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ More expensive.

- 3.3 Should we stop cash payments at Council offices, it would be advisable to contract out car park cash collection. The security contract could then be cancelled.

Cash Payments

- 3.4 In 2004/05 across the four offices we received on average 2,662 cash payments and 1,561 cheque payments per week. **Based on 2004/05 figures transactions cost £1.90 for Council Tax and £1.89 for rent.** These costings include variable and fixed costs.
- 3.5 Alternative methods in place to encourage customers to pay their bills without cash include:
- Internet payments – 24 hours – uptake has increased by 264% over last year
 - touch telephone – 24 hours – uptake has increased by 228% over last year
 - postal payments by cheque
 - direct Debit – current performance detailed in paragraph 3.10 (undertaking take up campaign to increase awareness of this payment method)
 - standing Order.

- 3.6 Some customers will want to pay cash. These customers could make payments using a service such as **allpay**. They would require a separate card for council tax and rents. Transaction costs are 45p for council tax (based on volumes of 50,000 to 100,000 per annum) and 45p for rents (based on volumes of 50,000 to 100,000 transactions per annum).
- 3.7 In 2004/05 only 972 cash payments were made for business rates. Therefore, there is not a business case to issue **allpay** cards for payment of business rates. This is likely to affect less than 100 businesses who will be asked to pay by direct debit, cheque or credit card.
- 3.7 Based on this the likely set up costs will be £4,500 for council tax and £2,600 for rents. A new or replacement card would cost 72p and the cards last for between three years.
- 3.8 **allpay** make their money by holding payments for ten working days. However, the day after the customer has made the payment at their local shop or Post Office a file is transmitted to the Council so records can be updated.
- 3.9 If all cash payers moved to paying by **allpay** there would be a significant savings. These are detailed in paragraph 7 onwards.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numerous outlets for customers to pay their bills – approximately 40,000 across the country (within South Kesteven 70 outlets) ▪ Longer opening hours ▪ Payments can be made on holiday in the UK ▪ Cheaper costs per transaction ▪ Customers can pay all their bills at one outlet ▪ Miscellaneous payments can be made using barcode technology ▪ Quick and easy ▪ Staff time saved could be better deployed in more customer services activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential reconciliation issues ▪ Less flexible in terms of issuing bills ▪ Potential staff redundancies

Direct Debit – additional dates

- 3.10 Direct Debit is the cheapest method of collecting council tax. Our current direct debit rate is 65.2%. Our neighbours, North Kesteven, have a direct debit rate of 71.6% and four payment dates. If we increased our direct debit

payers by 6.4% (3,152 taxpayers) this would equate to over 31,000 transactions.

3.11 Currently we have one payment date (1st of each month). The vast majority of East Midlands Councils have more than one payment date. In the case of Lincoln City Council they offer five payment dates.

3.12 We believe it is unlikely that current direct debit payers will move to the alternative dates offered. The following calculations give an indication of the interest that would be lost should council tax payers move to alternative dates. Although there is a risk current direct debit payers may move to a later date in the month we do not believe this will be significant; is it more likely new direct debit payers will opt for these new dates.

No of Council Tax payers	Monthly Council Tax	Payment date	Lost interest per annum
500	£100	15 th	£1,036
500	£100	25 th	£1,775
1,000	£100	15 th	£2,071
1,000	£100	25 th	£3,551
1,500	£100	15 th	£3,107
1,500	£100	25 th	£5,326
2,000	£100	15 th	£4,143
2,000	£100	25 th	£7,101
3,000	£100	15 th	£6,214
3,000	£100	25 th	£10,652

3.13 Should 3,152 taxpayers move from cash / cheque to direct debit payments a marginal saving of £44,000 per annum would be made when comparing our existing transactional costs of £1.90 and £0.50 respectively.

3.14 The advantages and disadvantages of increasing the number of direct debit payment dates are detailed below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase number of direct debit payers ▪ Improve flexibility for customers / customer service ▪ Increase collection rates ▪ Reduce number of cash payers ▪ Lower transaction costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of loss of interest (should current direct debit payers move from 1st of the month)

4. Sundry Debtors

- 4.1 An alternative to using **allpay** cards is to print a bar code on invoices, which can then be presented at **allpay** outlets with payments.
- 4.2 Cheques and card payments could still be accepted at Council offices.
- 4.3 Small amounts of cash payments (under £5) may be still required for sundry items such as photocopying.
- 4.4 A large amount of time is spent on selling green bags in the cash offices. There is no minimum quantity and these are sold at rural shops and post offices. It is suggested that these are sold in minimum quantities of ten and alternative outlets advertised.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 During the first two weeks in October we will be consulting with existing banking hall and area office users. A questionnaire has been handed out to each customer after they have made a payment. This included questions about alternative methods of payments they can use. The results will be available shortly.
- 5.2 If the Council would like to move to **allpay** we may need to consult with each secure tenant before a decision is made.

6. Human Resources implications

- 6.1 Currently six full time equivalent members of staff work on cashier related duties in the Grantham office. Should we move to all cash payments through **allpay**, a human resource strategy would be required to manage the staff implications in respect of such a change. Consultations with staff and the Unison are already taking place.
- 6.2 It is assumed area office personal would be assimilated into customer service advisors positions due to geographical reasons but this would be subject to further negotiation.

7. Cost benefit analysis

- 7.1 The total costs for cash collection & banking hall activities in 2004/05 was £617,000. The allocation of these costs is as follows:

	Actual £	%
Employees	366,000	59
Premises	126,000	20.5
Transport	3,000	0.5
Supplies & Services	68,000	11.0
Support	54,000	9.0

7.2 The table below shows the changes in the key cost drivers both for the option to outsource all cash, cheque and car parking collections (option1) and for the option to only outsource the cash payments (option2).

	Option1 £	Option 2 £
Employees	247,000	208,000
Premises	0	0
Transport	3,000	0
Supplies & Services	25,000	5,000
Support	0	0
Total reduction	275,000	213,000

7.3 Based on current transactions, the costs for moving to alternative methods of payment collection are summarised in the table below.

	Option1 £	Option2 £
<i>Allpay</i>	50,000	50,000
Car park cash collection	45,000	0
Cheque processing	53,000	0
Admin Contingency	15,000	15,000
Lost interest	6,000	6,000
Total cost	169,000	71,000
Total reduction	275,000	213,000
Net Cashable saving	106,000	142,000

7.4 The above analysis indicates that moving to a cashless office would generate cashable savings of over £100,000 per annum. There are however other real benefits that this move would be generated in terms of non-cashable efficiency savings.

7.5 The move to expand the level and quality of customer services at the area offices will require new and larger premises specifically at Stamford. These are estimated at an additional cost of £30,000 per annum. Also an extra 6 members of staff would be required at a cost of over £120,000. The move to a cashless office removes the need for the additional accommodation and allows for the overall savings to be re-invested in improved front line services. Likewise the provision of the new customer service centre in Grantham is being provided on the area currently occupied by the Banking Hall. The move to outsource cash payments results in a smaller requirement in physical build costs of around £90,000 (est). Carefull consideration needs to be given to exactly how these non-cashable savings are calculated but in any event they are substantial.

7.6 This leads us to re-state the benefits and drawbacks of changing payment options for our customers:

- increased payment outlets across district and nationwide
- longer opening hours for customers to make payments
- increased convenience because customers can pay all their bills at one outlet
- increased focus on Council's main business activities (less queuing at peaks)
- enhanced customer services centres across the district rather than cash offices in the South
- potentially increase council tax collection rates (direct debit)
- reduce Council liabilities on health and safety
- improved security on car park collection
- resistance to change
- customers may feel they haven't got the same level of confidentiality in shops

8. The way forward

We have three options for cash payments:

- stay as we are – however our new Customer Services Centre would require careful re-designing.
- accept cash payments at our offices and introduce **allpay**. This would duplicate processes and some costs.
- plan to stop cash payments before the opening of the customer services centre. **allpay** would need to be introduced and direct debit payment dates increased. To deliver this a Council decision will be required by mid December 2005. Move to 3 options of payment date for Council Tax direct debit payments

9. Conclusion

This study has highlighted alternatives to accepting cash at our own offices. This was looked at due to the introduction of the new customer services centre however potential savings of over £100,000 have been found as a result of this.

Officer contacts

Kevin Legg – Revenues Manager extension 6224
Marion Fox – Best Value Officer extension 6577
27 September 2005

Notes of visits to Derbyshire authorities

High Peak Borough Council – Population 90,000

1. Same service level a three offices: Buxton, Chapel-en-le-frith, Glossop
2. 75% of demand = Telephone
3. Call centre opened March 2003, Cash Office Closed March 2004.
4. Widened number of places where cash payments could be made.
5. Housing managed by High Peak Community Housing (ALMO), although telephone calls are taken by the Council's Customer Services Centre.
6. Customer Advisors advised customers of the changes in payment arrangements and the alternatives they were offering (on the customer side). This included helping customers complete direct debit forms.
7. Competitions/draws were used to encourage people to move to direct debit.
8. Sold benefits – for example: you don't have to come in...
9. Use Paypoint and Payzones – customer has a swipe card and is given a receipt. Customers can call in/telephone to obtain their balance
10. Cheques go to processing centre.
11. The only people who were upset were those that pay yearly as they missed the campaign detailing the changes. In hindsight, they could have been sent a letter.
12. Do take credit cards and petty cash up to £5 at customer services desks for services such as photocopies of plans.
13. Changed parking tickets and fines to make clear to customers cash not taken at Council offices.
14. Initially they had a few problems reconciling payments.
15. Changes have led to them having more time for recovery.
16. Issue rent payers with a payment calendar.
17. Generally, smooth transition to cashless office.
18. Opening times 8 – 8 from November 2005.
19. Customer Services deal with 80% of calls without referral.
20. CRM – Lynx Very customer friendly.

Derbyshire Dales District Council – Population 70, 000

1. 12 satellite points
2. In 2002 disposed of council houses - transactions reduced by 55%
3. Allpay introduced – available in over 130 outlets.
4. Stopped cash payments from April 2005.
5. 62% customers on direct debit - in May 2005 increased by 4%.
6. Have 3 payment dates 1, 15, 25th of each month.
7. No redundancies – natural reductions.
8. Allpay – people pay in village shops etc. Allpay charge the Council a flat rate per transaction (about 50p). Takes approx 10 days for money to be credited to relevant account.
9. No complaints.
10. Car park collection - done by Security Plus. Have 48 locations - charge £4 per box to empty. Company launder money (all used change) and money credited to council next day and notes recycled also. Asked for innovation proposals from potential contractors. Also collect from satellite points.
11. Cheques and notes also processed by Security Plus.
12. Saved £17k per annum including reduced insurance premiums.
13. No longer use local bank branch - cuts down their costs.
14. Rise in rent arrears at first. However, now they are lower than before.
15. Statement sent to tenants each year.
16. Rent paid fortnightly. Council Tax paid monthly.
17. Bills have barcodes on them, which can be scanned at payment points (shops etc).
18. Paperwork returned from satellite points two times per week – reconciled with bank statements.
19. Keeps local shops open.
20. Consulted with OAPs, community groups. Workshops and drop in sessions. Customer contact team, citizens' panel.
21. Transactions through area office: June 2004: 6000, June 05: 2500

22. Fear of change/unknown – communication starts in house.

23. PR very important. Didn't use incentives

Appendix 2

Details of quotes received and comparison with current costs

G4S Cash Services (UK) Ltd £10.93 per tin	Annual cost	£68,000
Securitas £9.60 per tin	Annual cost	£60,000
South Kesteven District Council staff (figure includes potential lost revenue from fines).	Annual cost	£45,000

Current Situation

Table to show Number of Payment by Type and Account

	Rent	Council Tax	Total
Cash	51,968	53,626	105,594
Cheque	9,474	55,504	64,978
Credit Card	148	2,160	2,308
Debit Card	1,482	5,284	6,766
Total	63,072	116,574	179,646

Proposal

Table to show estimated costs per annum for proposed cheque and car parking handling

£	Outsource	In-house
		-
Cheque	53,000	40,000
Car parking	60,000	45,000
Total	113,000	85,000

E-GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP

Notes of Meeting – 26th September 2005

Members Present: Councillor Kirkman
Councillor Paul Carpenter (observer)

Officers Present: Paul Stokes
Marion Fox

Apologies: Councillor Nadarajah
Councillor Wilks
Councillor Mike Williams
Ian Yates

Copy: Richard Wyles
Andy Nix

1. CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE DESIGN BOARDS

Paul Stokes presented the design boards which Paragon has done for the customer services centre.

