

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

REPORT NO: SD022

DATE: 4 September 2008

TITLE:	ANNUAL REVIEW OF PRIORITIES	
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	Yes	
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	15 August 2008	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Yes – Policy Framework Proposal	
COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	ALL	
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	ALL	
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	YES	
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	THIS REPORT IS AVAILABLE VIA THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY LINK ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE WWW.SOUTHKESTEVEN.GOV.UK	
INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Carried out and appended to report? N/A	Full impact assessment required?
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	PDG presentations Annual Surveys	

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 This report outlines the recent review of priorities, it also evaluates and recommends the repackaging of priorities into 4 broader "priority themes".
- 1.2 It is anticipated that the move to a priority theme approach will enable the Council to focus key resources in the longer term to delivering what is important to local people.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Council approves the proposed repackaging of priorities under the 4 broader priority themes as outlined in this report.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Our Corporate Plan sets out our key aims for the district and our residents. It contains our vision of providing brilliant services to our customers and is currently shaped around the following set of priorities.

Category A Priorities

Priority	Definition	Scope
Recycling	Improving the percentage of household waste recycled or composted.	Street Scene
Customer Service	Improving how we listen, and respond, to the needs of our customers	All services of the Council
Communications	Improving how the Council informs, and engages, with residents, stakeholders and staff	All sections of the Council
Bourne and Grantham town-centres	Improving the attractiveness, and economic vitality, of these town-centres.	Economic Development
Use of Resources	Improving the efficiency of the Council and developing the capacity to make it fit for purpose	All sections of the Council
Grantham Growth point	Securing growth status for Grantham and delivering this in a sustainable way.	Sustainable Communities

Category B Priorities

Priority	Definition	Scope
Local Neighbourhoods	Developing welcoming, safe and self-reliant communities with a strong sense of local identity.	Housing solutions Economic Development Anti-social behaviour
Housing Management	Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide to Council tenants	Tenancy Services
Public Assets	Ensuring all physical assets are fit for purpose and are managed efficiently	Assets and Facilities
Climate Change	Providing local leadership in both preventing and responding to changes in the environment	Healthy Environment

4. Current approach to priorities

4.1 We have categorised services for the last four years to focus attention into areas where specific improvement in performance was required. The table below identifies the principles applied to that process :

Category	Definition
A	A service where the Council commits to achieving a step-change in performance over the next four years.
B	A service where the Council commits to delivering annual incremental improvement over the next four years
M	A service where the Council seeks to maintain service standards and outcomes over the next four years
Z	A service where the Council will implement a programme of managed disinvestment to secure the resources required to implement improvement in its priorities

4.2 This approach, which has received favourable comment from auditors, has greatly assisted the improvement of performance on discrete issues, enabled the alignment of resources and has delivered some very positive outcomes:

- recycling rates increased from 14% to 51.3% which is amongst the best recycling rates in the country
- Improved street cleanliness with only 12 % of streets failing to meet acceptable standards in comparison with 19% in 2004/5
- Met and exceeded target for delivery of affordable housing units
- Addressed and reduced public concerns about anti-social behaviour

4.3 The current priorities were developed and adopted after considering views gained through consultation feedback, local intelligence and taking into account national targets.

4.4 There are now a number of drivers to look again at how we approach our priorities to ensure that we are able to identify more easily the benefits and outcomes for the customer/resident in priority areas. Council will seek to achieve efficiency gains so that resources can be directed to priority areas. These drivers include:

- the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy which incorporates Local Area Agreement themes including:
 - improving health,
 - improving skills and conditions for the economy,
 - making better communities through growth to improving housing provision,
 - providing value for money,
 - tackling the causes and effects of climate change.
- the outcome of a Gateway Review on priorities by members of the Cabinet and PDG Chairs held on 14 July 2008 (reviewed progress with priorities)
- up to date community feedback (e.g recent residents survey results)
- feedback from recent inspections
- a review of our medium term financial strategy .

5. **Outcome of Gateway Review**

5.1 At the gateway review event it was agreed that we need to ensure that the council's priorities continue to

- give a **clear direction** that everyone – Members, staff, partners, the community – understands;
- **help us to focus** – we can't do everything;
- **ensure we deliver** on local priorities.

5.2 It is recognised that the current approach has been effective in providing improved performance on one-off issues; for example recycling. However it is not necessarily the most effective way to deal with more holistic, longer term issues which require the input of the entire organisation (Team SK - Members and officers working together). For this reason it is now considered appropriate to adopt a more generic thematic approach to focussing our resources on what matters to local residents and businesses. This will ensure that all resources across the Council contribute to key objectives and make a real difference to local people.

6. Proposals

6.1 Our current approach involves 6 A priorities and 4 B priorities but we want to tie our priorities closer to the LAA themes and be clearer on the outcomes we want to achieve i.e. the difference our work makes to residents and other customers.

It is important to continue to focus on improving the customer experience in relation to:-

- **Quality** - high quality, reliable, flexible and responsive services which continuously strive to improve
- **Relevance** – tailoring services to meet specific needs of our community
- **Choice** - through a choice of access channels, putting the customer first
- **Consistent** - using information effectively to ensure the same level of service and same information available to all
- **Value for Money** - greater cost effectiveness, reliable and efficient with partners, to ensure value for money is achieved.

6.3 Taking the residents' survey into account and the outcome of the Gateway Review it is recommended that the following themes are agreed which will encompass the objectives contained within the current priorities.

