



# MINUTES

EXTRAORDINARY  
COUNCIL  
THURSDAY, 22 JUNE 2006  
2.00 PM

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## PRESENT

Councillor Gerald Taylor Chairman

Councillor Ray Auger  
Councillor David Brailsford  
Councillor Teri Bryant  
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright  
Councillor Nick Craft  
Councillor Dorrien Dexter  
Councillor Mike Exton  
Councillor Mrs Joyce Gaffigan  
Councillor Yvonne Gibbins  
Councillor Bryan Helyar  
Councillor Reginald Howard  
Councillor John Hurst  
Councillor Fereshteh Hurst  
Councillor Mrs Maureen Jalili  
Councillor Kenneth Joynson  
Councillor John Kirkman  
Councillor Reg Lovelock M.B.E.  
Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew  
Councillor Andrew Roy Moore  
Councillor Mano Nadarajah

Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal  
Councillor John Nicholson  
Councillor Stephen O'Hare  
Councillor Alan Parkin  
Councillor Stanley Pease  
Councillor Norman Radley  
Councillor Mrs Margery Radley  
Councillor Bob Sandall  
Councillor Ian Selby  
Councillor Robert Murray Shorrock  
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith  
Councillor John Smith  
Councillor Ian Stokes  
Councillor Michael Taylor (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Jeffrey Thompson  
Councillor Frank Turner  
Councillor Thomas John Webster  
Councillor Graham Wheat  
Councillor Mrs Mary Wheat  
Councillor John Wilks

## OFFICERS

Chief Executive  
Strategic Directors (x2)  
Corporate Director of Community Services  
Corporate Head of Finance & Resources

## OFFICERS

Head of Waste & Contract Services  
Housing Solutions Manager  
Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)  
Member Services Manager

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## 41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bisnauthsing, Mrs Bosworth, Carpenter, Channell, Chivers, Conboy, Fines, Fisher, Hewerdine, Mrs Kaberry-Brown, Kerr, Mrs Percival, Steptoe, Avril Williams, Mike Williams, Wood, and Mrs Woods.

## **42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor John Smith declared a personal interest in that part of the Town Centre Regeneration and the development of Grantham as a Sub-Regional Centre priority only in so far as it concerned the Bourne town centre core area. His interest was by virtue of his membership of a club whose premises were located within that area.

## **43. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PRIORITIES AND NON PRIORITIES**

### **DECISION:**

**(1) To confirm the following priorities of the District Council:**

#### **Category A (Step-change)**

- **Anti-social behaviour**
- **Recycling**
- **Access**
- **Town centre regeneration and the development of Grantham as a sub-regional centre**
- **Affordable housing**
- **Communication**
- **Effective use of resources**

#### **Category B (Incremental improvement priorities)**

- **Street scene**
- **Business Development**
- **Diversity**
- **Housing management**
- **LSP and Community Strategy**
- **Maintenance of the Council's Assets**

**(2) To re-name the previous classification of Category Y services to Category M;**

**(3) On the basis of consultations to date, to not make any changes to the services falling with Category M (service minimums) or Category Z (non priorities), other than the addition of Planning & Development Control and Public Toilets to Category M as a result of the above.**

Members had before them report CAB7 from the Cabinet which contained its recommendations on the categorisation of the Council's priorities. Circulated with the report were a number of background papers to inform the decision making process. These included reports CEX326 and CEX343, weighted results for the 2006 Residents Survey, Draft LSP Action Plan, feedback on consultations undertaken through the local area assemblies, outcome from the On-Line Citizens' Jury, and minute extracts from the Resources DSP and the

Economic DSP.

In considering the recommendations, the Council was advised by the Section 151 Officer to take into account the current budgetary framework and progress made towards achieving category Z savings for re-investment in service priorities, as reported to the Gateway review on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

### **Presentations on priorities:**

Members received a series of presentations on the following areas that the Cabinet was either recommending as new or remaining Category A priorities, or for re-designation.

#### **(1) Access**

Mr. Ian Yates, strategic director, gave a presentation on the definition and scope of the access priority as previously submitted to the Gateway review in April. He reminded the Council that the concept of a seamless customer service was the premise behind the introduction of the new customer service centre (CSC); information was given on the Council's progress against best value performance indicators relating to the delivery of e-services, achievements over the last 12 months in terms of targets set for 2005/06, areas for improvements, and the next stages of rolling out this development which would encompass the Council's satellite offices. Mr. Yates reiterated that the funding for the new CSC had come from LGov and IEG funding and had therefore had low revenue impact upon the Council's general fund.

In view of the need to continue to build on this work, the Cabinet recommended that access remain as a Category A priority.

Mr Yates was asked how access locations within the community tied in with the one stop shop priority identified in the Community Strategy. He replied that the CSC project was providing the infrastructure to build a better service. Community access points would be the next stage in the roll out. Several members who had visited the CSC stated that they were very impressed with the new facility that would provide a much more effective and friendly service to the customer. The Council asked that its congratulations be passed on to everyone who had been involved in the project.