The following recommendations/suggestions were made by the Councillors:

- Swivel screens so they can be turned to face customers
- Plasma screens to have tv option
- If cashless, sign to say 'no cash in this area'
- Cameras for customer services supervisor to manage queues
- Customer request facility in planned viewing area
- Carpet may get dirty at the entrance
- Needs to be homely with plants
- Calm down colours – particularly the green
- Group would like input on the materials
- Repair and maintenance costs that would have been used to be diverted to CSC budget
- Abbey gardens changes not to come from Modernisation budget

The following points were confirmed:

- Abbey Gardens will need to be revamped
- Arts Centre deliveries will need to be managed/diverted
- £400k budget – will use all of this

The group would like to be kept informed on what will happen to the 'dormant' areas.

E-GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP

Notes of Meeting:	12 th October 2005
Members Present:	Councillor Nadarajah Councillor Wilks Councillor Carpenter (observer)
Officers Present:	Ian Yates Marion Fox Rebecca Chadwick
Apologies:	Councillor Mike Williams Councillor Kirkman Kevin Legg

1. Notes of the Meeting Held on 26th September 2005

The notes of the working group meeting held on 26th September 2005 were circulated. As only one member had been present, the working group ratified the conclusion of that meeting, subject to the inclusion that at the customer services centre, speakers be placed within the waiting area rather than behind the operatives.

2. Cash Collection Update

The "Moving Towards a Cashless Office" report, having been updated from the last meeting, was circulated. The transaction cost at paragraph 3.4 had been revised. The main addition to the paper was a cost benefit analysis at paragraph 7 and the officers gave further details on how the costs and savings for cash collection and banking hall services had been calculated. It became apparent that various amendments were required to reflect the real savings to the tax payer, particularly a further look at a breakdown of the supplies & services savings and the addition of a "Gershon" column. This was investigated during the meeting and the potential savings recalculated. How Gershon cashable and non-cashable savings could be achieved was clarified and this was discussed in light of cash collection. The group considered the cashable savings alongside the costs of moving to a cashless office. It was noted that enhanced customer service would not be able to be provided if the cash offices remained as they were. Considerable non-cashable savings would be achieved because the area cash offices could be converted into customer service centres thereby eliminating the need to procure new premises. Refurbishment costs, however, would be required.

Paragraph 7.4 regarding the general benefits of changing payment options was discussed and amendments made accordingly.

Marion Fox spoke about the consultation questionnaire referred to at paragraph 5. There had been a very high response already and analysis

would be provided after the closing date of 18th October 2005. It was noted that as questionnaires were being collected at cash offices, responses might be biased. CMT had also commented that specific consultation with tenants might be required in case their contracts were affected. Further specific consultation would also be required on the introduction of any specific alternative payment options. Members discussed this with the officers and it was agreed that consultation with the tenant compacts should be arranged if any changes were to be made.

The approach to consultation and communication to the public was discussed. A general message was that the Council would be offering an increased choice in payment methods. The 'first day of the month' rush to pay bills could be decreased and providing payment at the local shops could enable people to pay other non-Council bills as well as utilities bills in one visit. Potential for negative media coverage was also considered. It was suggested that significant customer focus was required, especially for those members of the public who may have concerns. Whether to continue with one cash payment point at the customer services centre was considered but generally rejected.

The working group discussed making a recommendation to the Engagement DSP. The option of making no changes to cash collection was analysed first but it was considered that there would be no benefits from doing this. The introduction of 'allpay' alongside cash payments would incur considerable costs without savings. It would also not be financially viable to hold a pilot. The option to stop cash payments before the opening of the customer services centre with the introduction of 'allpay' and an increase in direct debit dates was considered and endorsed by the group. This is because it would prepare the ground for the customer service centre. In light of Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, it would also enable tenants to move to a more efficient payment method and there would be less impact on them when the stock transferred. It was requested that a project delivery timetable be included with this recommendation. It was suggested that the lead member from Matlock Borough Council could be invited to help with any presentations or communication.

The group also discussed making a presentation to Council, which would provide a general update on the modernisation agenda. It was agreed that this take place on 27th October 2005 and that the Portfolio Holder be asked to introduce it.

Conclusions:

(1) To recommend to the Engagement DSP that they recommend to Cabinet that:

- **cash payments stop before the opening of the customer services centre;**
- **Allpay be introduced and direct debit payment dates be increased;**

- **A full Council decision be made on this by mid December 2005.**
- (2) This recommendation be presented by the working group to the DSP at its meeting on 17th November 2005.**
- (3) The Resources and Assets Portfolio Holder be involved in the preparation of this recommendation when final Gershon savings are calculated.**
- (4) The Corporate Director of Communications and the Communications Manager be invited to the next meeting of the working group to consider potential consultation and communication requirements.**

3. Project Update

Ian Yates reported that the Council had presently achieved 87% of the BVPI 157 100% target. He was confident that the final target would be achieved. An IDeA support officer had met with officers at the Council and said that authorities having met 90% would not require inspection. This did not, however, reflect the views expressed by the ODPM. Current work involved looking at refreshing the website content under Crystalmark English guidelines and service managers taking ownership.

Key areas of work on priority outcomes were: e-procurement, GIS and a unique reference number system for acknowledgement of e-mails. There would be a formal update on this at a future meeting.

The Environmental Health Service (EHS) go-live still had a few issues but these were being resolved. It had been suggested that calls should be recorded and therefore this was being included in the relevant service plan. Awareness training for advisors on equalities information was also being worked on, as this had been unpopular with the public. Ian Yates also agreed to provide information on the time taken to respond fully to enquiries. He added that customer service standards monitoring did not have a standard for responding to a request on the telephone and this would be looked into. EDRMS mail scanning was currently being piloted in EHS. The process was explained.

Further updates were provided on waste collection and the development of the back office split with Revenues Services.

MEMBERS' IT WORKING GROUP

Members: Howard
Pease
Fisher
Mrs Woods
Bisnauthsing
Nadarajah
Moore
Kerr

Meeting date: 22nd September 2005

Members Present: Nadarajah
Mrs Woods
Bisnauthsing
Moore

Officers Present: Rebecca Chadwick
Ian Pick

1. Introduction and General Issues

Cllr Nadarajah clarified that the group had been established to explore how members could be encouraged to use their laptops. Initial thoughts were that there may be a fear of use or a fear of damaging the laptop. Those who did use their laptop may be discouraged from increased use because of problems with emails and access to documents. Those members present spoke on their own individual problems with using their laptops.

There had been some difficulty in logging on to systems and Ian Pick confirmed that ICT was working on providing a simple interface for users. He demonstrated the broadband version on a laptop. This was being worked on for analogue and dial-up systems, both of which could be demonstrated if required.

Conclusion (1) – to support the implementation of a simple menu style interface for members' laptops.

Further discussion on individual problems continued. One member spoke about their success in using the laptop for modern.gov access but could not print documents. There had also been an abundance of 'spam' emails about which members were very concerned. It was suggested that there should be an official reporting and repair system for members' laptops but it was also considered that there may be an issue regarding communication of what members can do when they have difficulty or problems with their laptops. It was also commented that it was important to have good connection with parish councils, although it was noted that any technical problems experienced by other organisations could not be solved by the district council.

Conclusion (2) – Individual councillors seem to have their own problems with using their laptops and therefore need addressing individually.

The group discussed briefly that it was sometimes difficult to communicate a problem to ICT because of members' lack of understanding.

Conclusion (3) – to recommend that members print or write out error messages to assist in the communication to ICT of problems with laptops.

The group also queried the Government's position with regard to members' use of IT but this was not certain.

Conclusion (4) – Rebecca Chadwick to research Government policy on member use of IT and whether any funding was available for training.

2. Councillors' Survey 2005: Your Laptop

Ian Pick circulated initial analysis from the Councillors' Survey 2005: Your Laptop. There had been a good response rate but those members who had not responded needed reaching. The survey results could be used as a starting point to find out not only why some members did not use their laptop but why some used it only occasionally.

Conclusion (5) – Identify those members who had not responded to the survey and approach them individually by setting up a meeting with the member and an appointed mentor from the working group.

Conclusion (6) – Councillor Bisnauthsing to be the appointed mentor and give suggested questions/approaches to Rebecca Chadwick before the next working group meeting.

Conclusion (7) – that further analysis of the survey be presented in graphical format at the next meeting of the working group.

3. Broadband

The group identified that one of the main factors discouraging members from using their laptop was that dial up was too slow thereby causing significant frustration. Broadband connection resolved the problems associated with dial-up but this did come at a cost. Members believed that the benefits far outweighed this cost. The working group would have to evidence the requirements for broadband and that it would encourage members' use of their laptop. Members noted that not all broadband suppliers provided the required connections.

Conclusion (8) – Ian Pick to provide at the next working group meeting a list of those members with broadband access and those converted to the new system.

Conclusion (9) – Members should be encouraged to receive Broadband connection. This could be achieved by a demonstration showing dial-up alongside Broadband.

Conclusion (10) – To investigate whether or not other authorities finance members' Broadband access and whether or not a corporate deal could be reached with a supplier.

Conclusion (11) – Ian Pick be asked to email or write to all members asking them to contact ICT before signing up to a Broadband connection.

4. Committee Papers

The group discussed access to committee papers via modern.gov. Although this system provided good access, most members still preferred to read through paper copies. It was suggested that members did not require paper copies for all meetings, perhaps only those which they attended.

Conclusion (12) – Rebecca Chadwick to determine cost of printing committee papers to compare with modern.gov publication. This could then be used to show members the real cost of posting and sending agendas and hence the savings that could be achieved via laptop use.

Members discussed their experiences of using modern.gov and saving documents on their laptops. Ian Pick reminded members that saving information on laptops required backup and that synchronisation on the main server was required.

Conclusion (13) – Ian Pick to confirm storage within Outlook on members' laptops and whether members can set up directories.

5. Training

Members discussed training sessions they had undertaken. Whilst these had been satisfactory, it was considered that further support was required. One member had undergone a local college course and recommended that other members did the same as a follow up to in-house training. Initial thoughts on providing training included that it be held in the Council Chamber or in smaller sessions. Members should use their own laptops during 'discovery learning' training sessions. It was acknowledged that training would be a two-stage process; first gaining confidence and then concentrating on technical issues. Training should also be supported by guidance in writing or on a CDROM showing FAQs and correct procedures. Training could be provided by officers and members as it was essential to send out a positive and supportive message.

6. Next Meeting

20th October 2005, 3pm. Location to be confirmed.

Agenda – Analysis from Members' Survey – presentation from Ian Pick
Broadband – Ian Pick and Rebecca Chadwick to provide feedback as above
Strategy for Encouraging Members' Use of ICT including modern.gov–
members to discuss
Feedback on Storage in Outlook – Ian Pick to clarify
Feedback on Government Policy and Financial Support for Training – Rebecca
Chadwick to report

Conclusion (14) – Given that those members who had attended this meeting were reasonable confident with using their laptops, those members who had not attended the meeting be encouraged to attend the next meeting.

MEMBERS' IT WORKING GROUP

Meeting date: 20th October 2005

Members Present: Councillor Bisnauthsing
Councillor Howard
Councillor Kerr
Councillor Moore
Councillor Nadarajah
Councillor Mrs Woods

Officers Present: Ian Pick
Joyce Slater
Rebecca Chadwick

1. NOTES FROM LAST MEETING

These were noted and approved.

2. ANALYSIS FROM MEMBERS' SURVEY

Ian Pick circulated an updated analysis of responses to the Councillor Laptop 2005 survey because a few more had been returned. Written responses were also circulated. The response rate was now 73.7% and Ian gave a presentation on the results. The working group was encouraged that 74% members who responded indicated that they used their laptop at least once a week. 4 responders, however, never used their laptop. It was also encouraging that 87% connected to the office network from home. It was suggested that this figure could be increased if more members had broadband access. The working group acknowledged, however, that the 20% who "did not bother" faced a number of issues. Ian informed the group that only 13% used broadband.

