

APPENDIX 1 – DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY

South Kesteven District Council

Corporate Strategy 2018-2025

Before we talk strategy, let's just remember why South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) exists: to serve the best interests of our residents.

These interests are represented by the council's 56 elected members who are, in turn, accountable to our residents.

Having worked with the Leader of the Council and his administration for a year, we know many of the things we need to deliver and have a strong sense of their political vision.

This strategy is our response. It explains how we will deliver that vision and what it means for the council and its officers in terms of what we do and how we do it.

The political vision

At the SKDC economic 'summit' in 2017, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Matthew Lee, laid out SKDC's agenda for the next three years and beyond.

[In his speech](#), Councillor Lee explained that his number one priority was growing the local economy and outlined a £40 million strategic investment programme across five broad categories: commercial, arts and heritage; leisure and the visitor economy, retail and markets; public realm and living; gateways and transport; skills.

Each category contains a number of deliverables that will be underway, or complete, by 2020. These include the creation of an inward-investment team, InvestSK, providing additional office space, investing in new and existing leisure facilities, tourism and so on.

As well as the direct benefit, the investment is also aimed at unlocking private investment estimated to be worth £500 million by 2020 and up to £1.2 billion by 2040.

In order to deliver this ambitious programme and ensure that SKDC is fit for the future, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council have initiated an equally ambitious programme of transformation and modernisation of the Council.

The Leader's speech demonstrates the scale of this administration's ambitions and its determination to deliver on its commitments. SKDC is demonstrating that South Kesteven is 'open for business'.

SKDC is an increasingly outward-looking council that is keen to engage and partner with external organisations and extend its influence and reputation beyond the boundaries of South Kesteven.

It is also increasingly commercial in its thinking, both to commercial opportunities and to using under-utilised council assets to generate income and contribute to the council's targets.

Our response

This strategy is our response to the members' political vision. It is how we will deliver, not only for our elected members, but for the local people we all ultimately serve. If we had a limitless budget, life would be easy! However, in the real world, our funding from central government is steadily reducing, challenging us to identify new streams of finance. Therefore, our first consideration is to make sure we can afford to deliver what we promise; not just this year or next year, but indefinitely.

*So, our core strategic goal is to achieve **complete and sustainable financial autonomy by 2025**, through commissioning services that are **relevant to our community and valued by those who use them**.*

In order to get there, we all need to think differently about SKDC's finances: how we are funded, how we can generate income, how we can reduce what we spend and find new ways to save. In other words, exactly how we all manage our own finances every day.

We will achieve this goal by focusing on three things: **growth, agility and competitiveness**.

To make sure we achieve these goals, we're going to structure ourselves so that there is clear alignment between how we work and what we are trying to achieve. In this way, whatever you do and wherever you sit in the organisation, you can trace a line to one or more of the goals. Now, let's look at each in turn.

We want to help South Kesteven to **grow**. A growing population and a growing economy creates jobs, secures infrastructure and attracts investment. More housing means more council tax and more businesses means more business rates. Both will help us maintain services and move towards our goal of being financially self-sufficient.

When we talk about being an **agile** organisation, we mean being as lean as possible – or, if you prefer, only as large as we need to be – while being able to maintain our effectiveness in the long-term. Of course, being an agile organisation increases the importance of ensuring that every member of the team is highly motivated, highly capable and multi-skilled.

Lastly, we need to ensure that the services we provide are relevant, commercially **competitive** and delivered to a high standard. While we have a duty to deliver some services, many are discretionary. But all of our services will be high quality, good value and contribute positively to the daily lives of the people of the district.

These services will be wide-ranging. They will keep us safe, they will help keep our district clean, they will support those in need and enhance the quality of life through the cultural and artistic life of the district. SKDC and the services we provide are part of the fabric of the local communities we serve.

Our existing services are our 'shop window'. The way we deliver them determines our credibility and professionalism. This, in turn, affects the public's trust in what we do now and gives confidence in any new services and practices we introduce. As a modern, agile and commercially competitive council, we will lead and commission services that will be relevant to those who use them and commercially attractive to those who buy them.

These three core components of our strategy – growth, agility and competitiveness – are inter-connected. Growth helps increase our revenue and allows us to invest in becoming more a more agile organisation; being lean and agile increases our effectiveness and reduce our costs, making us more competitive; and providing relevant, competitive services

provides the credibility and confidence needed for us to help the district grow – and so the cycle continues.

