

**MEETING OF THE
COMBINED OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE (GROWTH,
COMMUNITIES &
WELLBEING, CULTURE &
TOURISM, ENVIRONMENT
AND RURAL OSCS)**



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

MONDAY, 9 APRIL 2018, 2.00 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Robert Reid (Chairman)
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Lynda Coutts
Councillor Felicity Cunningham
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Breda Griffin
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown

Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Brian Sumner
Councillor Mrs Brenda Sumner
Councillor Martin Wilkins
Councillor Linda Wootten
Councillor Ray Wootten

CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor Jacky Smith, Cabinet Member for Health Wellbeing and Skills

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Bob Adams
Councillor Jacky Smith

OFFICERS

Chief Executive (Aidan Rave)
Civic, Democratic and Member Services Officer (Anita Eckersley)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from the following Councillors:

Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Nick Craft
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Councillor Helen Powell
Councillor Bob Sampson

Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Sarah Stokes
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Andrea Webster

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No interests were disclosed.

3. CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Chairman referred to the preparatory work he had undertaken for this meeting and noted he was mindful of the personnel budget and the importance of providing a clear direction of delivery for officers. Members would be provided with an opportunity to seek clarification on the draft Corporate Strategy at the end of the presentation. The Chief Executive was invited to start the presentation.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that a number of Members had already seen the presentation at different meetings, but this meeting was now part of the formal process. Comments and recommendations would be included in the reports to Cabinet and Council in May.

The presentation would provide greater context to the draft Corporate Strategy proposals. Also included was the feedback received from staff who had attended a number of workshop sessions held to ascertain staff views on the organisation as it was today and what type of organisation they wanted to work in.

Reference was made to the diversity of the District and the range of services the Council had to provide. The Chief Executive had undertaken a number of visits to parish councils and wards to gain a better understanding of the issues faced in the District.

The Draft Corporate Strategy was designed to help officers identify what Councillors had to do to deliver their aspirations and provide direction on how this could be facilitated.

Reference was made to the main five components of the Strategy and how the components had been set out in a house building block formation to provide a better understanding of the steps required.

Component one was at the top of the building block and referred to the identification of the “political vision” – (This referred to Councillor’s ambitions for the District). Areas categorised in this component were the ambitions of Members, the ability for the Council to create opportunities for the District, the need to modernise in order to compete and make an impact both inside and outside the District.

Component two was the Draft Corporate Strategy which had been developed in recognition of the need to enable an appropriate response to facilitate Members ambitions and provide officers with direction on how to deliver them. The categories for this component were outlined as recognition and realisation of the political ambition, being able to achieve the outcomes, aligning bureaucracy and providing the links to the community in respect of work the Council did.

Component three was the foundation stage (the base of the building) and would include a series of work programmes designed to help facilitate and identify what would be required to deliver Members aims. Some programmes were already in place but more would be required.

Component four was the identification of a number of behaviours that would enable the delivery of Member's ambitions. Reference was made to a central aspect of the Corporate Strategy which was for officers to look at what required changing in order to deliver Member's ambitions and how this could be achieved. The identified behaviours would become an integral part of job descriptions.

A core aim of the Corporate Strategy was to help achieve complete and sustainable financial autonomy by 2025 whilst providing and improving the services to residents and communities. Being sustainable was an extremely important element in the strategy bearing in mind the Government changes in respect of the reduction and final removal of Government Grants.

Growth, agility and competitiveness had been identified as the main ways forward for achieving financial autonomy. Growth in the District was a key component but it was important that this was sustainable growth that created jobs, provided a secure infrastructure and attracted investment to the area. This in turn would create the need for house building which would generate an increase in income through Council Tax Revenue. Providing the Business Rate pilot remained as an option for local authorities that would also generate an increase in income through Business Rate Revenue. These were seen as the main elements of becoming sustainable and would create a self-perpetuating economic profile for the Council.

The Council would also need to look at other ways of generating income such as promoting services to other organisations. Continued development and increase in working partnerships with other organisations would provide a potential to identify better ways of working and enable our expertise to be marketed.

As the core strategic goal of the Corporate Strategy was to help achieve complete and sustainable financial autonomy by 2025 three key elements had been identified that would enable this to be achieved.

As previously mentioned growth within the district was imperative and would be the driver for investment and development. Growth enabled revenue!

An agile, flexible and competitive Council would be essential. An agile Council meant having an understanding of the value of things and an awareness of worth. It also meant ensuring the workforce was highly motivated, multi skilled and well rewarded with a flexible approach that enabled effective working

The Council would need to provide competitive and relevant marketable services which would enable credibility and further growth and investment.

A change in technology over the last few decades had meant there were different ways of engaging and connecting with residents and businesses. Social media was a key player for informing people of Council initiatives. It was a gateway to developing awareness of the District as well as seeking customer views on the Council and it's services.

The fifth and final component was the monitoring of performance and how this would be undertaken. Part of the performance process would be to incorporate the above components and behaviours into job descriptions. Staff would be assessed against these behaviours.