A critical factor in members' use of their laptops was the connection response time. Over half said that it was poor or very poor. Members of the group spoke about their personal experience of slow connection time. Ian advised that conversion to the new system would resolve this to a certain extent. Members commented that the conversion of laptops seemed to be taking a long time. Joyce Slater explained this situation and Ian stated that out of the 15 who had not responded to the questionnaire, 7 had been contacted about being converted to the new system leaving 6 who had had no contact. A member suggested that feedback was required on those members who seemed impossible to reach.

Conclusion (1) – to ask the Training Manager to provide a laptop conversion schedule to the working group so that progress can be monitored.

Ian Pick went on to show whom members contacted when they had a problem with their laptop. 3% contacted their IT Buddy, 62% the helpdesk, 22% a particular IT Officer and 13% the Training Manager. It was promising to see that the helpdesk was used the most. Too many members, however, were still contacting a particular officer. The fact that 87% were pleased with the speed of response and 94% pleased with the quality of service from the help desk was evidence that the helpdesk should be used. This was affirmed by the group who went on to discuss how the helpdesk could be promoted. Ian

also emphasised that members should only bring their laptops into the office for system conversion when they are requested to do so.

Conclusion (2) – to recommend that stickers be placed on members’ laptops giving the IT helpdesk telephone number.

One member spoke of the difficulties when, living some distance from the Grantham offices, members had far to travel to bring their laptops to Grantham when a problem arose. Joyce Slater reminded the group that members could leave their laptop at an area office to be collected by the courier.

Responses regarding training were considered. Joyce stated that member guidance notes had been completed for using modern.gov and were being checked by a Portfolio Holder. Cllr Nadarajah added that using modern.gov would feature in the E-Government Working Group’s presentation at the next Council meeting. Satisfaction with training was high but 23% were unable to attend training offered to them. There had been significant wastage as a result of this. Joyce explained that training provided in the community had been encouraged and funded but places were limited. One member stated that local training, from his experience, had been too advanced and that he needed basic training specific to using his laptop. This was reiterated by the other members who went on to discuss the suggestion at the previous working group meeting that a CDROM be provided with a video of how to complete certain things on the laptop.

The group discussed various issues raised in the presentation: passwords, fingerprint recognition, certificates for laptop identification. In the discussion, a member present who had refused the offer of a laptop, explained that he considered using one to be too time consuming; he, like most other members, already received a significant number of telephone calls. He commented that people in his ward wanted to speak to their Councillor personally, not via email.

The group discussed whether or not members needed paper copies of all agendas and there was a brief discussion on modern.gov. Some members suggested that they could receive a few more agendas via modern.gov and so it was recommended that all members be asked if they would like to change how they receive their agendas.

Conclusion (3) – Rebecca Chadwick to update member agenda distribution list.

3. BROADBAND

As suggested at the previous meeting, Ian had drafted a letter to members regarding Broadband access. A draft copy was circulated and a few minor amendments suggested. One member commented that the Council’s website should appear on letterhead. Joyce mentioned that she thought this was something the newly appointed Communications Manager was looking into.

Conclusion (4) – to support the posting of a letter to all members regarding broadband access from their homes.

The members questioned Ian on his understanding of the benefits of broadband access. He stated that it would increase access speed and ease of use.

Rebecca Chadwick reported on the provision of broadband access by Lincolnshire County Council, who had funded a corporate annual contract for members’ broadband

access. Rebecca offered to invite a representative from the county to speak to the working group but members suggested that they would be satisfied with just paperwork that had been provided to the county council.

Conclusion (5) – Rebecca Chadwick to investigate further Lincolnshire County Council broadband provision and report back at the next working group meeting.

4. FEEDBACK ON STORAGE IN OUTLOOK

Ian Pick reported on mailbox sizes. With the old system (i.e. copy on server), sending was limited to 57 megabytes but there was no restriction on receiving emails. On the new there were no limits as data was stored locally. A copy, however, was retained on the server for thirty days. With regard to offline folders, Ian stated that if these were not synchronised, they would not be saved on the server. If members wanted to create a subfolder on outlook, they needed to contact ICT.

Ian stressed the need for members to be aware of doing backups, especially as there was no facility for backups on the server for folders. Various backup methods were discussed. Email archiving was currently being looked into.

Conclusion (6) – Ian Pick to report back on backing up sent emails.

5. ENCOURAGING MEMBERS' USE OF ICT

There had been considerable discussion on member training as this, together with broadband access, was seen as a key issue in encouraging members to use their laptops. Various suggestions for training were made:

- Working group members could assist with training, similar to previous IT Buddies. (Work would be required on improving this system should it continue);
- One-on-one training, despite the outcome of a previous scrutiny review, and although it was labour intensive, was an effective method of training. Small group training may resolve cost issue;
- Training should be provided on an individual needs basis;
- Training for modern.gov should be provided specifically;
- Training sessions should be arranged to co-ordinate with council/committee meetings on the same day to reduce travelling for members;
- Training sessions should be no longer than 2 hours;

The working group also considered a report on the cost of printing and posting committee agendas. It was acknowledged that not all expenditure would be reduced, as by law the council was still required to post the meeting summons to members. Costs were still significant and savings could be achieved.

Joyce Slater also gave further information on previous training exercises. Pre-election training had not been so well attended but it was suggested that this would become more relevant as potential members should be aware that they would be expected to use a laptop. Funding had been provided for members to attend local courses. An external trainer had also been used until the trainer had moved away. Appointing a replacement had not been successful as a trainer needs a certain affinity with the type of work undertaken by elected members. Short courses had also been run in a number of formats. Difficulties with these had been attendance and differing abilities preventing progress for some members.

An E-Government requirement was that IT E-learning skills should be provided on the Council's intranet. This was currently being worked on and would eventually provide the European Computer Driving Licence course.

Conclusion (7) – To make the following recommendation to the Engagement DSP:

That training for members on the use of ICT be provided through a structured portfolio of training options to cater for the variety of training needs. This to include:

- **One-on-one training**
- **Small groups**
- **Self study CDROMS with video demonstrations**
- **IT Buddies (with support)**
- **Supported learning playdays**
- **An integrated approach to training e.g. 'laptop month'**

Priority be given to those with most difficulties in using their laptop and new users. Level of previous training will not affect the prioritisation of future training.

Training to be provided, where possible and suitable, on days when committee meetings are scheduled to enable members to attend both in one visit to the council offices.

6. FEEDBACK ON GOVERNMENT POLICY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TRAINING

Rebecca Chadwick reported that there was no Government policy that members were required to use laptops and that there was no specific mention of broadband. There was only a general encouragement of members' use of IT through the ODPM National Strategy for Local E-Government. There was currently no external funds for training.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8th November 2005, 3.00p.m. – Members' Lounge

Agenda items:

- Broadband – to consider LCC provision and form a recommendation
- Further research on why members are reluctant to use laptops
- To form a final set of recommendations on training.
- IP to report back on data storage and backup.
- Cost of sending committee agendas on CD.



BOURNE LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the MEETING of the BOURNE LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 7th September 2005 at the Bourne Corn Exchange.

PRESENT:

- Councillor Teri Bryant** (Chairman) South Kesteven District Council
- LCC Councillors:** Councillor Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Croft
- SKDC Councillors:** Councillor Auger
Councillor Mrs Cartwright
Councillor Miss Channell (Greatford Parish Council)
Councillor Fines (Bourne Town Council)
Councillor Mrs Neal
Councillor Nicholson (Thurlby Parish Council)
Councillor John Smith (Bourne Town Council)
Councillor Mrs Smith (Bourne Town Council)
- LCC Officers:** Brian Thompson – Divisional Highways Manager
- SKDC Officers:** John Blair – Director of Finance & Strategic Resources
Sally Marshall – Director of Regulatory Services
Mike Sibthorp – Head of Planning Policy & Economic Regeneration
John Slater – Head of Leisure & Cultural Services
Garry Knighton – Head of Waste & Contract Services
Dawn Temple – Sustainable Waste Management Policy Officer
Paul Morrison – Scrutiny Officer
Lucy Bonshor – Democratic Officer
- Co-opted Members:** Ivan Fuller – Bourne Town Centre Management Partnership
Julia Lister
- Parish Councillors:** Councillor Martin Brebner - Greatford
Councillor Gordon Lack – Morton & Hanthorpe
Councillor Pet Moisey – Bourne Town Council
Councillor Richard Turpin – Careby, Aunby & Holywell
Councillor George Whitaker – Toft, Lound & Manthorpe
Councillor Alan Williams – Haconby & Stainfield

Bourne Tenants' Compact: Mr T Kelby

17 members of the public and one member of the press

Apologies: Councillor Horn (LCC), Councillor R Rose (Thurlby PC), Councillor Kirkman (SKDC), Councillor Fisher (SKDC), Mr Gillat

Parishes not represented: Braceborough & Wilsthorpe, Carlby, Counthorpe & Creeton, Little Bytham, Witham on the Hill

11. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman, Councillor Bryant welcomed those present to the meeting and reminded everyone that the LAA was an opportunity for the three tiers of government, county, district and parish to talk together it was not a forum for public debate. Questions would be answered by the relevant officers where appropriate and he asked that if members of the public had questions on topics which were on the agenda could they raise the questions when the item was discussed.

12. Public Open Forum

No questions were asked at this time.

13. Minutes of meeting – 13th June 2005

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2005 were accepted subject to the amendment of minute 2 that the A151 should read Bourne to Spalding.

14. Membership

The Chairman referred to the membership of the LAA and asked those members present to try and encourage hard to reach groups to be represented on the LAA.

15. Bourne Relief Road and Bypass

Brian Thompson from Lincolnshire County Council updated members on the current situation. Although the road was ready for use negotiations between Allison Homes and the County Council were still on going concerning the school provision. Until this matter was resolved Allisons were unwilling to sign the road over, therefore the County Council's hands were tied as Allisons had paid for the road to be built and owned the land. The issue of a compulsory purchase order which had been raised by the MP for the area Quentin Davies was raised but Mr Thompson indicated that the process required for a compulsory purchase order could take up to 18 months and was not a solution. The Chairman asked if the LAA could assist in helping to get the road opened. Mr Thompson indicated that many of the Bourne residents had e-mailed Allisons concerning the road and this had made some headway. It

was suggested that the LAA send a letter to Allisons pressuring them to open the road sooner rather than later.

A question was asked about how quick the road could be opened once the necessary paperwork had been signed. Mr Thompson replied that although some vandalism had recently taken place on the road the work should be rectified by Allisons and it would be a matter of days for the road to be opened.

A member of the LAA then posed the question of using the road as a toll road but this elicited a negative response from another member of the LAA and the Chairman asked that both members contact him in order that the letter sent to Allisons could take account of the relevant views of the LAA.

A further comment was made about the contents of the Section 106 Agreement and the school provision to which the Chairman indicated that the County Council would discuss the matter.

It was **AGREED** that,

The Bourne Local Area Assembly send a letter to Allisons expressing their concerns about the continued closure of the new road.

16. Lincolnshire County Council Local Transport Plan Consultation Document

Mr Thompson referred to the last meeting of the LAA and the Lincolnshire County Council's Local Transport Consultation Document. He informed members that the A15 through Bourne and the A15 Sleaford to Deepings were now included on the list of major schemes. However, in the past three weeks the Government had changed the rules from carrying out one scheme every five years to having one money pot for the whole of the East Midlands Region. This would mean a hard fight to get any of the £71m as the schemes would be up against those for Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire. It maybe that the County would be looking towards the private sector for finance as was the case with the southwest quadrant which was built using private finance.

17. Bourne Town Centre Redevelopment

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in relation to this item by virtue of his membership of a club located within the redevelopment area. The Chairman deemed that his interest was not prejudicial and he was allowed to remain in the meeting.

Ivan Fuller, the Bourne Town Centre Co-ordinator indicated that he had nothing further to report following the last meeting. Although work was progressing "behind the scenes", he had no further information for the LAA. The Chairman asked if it was possible to give any timeframes. Mr Fuller replied that hopefully a planning application would be submitted towards the

end of the year following that, if all goes well, work should start in 12 – 15 months time.

18. Local Development Framework – Issues and Options Paper

Mike Sibthorp, Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration updated members on the progress of the Local Development Framework (LDF). He outlined the preparation of the Local Development Framework and what the next stage would be.