Building on strong foundations – developing our talent

Anything you build needs firm foundations, and our strategy is no exception. In terms of what we do beyond the ‘day job’, four foundations are critical to our success: our **culture**, our **commercial approach**, **innovation** and **transformation**, and **strategic partnering**.

Culture. Having the right culture is an enormously important factor in our future success. Our culture may not be defined, but it nevertheless plays a big part in determining the SKDC ‘way’; how we work as individuals and teams, what we expect of each other and even how much fun we have together.

We need a culture that is flexible, agile and responsive. We need to retain our dedication and diligence, but be fearless, open to new ideas and innovations. That includes accepting that work is not a place; it’s about what you deliver.

To help guide our culture, this thinking will be incorporated into our recruitment, development and employee recognition programmes. We will be asking a lot of everyone at SKDC, but we hope that focusing on what matters at work will help us in our pursuit of the elusive ‘work-life balance’!

Commercialism. Our new, more commercial approach will involve seeing income and expenditure in a new way. We will make the most of our assets and knowledge to help generate more income, which we can use to improve services, deliver new ones or simply contribute towards our goal of financial independence.

Managers will be accountable for their budgets, which they will be expected to treat like profit and loss accounts. Some activity will be funded, while others will be dependent on generating additional income. Managers may also consider investing in projects that create new revenue streams or generate long-term savings.

Innovation and transformation. Just because something has been done a certain way for a long time doesn’t mean it’s the right – or best – way to do it. If a process or approach needs to change, it can change. And if we see a risk, we will manage it rather than avoid it.

As a council, we will actively encourage new ways of thinking, planning and working, whether they are small, incremental improvements or bigger, more radical ones. Ideas will be captured and considered properly and objectively. Where necessary, we will seek help from outside SKDC – including new technologies.

Partnering. We can’t – and don’t wish to – do all of this alone, so we will seek new strategic partners whose priorities and geography align with ours and work with them on a shared, risk-and-reward basis. Partners may be from the public sector, including other councils, or the private sector.

Values and behaviours

We’ve already touched on the importance of culture. The culture of any organisation is made up of the values and behaviours that characterise it, so if we want a culture that enables us to deliver, we’re going to have to define the behaviours we want and measure how well we’re all performing against them.

The key values and behaviours that will determine our success are: **accountability, flexibility, agility, equity, networking, 'always learning'** and **talent**. These will not be just words; they are going to be incorporated into our job descriptions, our recruitment processes and staff development.

Accountability. In order to succeed we will need a culture of accountability throughout SKDC. Everyone at every level will need to be responsible for what they do; willingly taking ownership for their actions and decisions and being a reliable, dependable member of the team, often going beyond the normal terms of employment. We cannot work flexibly without accountability.

Flexibility. We can't be set in our ways if we are going to succeed, so flexibility matters. It might be flexibility in terms of the hours you do, the way you work or where you work. We can't afford to do things the same way just because 'that's the way it's always been done'. Our performance will be measured in outcomes and those outcomes will contribute to achieving our strategy.

Agility. Related to flexibility is agility. SKDC's needs are going to change over time and we need people who can respond to those changes, who can move freely between teams and who want to stretch themselves by being trained to be better at more things.

Equity. Every member of the SKDC team matters, irrespective of their rank or position. This hasn't always been the case in the past, but it will be in the future. All of us should expect to be treated with respect and dignity and doors should be open. We will all be held to account for this.

Networking. We learn from each other and from external partners, so we need to be better at networking. Our networks hold the key to raising our profile, improving our performance, discovering better ideas and developing ourselves.

Learning. We are constantly learning from everything we do, regardless of success or failure. When we do something well, that knowledge can help us repeat and refine what we do in the future. We clearly won't seek failure, but neither will we be frightened of it. And if we fail, we will learn from it and not seek to just apportion blame (see 'accountability' above).

Talent. Having a diverse and talented team is fundamental to our success. However, a person's real talent isn't always obvious; sometimes it's overlooked, other times it may be hidden or ignored. Sometimes it's a talent the person didn't realise they had. Harnessing talent will be everyone's job, not just HR or senior managers.

Tracking our performance

So how will we know how we're doing? We'll need to get much better at analysing and managing our performance.

We will therefore be adopting a new approach by introducing a new performance management framework that will help us make sense of our performance through simple key performance indicators (KPIs) in an easier-to-understand 'dashboard'.

Performance will be something that we talk about on a daily basis. We will understand why things happen and the impact of our actions. It won't just be a series of pretty charts on the wall, but a way of working at SKDC where each of us knows how we're doing and what we can do to be more productive and ensure that we are performing at the right level.