#### **(2) Street Scene**

Councillor Auger, portfolio holder for healthy environment, submitted the Cabinet's recommendation that street scene be moved from a Category A to a Category B priority. This was because the Council had now achieved and established the step changes identified for this service which would now move to incremental improvements.

Councillor Auger then proceeded to give a presentation on what was covered under this service heading, and progress against targets highlighting the increase in satisfaction expressed by residents in relation to the perceived

cleanliness of the streets. He also spoke on the enforcement activities in relation to litter, dog fouling, fly tipping, and abandoned vehicles. He concluded the presentation by outlining the impact of the New Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 an element of which had been to increase the fixed penalty fine.

The question and answer session was opened by a member commending the street cleaning team for all their hard work following the Grantham carnival. Councillor Auger stated he regularly met with the members of that team and would personally convey the Council's thanks and appreciation to them. A point was raised on the comparatively low number of fixed penalties issued for dog fouling. The head of waste & contract services explained the difficulties faced in catching dog owners "in the act" of not clearing up after their pets and advised that the enforcement team did target areas where they had been advised a problem existed. Other points were raised on how the Council could address the percentage of residents who did not feel there had been an improvement, tackling graffiti problems, other ideas to improve the street scene such as participation in the Britain in Bloom competition, and the value of educational visits in preventing litter and similar problems. It was suggested that people should make more of an effort to notice the street scene in order to empirically assess whether there had been improvements. The Council had to accept that improving the street scene would inevitably mean clearing up the litter left by those who were not responsible citizens in that regard.

### **(3) Recycling**

Councillor Auger gave a further presentation on the extent of the current recycling service and outlined why separate collections were made. In the light of the planned development of this service and the challenging targets set for percentages of waste collected to be recycled (39% in 2007/08, 50% in 2008/09), he recommended that this service area remain a Category A priority.

Questions were put to both Councillor Auger and the head of waste and contract services on the educational aspect, particularly use of bring sites in school locations, the green waste collection service, and the excessive use of packaging materials. In relation to the latter point, a member advised that the Women's Institute was very keen on environmental issues and was currently lobbying manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging on products.

### **(4) Town centre regeneration and the development of Grantham as a sub-regional centre.**

The economic portfolio holder, Councillor John Smith began his presentation by recommending that this area remain a Category A priority. The nature of large projects associated with this area meant that there was a lengthy lead in time and therefore the step changes required necessitated this remaining a Category A priority.

Councillor Smith then went into more detail on progress with town centre development; town centre managers were now in place for all four urban areas

and a significant amount of partnership funding had been secured. He acknowledged that progress amongst the four town centre management partnerships was varied and outlined the status of ongoing projects within each town. Councillor Smith highlighted some improvement in perceived satisfaction with car parking facilities between 2005 and 2006 and an increase of 11% satisfaction with the retail offer in the district.

During the question and discussion session that followed, points were raised on the activity areas of each tcmp, the problems experienced by the Stamford tcmp (Stamford Vision) in terms of its perception by the public, the need for cross party co-operation between district and town councillors, and the importance of including all stakeholders, not just business and property interests in tcmp activity. Councillor Smith responded to these points and concluded by acknowledging the progress made recently in Stamford and the need to take on board the issue of effective communication.

[An adjournment for the tea break took place between 3.50pm and 4.05pm.]

#### **(5) Anti-social behaviour**

The Corporate Director for Community Services gave a presentation on this issue which the Cabinet was recommending remain as a Category A priority. Despite the district having a relatively low crime rate, residents' concerns remained high. There had been a 1.5% reduction in the perception by South Kesteven's residents that anti-social behaviour was a significant problem. This might appear a small improvement but when compared with the national picture where that perception was worsening, 1.5% reduction was an achievement to be recognised. Having outlined the "top ten" incidents of anti-social behaviour, Mr. Pell went through the action plan and objectives over the next three year period. Achievement of these targets necessitated a multi agency approach. Members were advised of the resources required and those already secured and the implications for supporting the Lincolnshire Neighbourhood Policing Initiative.

In response to the presentation, a member expressed the view that the Council needed to be clear on that which it was giving priority to; the causes of anti-social behaviour needed to be addressed otherwise the Council would run the risk of just beating the air. It was acknowledged that there was still much to do and there could be no room for complacency on this issue.

#### **(6) Use of resources**

The Cabinet was proposing that use of resources become a new Category A priority moving up from a Category B priority. Councillor Bryant, resources and assets portfolio holder, acknowledged that this was a very detailed subject and by way of introduction cited existing Council publications which contained information on the Council's financial position and procedures. The presentation by the Corporate Head of Finance and Resources would therefore focus on the way ahead.