He set the scene for the Issues and Options consultation paper and explained the parameters in which it was set. Mainly the document was made up of many questions asking the public for their views on various aspects of planning for the next 15 years. More information was contained on developing communities in a sustainable fashion although sustainability meant different things to different people depending upon where they lived. The document would contain questions asking where development should be taking place, where it should be encouraged/discouraged, where open spaces should be protected, how the wider community can be involved, what should Section 106 Agreements contain such as wider community benefits. Other sections would deal with brownfield/Greenfield sites, housing issues, affordable housing, car parking, employment, recreation/leisure, allotments, the natural environment, flood risk issues, renewable energy, conservation areas and the final issues would deal with infrastructure.

The document would be issued shortly and would be published on the website. Parish Councils would be notified and exhibitions would be held around the district to encourage people to access the document and make their views known.

The Chairman urged member of the public to look at the document and express their views. Comments were then made about the interim housing strategy and how this fitted in with the LDF to which Mike Sibthorp replied. A member then asked about changes to the document over the 15 year period and Mr Sibthorp replied that the document was flexible and there would be an opportunity each year to review and amend the document where necessary. Consultation would take place over six weeks to which a member of one of the Parish Council's asked if this could be extended to 12 weeks. Mr Sibthorp indicated that consultation had to be over a minimum of six weeks and therefore there was the possibility that this could be extended.

The Chairman concluded by stating that the document was very thick and it was likely that small sections would be distributed to different areas but it was a very interesting document and he encouraged "Mr & Mrs Average" to express their views.

19. County, District and Parish Intentions for the 2006/07 Budget

John Blair, the Director of Finance and Strategic Resources in a presentation informed the LAA that the district council had begun the process of estimating the budget for next year.

As members of the LAA knew the council tax collect by SKDC also included the County Council, Police and Parishes all different tiers, all with different issues. Although some of the slides shown included figures from the Police and the County Council Mr Blair stated that he could only answer questions pertaining to the district councils specific budget not the other two.

He broke down the average band D council tax and showed members how this was made up between the County Council, Police, District Council and Parishes. The parish council's money ranged for £0 - £50 and this depended upon the locality of the Parish. He stated that South Kesteven had the second lowest level of council tax across the country, the lowest being East Lindsey. He then outlined to members how external finance from the government affected budget setting and what capping meant, referring to the eight authorities that had been capped this year, one for asking for only an extra 4pence a week on the council tax above the capping level.

He then spoke about the revaluation of properties for the council tax banding and indicated that this could change the budget setting but at this stage no details were known. The missing millions campaign was then touched on followed by the efficiency savings that the Council had to make over the next three years. Basically the council had to do more for less and its performance on how it used the money was looked at by the Audit Commission who would look at the value for money (VFM) aspect.

Mr Blair then referred to the key issues affecting the County Council such as schools funding and the Police who were requesting an increase in resources of £11m as Lincolnshire Police were facing big problems at the Chief Constable and Treasurer had indicated at a previous meeting.

Factors that faced the district council were the impact of the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) and the Ground Maintenance Contract which was due to go out to tender. Currently this contract was for £850,000 but this could increase dramatically and it cut across many services.

Mr Blair then spoke on efficiency savings questions to be asked were "where should the council disinvest of invest?" "Who should pay?" "What is the balance between the two?"

Business rates were then mentioned which the council collects on behalf of the government. A new scheme was currently being proposed whereby any growth in business rate value would mean that the district council would retain some of the money for local services rather than the government receiving it all. Other grants that the council had received over the year were also identified. Mr Blair concluded by saying that although it was early days he

would appreciate any feedback that the LAA had on district and parish budgets.

Questions and comments were then made about education and how this affected the precept, the missing millions campaign and why council tax increased by four times the rate of inflation to which Mr Blair replied.

20. Stock Option Appraisal

The Director of Regulatory Services, Sally Marshall introduced herself to the LAA and gave a presentation on Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT). She informed the LAA what the current position was and what the next steps would be. The Council was required by the government to undertake the Stock Option Appraisal and this was carried out between last September and June this year. The Council had to look ahead to the next 30 years in connection with its housing stock which had to be of a decent homes standard. The key priorities were how was the council to sustain its stock over the next 30 years. She then gave a background to the Stock Option Appraisal Commission (SOAC) and how this was comprised and the decision that was reached by the SOAC following consultations with tenants and TOAG. She referred to the 4 options that the council had and how this was narrowed down to two with the preferred option of the SOAC being stock transfer. Following consultations that had taken place the tenants had indicated that they wanted an enhanced service at least two star, with aspirations including extra security and better sheltered accommodation. A considerable amount of investment was required and by 2012 the council would no longer be able to sustain its current service to include the aspirations required by tenants.

Tenants wanted to be involved in policy decisions and Miss Marshall went on to outline how the LSVT board would be comprised.

The Government Office for the East Midlands had signed off the preferred option of stock transfer which was critical for the next steps to be made. The next step was to employ consultants and for the members and tenants to shape and form the formal offer which would be going out to all tenants and would be carried out independently of the Council on whether the stock would be transferred or remain with the Council. A lot of work was yet to be carried out with tenant participation being paramount in the decisions that were made before a formal offer was put to each tenant.

Comments were then made about the preferred option to transfer the stock with the Bourne Tenant Representative indicating that some tenants did not understand what Stock Option Appraisal (SOA) meant and indicated that it was a lot of money to be spent on something that in his view wasn't "broken". Miss Marshall indicated that there would be no direct cost unless there was a negative ballot (one where the tenants decided that they did not want to transfer the housing stock ownership from SKDC) and the government had directed the Council to carryout the SOA. Another LAA member raised the issue of affordable housing and asked if the capital receipt received if the stock was transferred to a new landlord would cover the cost of building

houses for those on the waiting list. Miss Marshall said that currently the waiting list was being reviewed as it stood at 7,000 and assessments needed to be made on the current housing need. However, if indeed the waiting list was for 7,000 it was unlikely that the capital receipts received if the stock was transferred would cover the building of the houses. A question from the public referred to the likely doubling of rent if stock was transferred and the Director of Strategic and Financial Resources stated that currently the rent was being restructured and by 2012 the way in which rent was calculated would be the same for both local authorities and housing associations. Another question from the public referred to possible lack of repairs and Miss Marshall said that this would be incorporated into the offer made to tenants and the housing association would have to abide by the offer. She reminded tenants that there was an independent tenant advisor available who could answer questions but there was a lot of work still to be carried out before any formal offer was made to tenants.

21. Consultation on Proposed Changes to Waste Collection

The Head of Waste and Contract Services, Garry Knighton, gave a short presentation on the District Council's proposal to review how it delivers its waste management service. Consultations were shortly to take place and he outlined to the LAA the various factors that influenced how waste was collected from the EU Landfill Directive to the Environmental Protection Act. Landfill sites would no longer be used to the extent that they had in the past and the emphasis was on recycling. Recycling had been identified as a priority A of the Council and Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) issued by the Government set targets which Councils must achieve in recycling.

He outlined to the LAA the current options on which the public would be consulted on and the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Option 1 – continue with black bag and box option with an alternate fortnightly collection to include side waste.

Option 2 – two wheelie bin collection alternate weeks no side waste collection.

Questions were asked about the proposals including the cost of having wheelie bins and the current situation concerning the glass collection scheme in Thurlby, Baston and Langtoft to which the Head of Waste and Contract Services replied.

As an indication of the LAA views he asked for a show of hands for each option. Option 2 seemed to be the preferred option.

22. Leisure Trusts

The Head of Leisure Services briefly outlined to members the possibility that management of the Leisure Services could be transferred to a Leisure Trust. There could be one or numerous trusts which were management companies limited by guarantee and which held charitable status. The advantages of

having Leisure Trusts were savings on National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and tax as well as savings on other support service costs. By transferring to a Leisure Trusts savings could be made of £317,000 per annum on NNDR and £100,000 on tax. Consultations would shortly be carried out and the Head of Leisure and Cultural stated that it was a good opportunity for the community to get involved as representatives on the Trust board had to come from the community and he urged people to take an interest in the proposal.

23. Matters that the LAA would like to consider at future meetings

Road sign visibility in Bourne

24. Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next meeting to be held at 7pm on Wednesday 11th January 2006 in the Corn Exchange.

25. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.



STAMFORD LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the MEETING of the STAMFORD LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY held at 7.00pm on Thursday 22nd September 2005 at Stamford Town Hall.

PRESENT:

Councillor Ray Auger
South Kesteven District Council

in the Chair

Lincolnshire County Councillors

Councillor Colin Helstrip
(Stamford West)
Councillor Thomas M Trollope-Bellew
(Stamford Rural)

SKDC Councillors

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing*
Councillor David Brailsford
Councillor Frances Cartwright
Councillor Bob Conboy
Councillor Joyce Gaffigan
Councillor Maureen Jalili*
Councillor Andrew Moore
Councillor Bob Sandall*
Councillor Azar Woods*
*also representing Stamford Town Council

Stamford Town Council

Councillor John Judge (Mayor)
Councillor Maureen Riley
Councillor Peter Stearn

Tenant Compact Representatives

Councillor Ray Lee (Compact South)*
Maurice Bloodworth (District Compact)

**Stamford Chamber of Trade
Stamford YMCA
Warren Keep Residents'
Association**

Neil Scholes
Heath Monaghan

Ann Sutherland

SKDC Officers

John Pell (Director of Community Services)
Chris Sharp (Corporate Manager HR)
Garry Knighton (Head of Waste & Contract Services)
Dawn Temple (Recycling Officer)

Paul Morrison (Scrutiny Officer)
Lena Shuttlewood (Member Services Manager)

**Peterborough & Stamford NHS
Hospital Trust**

Mandy Renton
Bill Stevenson

14 members of the public

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Ashbury (Stamford Town Council), Councillor Teri Bryant (SKDC and Stamford Town Council), Catherine Hammant (Stamford Vision), Mrs Mary Patrick (Vice Chair District Compact), and Councillor George Waterhouse (SKDC)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Stamford LAA and advised that he intended to impose a guillotine and close the meeting at 9.30pm.

2. Minutes of the Meeting – 19th May 2005

Subject to recording Catherine Hammant's apologies for absence, the minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2005 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Public Forum

(1) Question from Mr George Gough

Mr Gough referred to a trust fund of £5 million which had been bequeathed to the town for play grounds. He asked why had nothing been done with this money and what interest had accrued.

The Mayor of Stamford, Councillor Judge replied that Mr Gough was referring to the Skells Trust of which the Stamford Town Councillors were the Trustees. He explained that anyone could apply for a grant from the trust subject to meeting the necessary criteria for funding. Applications would be considered by the Town Council at a special Skells Trust meeting. Councillor Stearn corrected that the amount left in the will was nothing like the £5 million Mr Gough had quoted. In fact it had been around £70,000 when the Trust had been established in the 1960's. The fund earned approximately £40,000 per year which was available for grant award. Councillors Bisnauthsing and Wood gave examples of local projects which had benefited from funding and these were not limited just to recreation areas. Local churches and community groups had been awarded grants in the past. Councillor Judge explained that application forms were available from the Town Clerk who could advise on the rules of the Trust and provide information on the current interest earned on the Trust's funds. Mr Gough indicated he was satisfied with the response he had received.

[The Chairman advised the meeting that he had received a letter from Mr Johnson of Austin Street, Stamford, but that he would respond to the author at a later stage.]

4. Hospital Provision in Stamford

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mandy Renton, General Manager of Peterborough & Stamford Hospitals NHS Trust and her colleague Mr Bill Stevenson. The LAA had previously requested a representative from the Hospitals Trust to attend the meeting to answer questions of local concern.

Mandy Renton gave a short presentation to the meeting in which she outlined the range of services and facilities provided at Stamford hospital, how well they were used, and the specialties which took place in the operating theatre and procedure room. The meeting heard that over 3,600 procedures were carried out at the hospital each year. However, surgical procedures in the NHS were facing significant change with more emphasis on day care procedures as the norm. There was also greater use of technical solutions for surgery which were less invasive and this contributed to the rapid pace of change over the last five years. Stamford hospital's outpatient department dealt with almost 22,500 appointments a year – nearly half of all appointments in the South West Lincolnshire PCT area. The emergency care facility had dealt with some 9,500 minor injuries in 2004/05 yet had managed to reduce waiting time for treatment dramatically.