The Council was in a stable position but there was always an opportunity to improve on what been set in place by the previous administration and find different ways of delivering services and encouraging growth and investment. It was important to monitor how the Council was progressing.

Reference was made to Lightbox and how this was a platform to research and develop new ways of working, particularly ideas that would help the Council achieve it's goal of becoming financially self-sufficient by 2025. Ideas that came forward and developed would be considered by Members who would then decide whether to take the ideas forward. The Council had a good workforce and amongst them were a number of bright young people with an eagerness to learn and develop. Lightbox was an opportunity to voice and develop ideas and find different ways of working. It would be important to recognise and reward successful initiatives. It was inevitable there would be a small element of successful staff who would leave the Council, but this was something that would need to be accepted as a risk by SKDC.

There was recognition that amongst the SKDC workforce there was an abundance of talented people. It would be important to provide opportunities for staff to grow and flourish. Accrued knowledge was a valuable commodity that could also be proffered to other organisations and local authorities creating a direct or indirect form of income.

Part of the process for culture change would be to ensure that staff felt valued and involved in the Council's performance. The sessions with staff had highlighted concerns about apparent lack of communication from management which would need to be addressed. The Assistant Chief Executive was taking this on board and would be looking at ways of engaging more effectively with staff.

Strategic partnerships was also an important element in changing cultures, as this would provide opportunities for collaborative working and learning. A strategic focus together with looking beyond the borders of the District were other key elements.

Reference was made to critical connections starting with growth, which led to investment, this enabled agility which in turn encouraged competitiveness and credibility which would then encouraged further growth.

The core strategy was built from a series of foundations or active work streams that would enable the Council to realise the strategy. A lot of activity was already underway but further areas would be developed over the next few months. Above all, developing a commercial approach in order to create more income for the Council's services was the best way forward as well as learning to see income and expenditure in a new way and making the most of the Council's assets and knowledge.

Some of the issues raised by staff were highlighted to Members: the lack of accountability, micro-managing; the lack of flexibility and consistency across some services; teams working in silos, a top down structure, feeling as though your face did not fit in some cases. These were all areas that would need to be addressed. One in particular was the equity and consistency of applying policies such as compassionate leave. In addition poor communication and the feeling of isolation were had also been raised as issues.

In order to try and address some of these issues effective measuring of progress towards the achievement of the Corporate strategy would be a core aim of the new performance framework. A new approach was required which would mean a shift away from the quarterly 'data shovelling' and a move towards a more focused and bespoke dashboard approach, plugged directly into the strategy that would be appropriate for each individual at their respective level of accountability.

In order to monitor performance management, Members would receive quarterly performance dashboards that would provide them with an opportunity to drill down into the detail of each behaviour and aspect. This would enable Members to look at whether the Council was going in the right direction. It was envisaged that staff would be provided with a four page "works manual" that would be easy to refer to.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for the informative presentation and reminded Members that the Scrutiny Role was to monitor the progress and performance of the Corporate Strategy. Members were invited to ask questions.

Members raised the following issues for discussion:

- Communication – A booklet with up-to-date contact details for key officers within the Council for Members;

Action point – The Chief Executive and Member Service Officer to consider how best to provide this information.

- The siting of council houses and whether these could be provided in smaller blocks and whether land the council owned was being used appropriately
- Members engagement with staff on a face to face basis rather than over the phone or by e-mail.
- Whether there was any evidence that an open planned office was the right way to go – It was noted that open planned offices encouraged face to face contact and broke down ‘silos’
- The Government’s potential changes to simplifying the compulsory purchase of land
- Would there be any recognition of the work undertaken by the previous administration; monitoring the performance of the Corporate Strategy and concern there appeared to be a lot of negative comments from staff from the workshop sessions

It was noted that there would be ongoing monitoring of the performance of the Corporate Strategy and that the aim was to alleviate the issues staff had highlighted

- The importance of engaging and encouraging young people as well as interacting with outside organisations and whether there would be performance comparisons with other service providers or local authorities

The Chief Executive noted that if it had not been for the work of the previous administration and Chief Executive, the foundations for the proposed Corporate Strategy would have been more difficult to compile. It was important that young people were encouraged and provided with opportunities to learn and develop their skills. There would be performance comparisons with other local authorities there would also be a series of performance indicators in terms the Council’s peers.

- More combined training or presentations where both Members and Officers could attend together. There was concern that Members had been told they were intimidating to junior officers.

Recommendation:

The Combined Overview and Scrutiny Committee after considering the content of the Draft Corporate Strategy recommend it's adoption to Cabinet.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, DECIDES IS URGENT.

A Member raised a query about the emails that had been received regarding the potential and rumoured removal of Orthopaedic Trauma from Grantham by the United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust (ULHT).

The Chairman noted that this was not an issue for this Council. He had consulted with Officers and other Members and arranged for a note to be sent to the people concerned who had emailed into the Council regarding their concerns and recommended that they contact the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire. They could also contact the relevant Executive Member at Lincolnshire County Council (Councillor Sue Woolley), or address their concerns directly to United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust (ULHT).

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.