Priority Themes

CUSTOMER FIRST	OUTCOME	CURRENT PRIORITIES INCORPORATED
Putting the customer at the heart of all we do	Excellent customer service and customer/ community access to services	Customer Service
QUALITY LIVING	OUTCOME	CURRENT PRIORITIES INCORPORATED
Protection and improvement of our environment. Improvement of health and well being. Working with our partners to create communities where people are safe and feel safe.	A clean and safe environment in our towns and villages. Improved health and well being. Vibrant cohesive communities.	Recycling Local neighbourhoods Climate Change
OPEN FOR BUSINESS	OUTCOME	CURRENT PRIORITIES INCORPORATED
Develop strong, vibrant and inclusive communities with a strong economy	Revitalised local economy and communities	Grantham Growth and Town Centre regeneration

QUALITY ORGANISATION	OUTCOME	CURRENT PRIORITIES INCORPORATED
<p>A Council delivering brilliant services – further improve performance and satisfaction levels.</p> <p>Transforming the business and gaining value for money</p>	<p>An organisation that is customer-focussed, which values its staff, and which delivers brilliant services. To increase efficiency through the use of technology and working with others. To keep staff and members developed and motivated. To listen, consult and communicate well.</p>	<p>Communication Use of Resources Public Assets</p>

6.4 Our overriding aim is to achieve brilliant customer service and customer satisfaction. To do this we need to put the customer at the heart of what we do, get service delivery right first time at the first point of contact and put any mistakes right quickly

6.5 The term 'customer' is generic. It is intended to embrace citizens, members of the public, service users and clients. Whatever term we use, all customers have a common expectation - they simply want someone to do something about the issue with which they are most concerned, at their point of contact with us, and to be able to interact with us in a way in which suits them, listen to their views and respond as we work within constraints to make the district a better place to live. The adoption of a priority of "Customer First" will enable all staff to focus their efforts to achieve this aim.

6.6 It is our aim that people recognise and value the services we provide, to be confident that services are good value for money, and to feel that their voice is heard. We need to demonstrate that we use our limited resources effectively and efficiently, and that we engage customers to inform and help us focus on priorities. By adopting a priority of "Quality Organisation" will enable a focus on these objectives.

6.7 Feeling safe, living in good quality homes located on clean streets with easy access to parks and open spaces are important factors to everyone. Our residents have told us that these are some of the key issues that impact on their health, well being and overall satisfaction with their lives. It is also vital that we take action to protect our environment and ensure that the same quality of life can be enjoyed by future generations. Action on further improving recycling, minimizing waste, keeping our neighbourhoods clean and safe, encouraging active lifestyles and responding to climate change will be encompassed by a "Quality Living" theme.

6.8 "Open for Business"- Promoting investment in the economic and business development of the district in all sectors, to ensure that we have vibrant and inclusive communities with a sound economic base, and which are supported and enabled by the District Council. To do this going forward we will need to focus on supporting local businesses, ensuring that our town centres and rural villages provide opportunities for people to work and enjoy their leisure time. To achieve this we need to work with other public and private sector partners to ensure a quality environment and attract inward investment. A key objective of the revised approach will be to see South Kesteven develop its role as a main gateway to Lincolnshire and the wider East Midlands, taking the best advantage of its location, its environment and key transport links.

7. **Measuring our success**

7.1 Strengthening our objectives and success measures is also a key aspect in the proposed approach. In making this change we will continue to track our progress and the difference we are making to local people through the use of success measures. For each objective there will be clear measures to help us identify the short, medium and longer term impact and outcomes of our actions. These details will be set out in priority theme plans and progress will be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis.

7.2 This revised approach to priorities has not been considered in isolation as it will directly influence the content of future service plans. Our service managers are actively contributing to the debate to strengthen our current approach to managing and improving our performance. These plans will translate the key actions from priority plans into team action plans. These form the basis of our staff appraisal process which sets individual targets and identifies training and development needs.

8. **Conclusion**

8.1 The revised repackaging of priorities will encompass the issues outlined in our current categories but will enable us to clearly define where we will focus our attention and resources over the next three years to deliver outcomes for the local community. The actions contained within the current priorities would transfer into the broader priority themes. If approved, priority plans will be developed which will identify specific actions and these will be cascaded into service plans to ensure that the work of teams across the Council is focused in these priority areas.

8.2 We need to empower managers and staff to drive this forward in a way in which delegates decision making to the lowest possible level. We have started this process through our "being brilliant programme". Staff will need to have access to high quality training, systems, data and information if they are, consistently, to be able to deliver the excellent standards of customer service to which we aspire.

9. Comments of the Council's S151 Officer

9.1 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets out the framework for ensuring the Council's resources are allocated to the Council's priorities. The priority action plans (that will identify the outcomes for the community) will need to be fully costed with deliverable timescales in order that the budget setting process can allocate the necessary resources. The Council must continue to review the portfolio of services to consider whether future disinvestment in services is necessary having regard to the limited resources the Council has available. The MTFP also identifies that savings and efficiencies will also need to be found (utilising a range of efficiency options) in order to enable the Council to invest in priority services and ensure financial stability in the medium term.

10. Comments of the Monitoring Officer

10.1 Clear, well articulated priorities are essential to the delivery of good governance of the Council. The provision of broad themes will ensure actions can be started and finished in line with priority and service plans without constantly changing the priority themes.

11. Contact Officers

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