Mandy then gave an overview of the hospital estate and what areas were in use. The west end of the estate was no longer in use for patient care. The Trust was currently exploring a number of possibilities for good uses of the unused parts of the estate which would be of benefit to the local community. A workshop was to be set up to explore these proposals and she extended an invitation to anyone interested in becoming involved to contact her after the meeting. She closed her presentation by stating that the Trust was facing a lot of challenges in the future; it needed to be sufficiently flexible in order to respond to the demands of the PCT who were developing services themselves in order to provide health care closer to patients' homes.

The Chairman invited questions from the floor.

The main issue of concern from both members of the public and LAA members was the recent closure of the Hurst ward at Stamford hospital. Reference was made to the demand in the past on this ward for elderly patients during the winter months and Mandy Renton was asked how the hospital intended to cope if there was a surge in demand for beds and whether there was a possibility that, in those circumstances, the ward would be re-opened.

Mandy explained that the demand for beds had decreased following the changes in the provision of health care practices she had previously mentioned. The Hurst ward had been considerably under utilised and this could not continue as it would have been a gross abuse of tax payers money. She stated she did not expect the Hurst ward to be re-opened as it was near impossible to provide the necessary staffing. However, the hospital had the flexibility within its services to meet a surge in demand.

This explanation was met with dissatisfaction and Mandy was asked if the Trust was aware of the strength of feeling in the town and surrounding area over this

issue. Mandy replied that she and her colleagues were well aware of this and that none of the decisions had been made lightly but were made quickly in response to the situation across all three Trust sites. She reiterated that demand for beds had declined due to changes in the provision of health care practices; the average length of stay for emergency patients had dropped significantly over the whole Trust area as better support was available for them in their homes. If the Trust needed to have beds available because of a surge in demand, it had a duty to provide them.

Mandy also responded to other questions concerning some services which were no longer available on the Stamford site such as treatment for hearing loss and podiatry, national NHS targets, and the implications for funding arising from the reconfiguration of the Primary Care Trusts. The Chairman closed what had been a lengthy debate and thanked Mandy and her colleague for their attendance.

5. Consultation on proposed changes to the Waste Collection service

The Chairman introduced Mr Garry Knighton, Head of Waste and Contract Services and Mrs Dawn Temple, Recycling Officer from SKDC.

Garry Knighton gave a presentation to the assembly on proposed changes to the waste collection service in order to enable the authority to reach its statutory targets for recycling from the waste stream. The District Council was now embarking upon a period of consultation in order to find out residents' preferences over:

- Refuse collection containers – bags or wheeled bins
- Recycling collection containers – boxes or wheeled bins

and to discover the public's choice between the two following options:

- Option 1: continue with black bag and box with an alternative fortnightly collection to include side waste.
- Option 2: wheeled bin collection on alternative weeks with no side collection.

Under each option, he outlined the future recycling predictions. The meeting was advised that other local authorities were being approached and visited to understand their workings, and to learn how they have overcome some problems and issues. With many authorities adopting variations of all of the above, consultations with them will highlight possible difficulties for the future. Mr Knighton also made reference to health and safety implications for the refuse collection crews: there is an onus on the Council to consider the potential risks to collection staff using both bags and boxes. Research is being conducted by the Health and Safety Executive to identify the actual risks, and the results, once available, will need to be considered in the long-term.

The Chairman invited those present to put any questions to Mr Knighton.

A question was raised that, in the event that the preference was for wheeled bins, would there be any circumstances in which the existing black sacks would still be used. Mr Knighton replied that he was not aware of any authority who had gone

down the wheeled bin route who had 100% coverage; there would always be certain types of properties such as flats where this would not be practical and an exception would have to be made. A member of the Stamford Town Council commended Mr Knighton on the quality of the existing weekly black sack service and expressed concern at the proposal to change to alternate weekly collections under a wheeled bin scheme, suggesting that this would be a retrograde step. Mr Knighton replied that if refuse was stored correctly there should be no problem with rats and maggots; the ethos behind alternate collections was to encourage people to think more carefully about their household waste and to put more effort into recycling. Mr Knighton later reiterated this point in response to an assertion that the amount recycled was not related to the type of receptacle used.

A question was asked about the consultation process and whether the outcome would be dependent upon a vote by residents. Mr Knighton explained that the views expressed by residents would be considered by the District Council's Cabinet who would take these into account in making the final decision.

During his presentation, Mr Knighton had stated that the existing Saturday collection of waste generated by the Friday market was to cease. The Stamford Town Council's representatives expressed concern at this decision and asked why there had been no prior consultation on this. They were advised that this was not a service provided by the District Council but an activity that had been undertaken by the County Council. A final question from a member of the public concerned why there was no door to door glass collection. Acknowledging that to do so would not be cheap, she asserted that recycling should not solely be about cost. Mr Knighton replied that the existing Bring sites were well used for glass recycling. It was a fact that most of the waste glass was green glass which originates from abroad. A key consideration with recycling was what could be done with the end product; clear glass had been used in road aggregate. To ship the used green glass back to its origin would be extremely expensive.

In conclusion, Mr Knighton sought the views of the LAA members on which of the two options they would prefer. A show of hands indicated a slightly greater preference for option two.

It was agreed:

- (1) Mr Knighton and Mrs Temple be invited to a future meeting to discuss problems with litter and enforcement issues;**
- (2) The District Council's Cabinet take into consideration the Stamford LAA's preference for Option 2 for future waste collection arrangements.**

6. Local Development Framework- Issues and Options Paper

The Council's Director of Community Services, Mr John Pell referred to a detailed document "Issues and Options for future development in South Kesteven" which had been circulated at the meeting. This was the first significant document in draft form for public consultation on the new Local Development Framework which would replace the existing South Kesteven Local Plan.

He urged those present to take this document away with them to read. At the next LAA, the Council's senior planning officer would be available to respond in detail to questions. Attention was drawn to the dates of the public exhibitions, the one in Stamford being held on 3rd and 4th October 2005.

It was agreed to note the circulation of the document and consider this in more detail at the next LAA meeting.

7. County, District and Parish Intentions for the 2006/07 Budget

The Chairman advised due to the length of the agenda, this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

8. Equalities & Diversity

The Corporate Manager for Human Resources, Mr Chris Sharp introduced himself to the meeting and explained that an additional duty he undertook was to be the responsible officer for equality and diversity issues. The purpose of his presentation was to give an overview of what the Council was doing in this area and the challenges it faces.

Equality and diversity was an increasingly important aspect of what the Council carries out as, fundamentally, it was a people business. It therefore made sense to treat all its citizens with equal importance. No one should receive a lower standard or have reduced access to a service because of their race, ethnicity, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age, or economic status. There was a significant business case for equalities as the Council was one of the major employers in the district with 700 staff and also a large service provider. Mr Sharp acknowledged that prejudice and stereotyping was a fact of life and it often happened in subtle, covert way – hidden apart from those who experienced it. The Council must take a lead on this issue as equal treatment did not occur naturally; assumptions and stereotyping led to unfairness and poor decision making. He went on to outline the economic, legal, security, moral, and social reasons for keeping this issue at the forefront and explained there were three aspects to equalities: equal opportunity, equal access and equality of outcomes.

He concluded by explaining that the Council was in the process of developing its customer contact centre and part of this process involved gathering information about the Council's customers. This data would be used to help review its services and establish a multi-cultural consultation forum. Work was ongoing in terms of training for members and staff and the development of a racial incident reporting process.

A question was raised about positively promoting multi-culturalism within the democratically elected council members, particularly the executive decision making body. Mr Sharp commented that the Council had become more culturally diverse and therefore was quite healthy in those terms, particularly by comparison with

many other local authorities. Mr Sharp was thanked for his informative presentation.

9. Leisure Trust

Mr Pell informed the meeting that at the start of September, the Council's Cabinet considered a report on the viability of transferring the management of the Council's cultural services into a leisure trust. The Council had employed consultants to look at the various options for not for profit organisations to operate its leisure and arts centres and other facilities such as parks and recreation areas. Mr Pell explained that leisure trusts were already in existence in other parts of the country and cited examples such as the Nottingham Play House, the Nottingham Ice Arena and the Northampton Theatre who were operated and managed under such arrangements.

The Council was now undertaking a process of consultation to seek the views of interested parties and the LAA's.

The meeting was told that there were significant benefits, particularly financial ones, through business rate relief and VAT advantages from operating a trust arrangement. Leisure trusts were also better placed than local authorities to draw down funding from external sources such as the National Lottery. Advice had been sought from trusts set up elsewhere on the advantages and disadvantages. One of the real benefits was that the members of the trust board could also influence and be much more involved at a local level. If the Council pursued this route, there was also the option whether to have one large trust or a number of smaller trusts that were bespoke to a particular area. Mr Pell asked the members of the LAA whether they felt there was enough local interest to make a trust viable.

One of the Stamford Town Councillors stated that she had heard talk of turning the Stamford Arts Centre into a trust but there were wide implications to be considered. She expressed concern that the Arts Centre should not lose out. The benefits of a trust had been emphasised by the officer but there were also disadvantages to this arrangements. Further concerns were raised on whether savings could be re-invested into the centres and if in fact the trust option was a way for the authority to pass on a loss making service and walk away from its commitment to the Stamford Arts Centre. Mr Pell stated that view could be countered with the benefits from the degree of autonomy and independence enjoyed by trust status. The view was put forward that this was a complex issue which had major implications for the town given that the Stamford Arts Centre was a cultural flagship which enjoyed not only a regional but national reputation. The officer was asked to bring back to the LAA a more detailed presentation on how such a trust would operate, particularly in terms of the Arts Centre and the implications for an improved leisure centre for the town. Mr Pell undertook to arrange this and drew members' attention to the fact that a summary of the consultants' report was available to download from the Council's website.

It was agreed that a more detailed presentation be brought before the LAA at a future meeting on how a leisure trust arrangement would be formed and operate to benefit the town's leisure and cultural facilities.

As it had now passed 9.30pm, the Chairman reminded those present of his intention to close the meeting. There were still a number of items remaining on the agenda that had been identified by the Town Council as issues for consideration. The Chairman stated he could give a brief status report on each or carry them over to a future meeting.

This was met with strong concern being voiced by the Town Councillors who felt that it had been over ambitious to fit this lengthy agenda into two and a half hours. The Chairman was asked why the issues of concern to the Town Council and local residents not been tabled at the start. Although the officer presentations had been informative and useful there was now no time to debate the other matters. A Town Councillor referred to the dwindling attendance by the public and suggested that by not allowing debate on their concerns had effectively discouraged public participation. Other comments were made about the lack of publicity for these meetings and agenda content. A suggestion was made that the agenda could be published in the Stamford Mercury on the Friday preceding the meeting as the local newspaper was widely read by residents.

10. Date, time and venue of next Meeting

The next meeting of the Stamford LAA was scheduled to take place at 7pm on Thursday 2nd February 2006 at the Stamford Town Hall.

The meeting formally closed at 9.45pm

APPENDIX TO MINUTES:

Update on issues previously raised by the Stamford Town Council as listed on the agenda:

(1) New Licensing laws and implementation/impact on Stamford town centre.

This would be considered at a meeting of the SKDC Community Development and Scrutiny Panel (DSP) to be held at the Town Hall in Stamford at 10.00am on 10th November 2005. All Members of the Public were welcome to attend.

(2) Council Housing Stock Transfer

This would also be considered at the DSP meeting on 10th November.

(3) Leisure Centre for Stamford

This had been covered in minute 9 above

(4) Article 4 Direction for Stamford Conservation Area

An Article 4 Direction is a restriction on development that can be placed by local planning authorities (such as SKDC) on non listed buildings within conservation areas, such as exists in Stamford.

(5) The place of the Town Council as a consultative body for Stamford

(6) Stamford Town Council or Stamford Vision – who should have the authority to make changes in Stamford, elected members or non elected members.

The following written response from Catherine Hammant of Stamford Vision had been circulated at the meeting:

Stamford Vision believe that there is a case for both organisations to work both together and separately towards their mutual goal which is the positive improvement of the town for the benefit of its people. We can see that there are occasions where one or other organisation might be the appropriate lead in implementing improvements but by having both groups a wider range of initiatives can be embraced.

All tiers of government have encouraged partnership working, in particular with the private sector. It is our experience that there is strength in acting as a broad based local partnership. Stamford Vision currently has an active core of 50 volunteers representing not only the three levels of local government but also the private sector, voluntary, educational and community organisations.