The Corporate Head of Finance and Resources, Miss Marshall explained that Financial Services had previously been identified as a Category B priority but the proposal was to redefine it as a broader subject of use of resources. The assessment of an authority's use of resources was carried out annually and was likely to be incorporated into the CPA process. It was about focusing financial management but also linking it to the strategic and corporate management of the organisation. She emphasised that there was a clear role for members in this process: a working group of the the Resources DSP had already begun investigation into this area. Members were advised how the Council had scored for 2005/06 against the list of criteria which included financial reporting, financial management, financial standing, internal control, and value for money. The Council would have to make significant improvements on its existing scores in order to achieve an excellent rating at the next CPA. Miss Marshall outlined what action had been taken to date, highlighting the fact that there were a number of vacancies in the accountancy services section at the moment that had necessitated bringing in interim capacity in order to conclude the closure of accounts. A review of the structure was currently underway and it was anticipated that a recruitment process would be undertaken shortly as it was vital to get the necessary staff resources in place. A use of resources action plan would be submitted in due course to the Cabinet for approval in July as part of the medium term financial strategy. This would also incorporate the outcome of the audit inspection. Another requirement was the backward looking statement on how the Council had achieved its 2.5% efficiency savings.

Subject to acceptance as a Category A priority, planned activity provided for decentralised budget management to enhance accountability at service level. The Resources DSP had already identified the need to have a robust system of time recording. Planned review of the Council's financial procedure rules would also be an area of activity for member involvement. At this point, the Chairman drew members' attention to a survey questionnaire which had been circulated at the meeting on behalf of the Resources DSP seeking members' opinions on such matters as their experience of involvement in the budget preparation process and the gateway reviews.

After the presentation, a member, acknowledging the good proposals put forward by Miss Marshall, expressed reservations that should the need arise, purely financial considerations be replaced by considerations which may be equally important to those people affected even though those considerations may not be entirely financial. The portfolio holder responded by reiterating the need for additional support and ongoing work to achieve the value for money and best value resources. He thanked the Chairman of the Resources DSP for the collaborative working to deliver successful improvements in this area.

## **(7) Communications**

The Communications Manager, Miss Ellen Breur, introduced her presentation by explaining that the Council's communications unit was a recent addition to the authority's structure. Its dedicated team was responsible for the longer term objective of positioning the Council as a leading and reputable public

service organisation by ensuring fair, accurate, timely, and accessible representation of the Council's role, position and activities to a variety of target audiences. At the gateway review the service had exceeded its targets but had yet to see a return on its investments. Miss Breur went on to identify the main channels of communication used as a source of information about the Council, and the bottlenecks in the internal and external communication which the communications strategy would address. Members were then advised on the targets (as identified in the change management action plan) that had been met such as the introduction of team briefings, the staff magazine "Skoop", the district newspaper "SK Today", and a new corporate identity. The presentation concluded by the officer outlining current projects identified from the objectives in the service plan and a recently recruited third person to help support the high demands on the services of the unit. The overall aim was to achieve a better understanding between the Council and its residents.

The Cabinet had recommended that communications remain a Category A priority.

Miss Breur was asked whether the step changes necessary could be achieved. She replied that she was confident that the challenges could be met. A member expressed concern that communications was a Category A priority on its own; he suggested that there was a need to expand the remit around both communications and engagement. The Council needed to look at ways of including people in the democratic and decision making process, for example expanding the Local Forums as public bodies and involving the public in strategy and policy making. He stressed the need to bring in the public in a far more consistent and effective way.

## **(8) Affordable housing**

The portfolio holder for organisational development and housing, Councillor Mrs Cartwright outlined the scope of this Category A priority which centred on access to decent, affordable homes for all. 90 key actions had been identified as part of the solution to address these issues supported by additional resources allocated following the Audit Inspection that had resulted in the service being given a poor rating.

The Housing Solutions Manager outlined the targets and achievements to date and future proposals involving use of planning powers for more planning gain from developers and developing partnership working with registered social landlords and the Citizens Advice Bureau and greater consultation. The objective was to achieve a fit for purpose housing strategy.

A member congratulated Councillor Mrs Cartwright and the officers on exceeding targets set and asked if these achievements had been publicised. Councillor Mrs Cartwright replied that this information was available through a number of Council publications.

At the conclusion of all the presentations, the Leader moved the recommendations contained on page two of report CAB7 subject to the

following amendments:

- On the list of proposed Category A priorities, the word effective to precede use of resources
- That in future Category Y services (those services to achieve service minimums) be renamed Category M

The Leader explained that the Cabinet had doubts about the message that was sent out by the categorisation of services as 'Y' both externally and to the staff who worked in those areas. Category Y meant maintaining the service at its current level and could be interpreted as meaning at the "back end". The Cabinet was fully aware there were staff in Category Y services that were doing brilliant jobs and the Council wanted them to continue doing so. Various positive interpretations could be associated with the letter M, for example M for maintenance of excellent service.

[At this point, the Chairman declared that the meeting had been in progress for three hours and in accordance with council procedure rule 9 a majority of those members present must vote for the meeting to continue. It was moved and seconded that the meeting continue and carried following a vote.]

The motion proposed by the Leader was seconded.

An amendment was then proposed that Category Y services be re-designated Category C, and Category Z become Category D. The amendment found a seconder. A vote took place on the amendment and was subsequently lost.

A further vote on the original motion was carried.

#### **44. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 5.25pm.