GRANTHAM LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the MEETING of the GRANTHAM LOCAL AREA ASSEMBLY held at 7.00p.m. on Wednesday 28th September 2005 at the Guildhall Arts Centre Gallery.

PRESENT:

Councillor John Smith South Kesteven District Council – Chairman

SKDC Councillors:

Councillor Ray Auger
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs. Frances Cartwright
Councillor Yvonne Gibbins
Councillor Rob Shorrocks
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Frank Turner
Councillor Mike Taylor
Councillor Mrs. Mary Wheat
Councillor John Wilks
Councillor Avril Williams

SKDC Officers:

Sally Marshall - Corporate Director, Regulatory Services
John Blair - Corporate Director, Finance and Strategic Resources
Nick Goddard - Corporate Manager, Democratic and Legal Services
Chris Sharp - Corporate Manager, Human Resources & Occupational Development
John Slater - Head of Leisure and Cultural Services
Garry Knighton - Head of Waste and Contract Services
Dawn Temple - Sustainable Waste Management Policy Officer
Paul Morrison – Scrutiny Officer
Jo Toomey – Trainee Democratic Support Officer

Parish Councillors:

Councillor Alan Hubbard – Allington PC

Co-opted Members:

Susan Swinburn – Voluntary Action Kesteven
Steve Prince – Town Centre Residents Group

9 members of the public

Apologies:

Donald Atkinson (Co-opted)
Councillor Mrs. Edna Chapman (LCC)
Councillor George Chivers (SKDC)
Councillor Carole Harris (Harlaxton PC)
Councillor Graham Wheat (LCC and SKDC)
Councillor Mike Williams (LCC and SKDC)

14. Introduction and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed members of the Local Area Assembly and the public to the meeting.

15. Public Open Forum

No questions were asked by members of the public. Correspondence had been received from Mr. D. Atkinson querying:

"It has been reported that while the Disability Discrimination Act came into full force on 1st October 2004, SKDC would not have a District-wide plan until 2010. Would be possible for the LAA to consider this."

The question would be dealt with under agenda item 11: Equalities and Diversity.

16. Minutes of meeting 29th June 2005

With the addition of the following to item 7,

"It was hoped that the development of the canal basin would not out-price Grantham residents from the market."

the minutes were agreed as a true record.

17. Membership

Two nominations had been received:

Susan Swinburn (Voluntary Action Kesteven)
Steve Prince (Grantham Town Centre Residents Group).

Both nominations were seconded and agreed. The Chairman welcomed the new members and invited them to participate in the evening's discussions.

With the permission of the assembly, the Chairman reordered the agenda to take the item on Equalities and Diversity first.

18. Equalities and Diversity

Before his presentation, the District Council's Corporate Manager of Human Resources and Occupational Development responded to the representation received from Mr. Atkinson. He noted that the dates were not accurate. While the Disability Discrimination Act was passed in 1994, further legislation had been produced. The legislation would be phased in and come fully into force by December 2006.

Assembly Members received a presentation on equalities and diversity, the purpose of which was to give an overview of what the District Council were doing to address the issue. Equality and diversity were fundamental for the Council to fully meet the needs of all members of the public, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age or economic status. There was a need to respond to the rapidly changing demographics and the need for economic migrants.

The Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relation (Amendment) Act have both placed legislative parameters that promote equality of opportunity for all and sanction discrimination on account of race or disability.

Assumptions and stereotypes mean that equal treatment would not occur naturally. The economic, legal, social and moral benefits of an equal opportunities approach were also detailed. It is important to ensure that everyone receives equal opportunity, equal access to services and equality of outcomes. As part of the development of the Council's new customer contact centre, data on the Council's customers was being compiled.

The Assembly discussed SKDC's fulfilment of the Disability Discrimination Act; the majority of the buildings within council ownership were compliant with legislation. The only exception was the court above Bourne Town Hall. Assembly members also commented on how a greater mix of people would enrich the community, although some were concerned that migrant labour could keep wage values low across the District. Concern was also shown about the way in which customer information was collected, the data collection process is a work in progress. One member asked how it was ensured that any group was representative; Mr. Sharp advised that the only current objective was the identification of different groups, so that particular needs can be identified. It was suggested that consultation should extend to non-statutory groups including the CAB and Mind.

19. Town Centre Action Plan

A booklet detailing Issues and Options for future development in South Kesteven was circulated. The document and consultation were components of the production of the Local Development Framework, to encourage the development of "sustainable communities" by promoting and controlling development over the next 15 years. Assembly members were asked to read the document and complete a questionnaire form, which should be returned to the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration by 11th November 2005. A copy of the document and questionnaire form were also available on the Council's website.

20. Grantham Town Centre Management Partnership

An update on Grantham TCMP by the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration was circulated. The consultation period for the Town Centre Action Plan, ended on 15th September 2005 and will be considered by the District Council's Cabinet on 10th October 2005.

The actions relevant to Grantham were: the need to review the TCMP structure and membership, it's vision and priorities; development of a strategy for the Evening Economy; review and roll forward of the Grantham Town Masterplan, to be broadened to encompass the whole town; preparation of the feasibility study for the canal basin; development of planning briefs for the St. Catherine's Road area and the Conduit Lane site; review of feasibility of a core area redevelopment; initiating the design process for marketplace pedestrianisation; initiating design studies for public realm projects and the investigation into the feasibility of a rail halt at Gonerby Moor. The Assembly were advised that Nick Vass had been appointed as the new Town Centre Manager.

The Assembly noted that they had previously recommended a travel interchange, where the bus station would be closer to the railway station.

It was agreed:

- 1. That the Assembly's enthusiasm for a new travel interchange be emphasised;***
- 2. To ask for consideration of a travel interchange.***

21. Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)

The District Council's Corporate Director, Regulatory Services and the Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development (including LSVT and the housing Landlord function) gave a presentation on Large Scale Voluntary Transfer.

The Council had to carry out a stock option appraisal to examine the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and whether it would be fit-for-purpose over a thirty-year period. A Stock Option Appraisal Commission (SOAC) was formed comprising of District Council members and tenants, who carried out detailed study on all available options to identify their preferred option: LSVT. LSVT would allow enhanced housing management, a District Council focus on the Strategic Housing function, enhanced tenant involvement, more affordable housing and it would fulfil tenants priority investment choices. The Council agreed to support the preferred option on 26th May.

A number of working groups had been established based on a combination of tenants and District Council Members. These would identify everything that need to be done to ensure tenants were well informed before the ballot. A timetable for the process had been prepared and included the development of a communication strategy, identification of what would be required from a Landlord, the development of the transfer agreement, a formal consultation period and the ballot of tenants. The new Landlord Structure would be headed by a Shadow Board, comprising 5 representatives from the District Council, 5 tenant representatives and 5 independent representatives. All members of the Shadow Board would have equal voting rights.

The Chairman stated that there had been some adverse publicity over a £1million cost and asked for this to be clarified. £1million pounds had been budgeted in the Mid Term Financial Strategy as a worst-case scenario. Should the ballot be positive and stock transfer proceed, the costs incurred would be set against the transfer receipt. If the ballot was negative, council tax payers would be protected by the provision made for £1million from the reserve account. There had also been adverse publicity over the difference between sale and transfer. The stock would be transferred following an evaluation of the tenanted market value. This would take into account that the properties would always be used for affordable housing and affordable rents would need to be guaranteed. Based on a national comparison, the tenanted market value of properties for South Kesteven was six and a half times higher because of previous investment.

The new Housing Association would have access to funding not available to the District Council. As a charitable organisation, all proceeds made by the Housing Association would be filtered back into housing. The Council would retain some accountability because they would be identified on the contract for transfer.

A question was raised about the decent homes standard and additional tenant aspirations. Landlords including Councils and Housing Associations had been tasked with ensuring that all homes under their control met the Decent Homes Standard, which was basic. Tenants were questioned on what aspirations they had beyond the Decent Homes Standard and a modest list of priority aspirations was produced. Homes within a Housing Association would be subject to inspections, scrutinising them on behalf of the tenants and the wider community.

One Member was concerned about the potential for a Housing Association to merge and operate from headquarters outside South Kesteven. Merges would be possible, however, the Assembly was advised that the necessity of a local contact point could be included in the specification for the Landlord. There was also concern about the implications of the Data Protection Act. The District Council's Corporate Manager, Democratic and Legal Services stated that the Housing Association would have to comply with the Data Protection Act. In the future they may have to be compliant to the Freedom of Information Act.

One member questioned how much control the tenants would have in designing the specification for the new Landlord. Briefing and focus group sessions would be organised for staff and tenants to establish what would be desired from a new Landlord. The Council would make their decision based on the work of these groups.

One member commended the construction of SOAC and the way members and tenants worked together, deeming this method of working as being beneficial.

It was emphasised that the final decision would rest with the decision of the majority of tenants. Consultation would occur to ensure every tenant had access to impartial information on all options using a variety of media and briefings. Anything released by the District Council would have been checked for impartiality by government, a legal professional, tenants and other internal checks. One-on-one meetings with tenants would be organised so they could be given all the facts and have the opportunity to ask questions.

The Portfolio Holder for Occupational Development (including LSVT and the Landlord function) thanked the Corporate Director, Regulatory Services for all the work that went into getting the preferred option signed-off by GOEM.

22. Financial Feedback Briefing

The District Council's Corporate Director of Finance and Strategic Resources gave a presentation as an early part of the Budget consultation process. He stated that Council Tax was collected by the District Council on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council, the Police Authority, the District Council and the government.

Parish precepts are added to the District Council's portion of the Council Tax and are included in figures liable for capping. He explained the effects of gearing on Council Tax and how alterations could be made following a current consultation paper. A two-year settlement giving an indicator figure for the following two years would be introduced; this would increase the Council's ability to plan ahead.

Key aspects of Council Tax setting would include new financial systems, Lincolnshire is a low Council Tax area, the impact of the missing millions campaign and the efficiency agenda. These are measured against the use of resources, value for money, comparison to other Councils, the local context and an assessment of whether the amount and direction of spending offer value for money.

Key issues for Lincolnshire County Council: national school funding; grant resources and review; priority consultation and the reallocation of resources to higher priority items. The Police Authority had additional spending requirements of £5.3million, needing an estimated budget increase of £11.4m (37%). Resource allocation would come under review. SKDC's key issues included achieving savings of approximately £200K, focusing on priorities and offering value for money, the impact of stock transfer on the general fund and the renewal of the grounds maintenance contract. Other issues would include efficiency savings, investment in priority areas, savings in non-priority areas and the user/taxpayer balance. Additional funding would be received by SKDC from the growth of business rates in 2006 and the planning delivery grant for 2005/06.

Members of the Assembly were asked to feed in any areas that they would like to be taken into account, whether they understood the relationship between gearing and low tax and that above inflation increased in Council Tax could be necessary.

The Assembly discussed the impact of Parish precepts. If these pushed the District Council over the capping limit, they were advised that there was no legal recourse they could take. The case would be taken to the Secretary of State. The Assembly were

advised that Grantham had a Special Expense Area, the equivalent to the Parish Precept would go to the Grantham Charter Trustees. Assembly members were concerned that because South Kesteven were the billing authority, people would assume they receive all monies collected. A combined booklet would be included with the Council Tax Bill covering LCC, SKDC and the Police Authority.

The Assembly also considered the impact of pensions; these would be covered from money in the reserve account. Information on second homes would follow shortly; a report for Cabinet was in preparation, on whether proceeds would go to the Local Strategic Partnership or the District Council.

23. Twin Bin Consultation

The District Council's Head of Waste and Contract Services and the Sustainable Waste Management Policy Officer gave a presentation to the Assembly on waste collection and methods of ensuring statutory recycling targets would be met.

The Landfill Directive prescribed targets for the reduction of biodegradable waste landfilled, using alternatives such as recycling, composting and energy from waste. The Household Waste Act required all householders to receive a kerbside recycling collection of at least two materials by 2010. Consultation had been initiated to identify the preferences of residents:

- Option 1: To continue with black bags for refuse and green boxes for mixed dry recyclables, both collected on alternate weeks;
- Option 2: To have two wheeled bins, one for refuse, one for recyclables, to be collected on alternate weeks with no side collection.

Separate green waste collections would remain voluntary. Option 1 could potentially yield a 27-30% recycling rate, option 2 could facilitate as much as 40% with the inclusion of green waste. Advantages and disadvantages of both schemes were given; these would be illustrated by discussions with other authorities. Issues for consideration would include feasibility and practicality for residents, potential implications on the health and safety of staff, suitability for longer term storage and increasing ability to meet national targets. Following consultation through the South Kesteven local paper and on the Council's website, a report would be submitted to the District Council's Cabinet.

Members of the Assembly were given the opportunity to ask questions on the schemes; interest was shown in the possibility of recycling glass, as had previously been available in some areas of the District. It was not possible to include a glass scheme with mixed recyclables because of potential health and safety risks as products are sorted manually. The glass scheme in the South had little uptake producing minimal tonnage. The original DEFRA bid for green waste collection had included combining it with glass; the bid was rejected.

One member asked about the possibility of using waste to produce energy, Mr. Knighton stated that provision for an energy from waste plant had been made in the original draft of the Lincolnshire Waste Local Plan, two sites in Colsterworth had been identified. Both sites have since been removed and a plant had been proposed close to Lincoln. Assembly members discussed the impact of increased kerb-side recycling on bring-sites; some Authorities with kerb-side recyclable collection had noted an increase.

A straw poll indicated that most members of the LAA would prefer Option 2.

24. Leisure Trust

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services for the District Council summarised a proposal to found a Leisure Trust. The Trust would be an Arms-Length Organisation, responsible for managing leisure and arts facilities and parks and gardens. The Trust would be run by a board of directors composed of District Council Members (20%) and representatives from the local community (80%). Trust options include a banner trust to cover all leisure and arts facilities, or several specific trusts.

The number of Leisure Trusts had increased rapidly over the past 15 years. There would be savings on Non-Domestic Rates and VAT advantages. A consultant had been engaged to evaluate options, a copy of their report was available on SKDC's website. The consultant's findings had been considered by Cabinet on 5th September 2005 and a consultation period was approved, the conclusions from the consultation period would be compiled by the end of November for further consideration.

A new company limited by guarantee would need to be established, to which all relevant District Council staff and staff of the current Leisure Contractor would be transferred. In order to qualify for rates relief the property would have to be leased to the company; negotiations to facilitate this in some Southern areas of the District were underway between the District and County Councils.

Members considered the proposal and asked questions about the scheme. Concerns were raised over the leasing of certain properties, including the Guildhall, which had been paid for with public money. One member asked whether this agreement was the same as one considered previously. Mr. Slater stated that the previous offer had been for admission to a hybrid trust created by Leisure Connection, the Council's current leisure contractor. Any finances would have been shared with the company rather than reinvested into Leisure Services. The foundation of a trust would have no impact on the Council's current contract, which would expire in March 2008 (except for Deepings Leisure Centre contract, which would expire in March 2006).

Following a question on public consultation, Mr. Slater stated that it would be service delivery that would change rather than the level of services offered. If the Company failed, the District Council would have to assume the role it played prior to the foundation of a Trust.

25. Matters notified to the Chairman by LAA members

- **Local Area Assembly Format:** A member asked for an update on the report considered at the last meeting of the LAA. The Scrutiny Officer stated that it was considered by the Engagement DSP and by Cabinet. Visits to other authorities were underway to compare structures and a report would be submitted to Cabinet shortly. LAA members felt that the evening's meeting had gone well, accepting questions from members of the public on each item in turn. It was felt that a mechanism to feed information back should be incorporated into the agenda for future meetings.
- **Decriminalisation of Residents' Parking:** An update on the issue of residents' parking was requested. The Corporate Manager of Democratic and Legal Services stated that discussions had been undertaken with the County Council. A meeting had been arranged between LCC and all District Councils to discuss a united approach to the policy. It would be premature to submit the item to a DSP until the meeting had occurred. Mr. Goddard would report progress back to the LAA after meeting.

It was agreed:

A mechanism to feed information back should be incorporated into the agenda for future meetings.

26. Matters that the LAA would like to consider at future meetings

- The boundaries of the TCMP, the parameters under which it works and the geographical area it serves;
- An update on the Town Centre Action Plan
- The Council communications strategy;
- The impact of the new Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing legislation, how the process works and the appeals process.

27. Issues raised by the public

None were raised.

28. Date, time and venue for next meeting

Wednesday 18th January 2006

The meeting was closed at 21:30.

Local Area Assemblies

Review of Purpose and Structure

SKDC set up the Local Area Assemblies as

'consultative meetings of all County and District Councillors in the area concerned. Each town and parish council also has one place on the Assembly. Tenants Compact representatives are also members as of right. In addition, each Assembly can co-opt up to five additional members, these can be, for example, representatives of local business interests or voluntary groups. The Council is also keen to engage with hard to reach groups, such as disabled persons, members of minority ethnic groups and young people and would welcome co-options from all sections of the community.

It is intended that meetings should be held at least twice a year, more often if there are issues in a particular area. This has already happened in Bourne for example where there have been three LAA meetings concerning the Bourne Town Centre redevelopment.

Although the District Council has established these assemblies, it is intended that they will eventually be driven by the assembly members themselves.

Members of the Public are welcome to attend meetings and there is an opportunity for members of the public to put written questions to the Assembly on any matter of local relevance or concern'. (SKDC website)

In reality, Local Area Assemblies impede the ability of the public to voice concerns, ask questions, raise ideas and issues and ultimately hold the Council to account. The insistence that the public must put questions in writing to the chair before the start of the meeting and have to wait to the end of the meeting to have them dealt with seems to demonstrate that public concerns and involvement have a low priority.

In fact, it is easier for the public to raise questions at Council meetings as these are dealt with straight away and, if necessary, a written response is provided.

Reform of the Local Area Assemblies has been attempted before. Cllr Stephen O'Hare put forward a motion to Council that the LAAs should be reformed so that

the public can ask questions at the end of each agenda item. This was rejected. A proposal to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Officer to deal with items from the public at the start of the meeting was also rejected.

This resistance to change is perplexing. If the Council genuinely wants to engage people, then the current arrangements are far from alluring. In fact these arrangements are a long way from the Governments drive to 'secure and sustain improvements in our public services and reengage our citizens with the institutions of government.' (*Citizen Engagement and Public Services. Why Neighbourhoods Matter? 2005*)

I believe another problem is that there is some confusion about the purpose of LAA's and the function they provide. Are the LAA's simply about bringing together a cross-section of community groups, councillors and organisations, or are they designed to genuinely give the public a voice in matters that affect their lives and communities?

I would argue that they should be about the latter. There is no other mechanism that allows the public to do this.

In recognition that this issue needs to be addressed, the Cabinet recently made a series of recommendations following its scrutiny of the Audit Commission CGI report into Lincolnshire County Council. In particular, "**That the Council re-affirms its commitment to the concept of Local Area Assemblies and pledges to work with local people to make these meetings effective forums for wider community engagement;**" (Cabinet Decision 32/7 6th June 2005)

As a local person, I am proposing the following root and branch changes to bring about genuine public involvement, empowerment and a mechanism that allows public issues to be seriously considered as a part of the priorities of the Council.

Proposal:

The Purpose of Local Area Assemblies

Local Area Assemblies will:

- Provide a way for the public to raise their own views and concerns about the Council or local issues;
- Strengthen local community networks and develop constructive and effective partnerships between local people and the Council.
- Work with local people to improve their quality of life
- Take action to tackle local issues
- Influence plans and services for the area and make sure they are what people want
- Raise money for local projects

- Bring together all those who live and work in an area in a positive and active partnership.

Local Area Assemblies are meetings of SKDC and will be supported and serviced by officers of SKDC.

Local Area Assemblies will be held at least 4 times a year.

Local Area Assemblies will be public meetings. Each assembly will appoint a chair to serve for 12 months.

The Local Area Assemblies will be promoted to community stakeholders, including:

- Local residents
- County, district, town and parish councillors.
- Voluntary Sector and Community organizations
- Social, sporting and recreational clubs and societies
- Local businesses and business associations and networks.
- Statutory agencies and partners.
- Police
- PCT
- Schools and colleges.
- Trades Union branches.
- Local Strategic Partnership
- RDA

The agenda for the Local Area Assembly will include as core:

- A report from the Chair of the Assembly Working group (see below)
- Items from the Council on priorities and initiatives
- Items from the public and other stakeholders.
- Issues and questions from members of the public.

Each Local Area Assembly will establish an Assembly Working Group. This will meet on a quarterly basis between the Local Area Assembly meetings to ensure that the issues and views reflected in the open meetings are considered by the appropriate agencies. They report back to the full assembly thereby maintaining accountability to the wider community.

A small number of local people are elected from the open meetings on an annual basis (together with Chairman, Vice-Chairman and LSP representative) to form this Working Group in partnership with Councillors and representatives of public agencies.

The membership should be four Councillors, four stakeholder representatives and a Police and Health representative.

The Working Group will prepare an annual report for consideration by the Community Engagement DSP. The report reviews the work of the LAA and highlights issues of local concern.

Next Steps

I propose that SKDC calls a conference made up of representatives from each of the assemblies in South Kesteven. This could be held in the Autumn.

The conference aims to reform the Local Areas Assemblies. This proposal can be used as a springboard to do this.

The conference should establish purpose, function and structure built upon the principles of modernising government and citizen engagement.

A new cycle of reformed Local Area Assemblies is launched in January 2006.

Rob Shorrock

REPORT OF EQUALITIES WORKING GROUP

MEETING DATE: Friday 14th October 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Fines
Councillor Mrs Woods

OFFICERS PRESENT: Hilary Lovell
Rebecca Chadwick

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mike Williams
Chris Sharp

1. Progress to date

Hilary Lovell gave an update on general equalities issues. Initially, the Council had been aiming to achieve Level 2 of the Local Government Equality Standard by December 2005. Realistically, this should be achieved by the end of March 2006. December 2007 was the target date for level 3. Hilary explained later on in the meeting that because of the way the assessment operated on levels, i.e. by building on previous levels, taking longer on levels 2 and 3 would be beneficial in the longer-term as it would provide a solid foundation for achievement at higher levels.

Hilary also reminded the group of the successful ODPM-funded project (The Lincolnshire Districts Project). This was contributing to the Council's achievement of level 2. The Project Manager and Worker were based in North Kesteven. A steering group reporting to the Lincolnshire Chief Executive's group was also involved. Chris Sharp sat on the steering group on behalf of South Kesteven.

The Multi-Cultural Consultation Forum, on which sat Councillor Kirkman with three other members, had seen fairly slow progress in its initial meeting. Its third meeting, however, had proven very successful. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Police were involved in the forum. The forum was also engaging with community groups and proposals in terms of developing the forums were currently being considered.

A member asked about how the forum related to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Hilary reported that the LSP had asked for a nomination from the forum. The member nominated from the forum was already a member of the LSP so a strong link had been formed. The District council members on the forum also formed a good link with the authority.

In relation to the action plan for achievement of Local Government Equalities Standard, Hilary stated that although the forum was not part of this assessment specifically, the Council had a statutory duty under the Race Relations

Amendment Act 2000 to eliminate discrimination, provide equality of opportunity and promote good race relations; this could be achieved through the forum. Achievement of level three of the standard, however, did comprise a large part on consultation.

2. Equalities Awareness training

Chris Sharp had undertaken training for members and was currently visiting each Local Area Assembly and giving a presentation on Equalities and Diversity. Training for staff would involve a programme of workshops running until March 2005. All staff would be required to attend a workshop, which would be led by an external trainer who had been heavily involved in diversity work with the Employers' Organisation. The trainer would also be asked for her assistance with the achievement of the Equalities Standard. Training was relevant at all levels of the Standard. It would therefore be ongoing and may include refresher courses or further specific training for certain sections of the authority. A member of the group had a particular interest in training for planning staff because it was suggested they received a large number of race related complaints and support was required for managing this.

Hilary clarified the costs and budgeting process for equalities. The group discussed funding and the planning delivery grant. Hilary informed the group that all service plans were required to reflect equalities and that Chris Sharp would be auditing the relevant sections of the service plans. She was also meeting with the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration to discuss how part of the Planning Delivery Grant could be apportioned to equalities work relevant to that section but also to the district.

3. Action Plan for Achievement of Level 2 of the Local Government Equality Standard

An updated action plan was circulated. Hilary reminded the group that work towards levels two and three could not realistically be considered in isolation as level three built on areas in level two. Parts of level three had therefore already been achieved.

Having read the plan, members then asked for clarification on a few of the action points. Further information was given on impact assessments, equal pay, job evaluation, racial incidents reporting and a Local Labour Market Assessment.

Hilary then clarified the assessment process which involved a self-assessment followed by the submission of evidence to the Audit Commission. In addition to this, one third of the lines of enquiry for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment related to equalities. Outcome and analysis of any consultation would contribute to the evidence considered in the assessment.

The group went on to discuss other issues concerning engagement with the community. Hilary and Chris Sharp had visited a local Yes4Learning centre and, having spoken to the students there learning English, were able to gain a better

appreciation of the number of different races living in the area. Other engagement initiatives were also discussed.

Conclusion:

To endorse the action plan and raise any arising issues with HR officers.

4. Roles in the council in terms of Equalities

Hilary reminded the group that the Council also had an officer group for Equalities. The external trainer had already been consulted on whether or not the management structure for equalities work was appropriate. The outcome was therefore being considered in light of the current reorganisation.

In relation to the new customer services centre, operatives were asking customers for information on their age, ethnicity etc. This was to gain a database of information to make sure that there are no groups disadvantaged by the council's services. Hilary gave further details on this as requested by the group. She emphasised that data for equalities observed strictly the Data Protection legislation.

5. Termination of Working Group

It was suggested that the working group had achieved its task of setting the action plan for achievement of the Equalities Standard and the publication of the Generic Equalities Scheme. Member input was now present via the consultation forum.

Members were initially concerned that they would no longer receive information on the progress with equalities. The Scrutiny Support Officer suggested that minutes from the Forum could be circulated with the agenda for the Engagement DSP, as already undertaken with the Local Area Assemblies. Hilary agreed to investigate whether this would be viable and possible. It was commented that the DSP could ask for update reports when required.

Conclusion:

That the Equalities Working Group disband and the Engagement DSP be asked to undertake a monitoring role on progress with equalities by receiving minutes from the Multi-Cultural Consultation Forum if available and update reports if necessary.



Councillor Paul Carpenter
Access & Engagement Portfolio Holder
Council Offices
St Peter's Hill
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG31 6PZ

Our ref : KR 2189/05/RT/101005

10 October 2005

Dear Cllr Carpenter,

Proposals to realign public payphone provision to meet customer demand

Thank you for your letter of 28 September 2005.

Having carried out a further review, we have cancelled the proposed removal of the payphone (01476 656778) in Edinburgh Road, Grantham. This will now remain in service. We would, however, like to proceed with the other 3 proposed removals and your agreement to this is appreciated.

I have enclosed some details on the BT chargecard, as requested. Information on chargecards can also be viewed at www.chargecard@bt.com

Finally, the question of payphone provision on the Harrowby Lane estate is something that would be handled by our Payphone Customer Service team. I have passed a copy of your letter to them and they will reply to you on this point in due course. For reference, they can be contacted at customer.serv.payphones@bt.com or on 0800 661610.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Thompson'.

Rick Thompson
Project Liaison Officer
BT Payphones

**Street Project Office
BT Payphones
PP06A21
Delta Point,
35, Wellesley Road,
Croydon,
CR9 2YZ**



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CHARGE CARDS

Summary

Chargecard is a post paid calling card product for the Consumer and Corporate market in the UK. The card is used by dialling an access number, inputting a personal account number and PIN and then making a call. It provides a means of billing calls to an account other than that associated with the point of calling and also usually overcomes the need for coins when calling from payphones.

Features

Customers can have more than one BT Chargecard per account. Calls made using each different card will be separately itemised on the customer's bill. Weekly credit limit can be set for individual cards. BT Chargecard can be used to call both the UK and international directory enquires, Calls can be made to Freefone numbers (0800) numbers in the UK BT Chargecard can be used abroad to call back to the UK via direct dial Cards can be limited to calling only nominated telephone numbers (max nine) and used without a PIN number, UK access code 144 or Freefone 0800 144 144. Transmission of Calling Line Identity (CLI) within the UK, this can be withheld. The * key can be used to correct mistakes when inputting numbers. Follow on calls can be made by pressing ##. Last number redial *3, in current or previous call session. Automatic pop up operator assistance. Speed dial facility - for the nine numbers most often called. Customers can pre-select their own PIN number. Customers can change their PIN automatically on line. Customers can have their home, office or mobile number, as their Chargecard account number.

- 7 language options:
- English (Default)
 - Welsh
 - French
 - German
 - Spanish
 - Japanese
 - Italian

Benefits

Convenient way of making calls from fixed line phones (including payphones and hotel rooms) in the UK and around the world.
 Three billing options; standard telephone bill, credit card or debit
 Account number can be home telephone number
 24 hour customer service available
 Also pop up operator will provide on line assistance free of charge if customer is having difficulty making the call

BT Retail Business Units
 Please select:



Access from over 130 countries
Helps to overcome currency, language barriers and problems with local phonecards
Can be used for transmitting data.
Easy to use - features such as speed-dial numbers, follow-on calls
Cost Effective Simple pricing structure allows you take advantage of BT discounts such as Friends and Family, and Best Friend calls.

Market

The target audience is all customers who are defined as being away from their recognised base at some point in time.

Applications for Chargecard service may be made by people/companies who:
BT account holder
Or Hold a valid credit card.
Or Hold a current bank account.
And have a customer/user base that will fit into the above criteria.

Minors (below 18) cannot acquire the card directly it must be via the parent/bill payer.

Sales Info

Internal Application Form -
Corp Sales, Corporate Helpdesk 0800 731 5410 or email [click here](#)

Call Charges

Full details of all current tariffs appear in the BT Pricing Manual. The following URL gives web access:-
http://www.serviceview.bt.com/list/current/docs/Call_Charges.boocsectoc.htm A range of discounts is available depending on customer type.

Tariffs and Commission

Commission is not available unless the chargecard has been provided as part of a dual branded arrangement with another company.

Usage

The card is used by dialling an access code - 144 or 0800 144 144 within the UK - when prompted the user enters their account number and PIN - then dials the full number they want i.e. they must include the area code or country code when dialling Internationally.

Contacts

A Customer Service Agent can be obtained as follows:

General; 0800 345 144
Chargecard Customer Services Centre;
Dropback/*0 Chargecard Customer Services via Chargecard operator: either hold for an operator or key *0 after validation.
0800 328 8004 Data problems Helpline
0800 783 7792 Special needs Helpline voice.
0800 917 9696 Special needs Helpline text.

Engagement DSP - Performance Monitoring 2005/06

Those indicators with a number in the PI column are from the Government's Best Value Performance Indicators suite used by many Councils. The remaining indicators are local to SKDC and may be relatively simple measures/indicators only. The reader is asked therefore to exercise an element of caution when interpreting any data attached to them.

Key: C=cumulative; A=average; N=number; %=percentage; CA=cumulative average; Q=quarterly; blank=monthly

PI	SKDC Priority Area and PI Description	IND Type	Reporting	2004/05 SKDC Outturn	2003/04 Upper Quartile	2005/06 SKDC Target	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Are We Improving Yr on Yr?	2006/07 SKDC Targets	2007/08 SKDC Targets	Apr	May	Jun
	ACCESS Priority A																	
157	Types of interactions delivered electronically	C	Q	71%	72%	100%			74%			83%	Y	100%	100%			
Local	No. of hits on SKDC website	C				300,000	26,200	53,756	79,991	109,182	141,764	176,626	N/A	330,000	363,000			
Local	No. of complaints regarding DDA	C	Q			6			1			1	N/A	4	2			
Local	% of customer calls dealt with at first point of contact through CRM	A				20%						N/A	N/A	40%	80%			
Local	% increase in self service transactions from 0405 base	%	Q			10%			262%			175%	N/A	15%	20%			
	COMMUNICATIONS																	
Local	No. of copies of Districtline issued	C	Q			4			1			2	N/A	4	4			
Local	% of PR outputs to media actually published	%				60%	83.33%*	75%	67.39%	81.36%	81.82%	100%	N/A	70%	80%			

DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANELS (DSPs) WORK PROGRAMME 2005/6

INTRODUCTION

This Work Programme is partly derived from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, but also contains items that have been brought forward by the DSPs themselves. Such items are in *italics*.

Where the item has appeared on the Forward Plan, the anticipated date of the key decision is listed in the second column. The third column shows the last available date that the full DSP can consider this item before the key decision is due to be taken (unless a special meeting is called). This does NOT necessarily mean that the item will appear on the DSP agenda, this will only happen if this is requested by the Chairman or members of the DSP. There will also be instances where there is no DSP meeting before a decision is due to be taken; in these cases the next meeting date after the decision date is shown.

As Cabinet meets monthly and the DSPs meet bi-monthly it is not possible *within* the current timetable of meetings for the DSPs to consider every single Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision. Scrutiny members are therefore encouraged to read this Work Programme and bring forward items for consideration where they think that an item should be considered by the DSP.

**DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANELS (DSPs)
WORK PROGRAMME 2005/6**

ENGAGEMENT DSP

<u>ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION</u>	<u>DATE OF KEY DECISION (IF APPROPRIATE)</u>	<u>DSP MEETING</u>
BT Telephone Boxes –possible removal or conversion to cashless facility	N/a	BT invited attended meeting on 22.09.05
Cash collection – review of cash payments in council offices	Not before November 2005	22.09.05
<i>Members' Use of IT including Broadband for Members</i>	<i>N/a</i>	<i>Identified by E-Government Working Group – new working group established.</i>
<i>Election Turnout</i>	<i>N/a</i>	<i>Identified by DSP on 22nd September 2005</i>
<i>Local Area Assemblies – future choices</i>	<i>N/a</i>	<i>Visits have taken place to Spelthorne BC on 4th and 18th October</i>

REPORT TO ENGAGEMENT DSP

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

REPORT NO. CEX 309

DATE: 17th November 2005

TITLE:	Arrangements for the Citizen's Jury on the 8 th December
COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Paul Carpenter
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Communications
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	Yes – see report
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	None

Introduction

1. As members of the DSP will recall, at its last meeting the Council received a paper proposing that this year's Annual Stakeholders Conference take the format of a citizen's jury to enquire into whether the Council is offering value for money. The Council resolved

"To approve the proposals for the format of this year's annual Stakeholders Conference on the 8th December and asks the Communications and Engagement DSP to finalise the arrangements by its meeting on the 17th November".

Timetable for the meeting

2. The decision by the Council to hold the extraordinary Council meeting in January improves our flexibility in arranging timings for this meeting. It is proposed that the following timetable is approved:

9.30	Coffee
10.00	Introduction, welcome and procedures
10.15	A few facts and figures – the Council in context
10.30	Service 1 – Refuse and litter Evidence from practitioners and the public
11.15	Coffee
11.30	Service 2 – Anti-social behaviour Evidence from practitioners and the public
12.15	Lunch
13.00	Service 3 – Economic Development Evidence from practitioners and the public
13.45	Service 4 – Engagement with the public Evidence from practitioners and the public
14.30	Tea break
14.45	Clarification/additional questions from the jury
15.15	Jury retires to consider its findings
15.45	Announcement of outcome
16.00	Event ends

Format of the meeting

3. In order for the event to be seen as impartial, it is important that the key role of the judge, who effectively co-ordinates the event, is undertaken by someone who has the skills and independence. I am delighted to say that Nic Streatfeild from Rutland-on-Line has agreed to undertake this role for us.

In discussion with both Nic and with Councillor Taylor, we have agreed a format, which focuses on the Council's key priorities.

Invitations to become a jury member

4. The most challenging aspect of this event is to secure suitable people to become jury members. By definition these people should not have preconceived views regarding the performance of the Council. Equally they will need to have the ability to absorb a wide range of data in a variety of forms, and the confidence to be able to question and challenge witnesses.
5. It is intended to enlist jury members through direct appeals in the press, on the Council's web-site and via our on-line portals, but also to make direct contact with colleges and schools who may be willing to assist as part of their curriculum for citizenship.

Witnesses

6. On each service we shall look to involve at least one resident who has direct experience as a customer who can give evidence in addition to the portfolio-holder and, where relevant, external partners.

Key Question

7. Finally we need to agree the focus of the jury – in particular what is the precise question that is being addressed. It is proposed that this be:

“Does South Kesteven District Council deliver a good standard of service for the money it charges?”

Recommendation

8. That the proposal for the Citizens Jury be approved.

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive