

COUNCIL MEETING

Item 6

Date: 27 April 2011

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors:- Sue Homer (Chairman)
Sylvia Hughes (Vice Chairman)
Steven North (Leader of the Council)

David Bateman	Richard Lewis
Tony Boto	Peter MacGovern
David Brackenbury	Andy Mercer
Wendy Brackenbury	Gill Mercer
Pauline Bradberry	Brian Northall
Albert Campbell	Sarah Peacock
Michael Finch	Ron Pinnock
Richard Gell	Rupert Reichhold
Roger Glithero	John Richardson MBE
Philip Hardcastle	Anna Sauntson
Glenn Harwood MBE	Ron Silver
Marian Hollomon	Phillip Stearn
Dudley Hughes	Robin Underwood
Barbara Jenney	Clive Wood
Sean Lever	

Also Present: Graham Blagden (Chairman of the Standards Board)

490. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Eloise Lucille, Duncan Reid, Pam Whiting and Colin Wright sent their apologies.

491. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

492. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

493. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The chairman reported as follows:-

"I have several announcements this evening as this is my last full council meeting.

(a) Presentation of Cheques to Charities

Firstly, I would like to present cheques to my chosen three charities for my Civic Year.

You will recall they are Help 4 Heroes, St John Ambulance and Rushden Historical Transport Society and I would ask that John Sugars and Heather Crane, County Staff Officer, to come forward to accept these cheques on behalf of their charities and unfortunately the H4H representative could not be here tonight so this will be sent on to them where I know it will be put towards the healing, comfort and needs of our wounded servicemen and women”.

The chairman then presented cheques to Heather Crane, County Staff Officer, St John Ambulance and John Sugars of Rushden Historical Transport Society.

(b) Presentation – Cadet of the Year

“Secondly, I wanted to recognise volunteers during my year in office in the District and decided to split it into two categories – under 18s and over 18s. I have therefore chosen Tom Carvell, Cadet of the Year in St John Ambulance as a shining example of the youth in our District”.

The chairman presented Tom Carvell with the award for Cadet of the Year.

(c) Tribute to Retiring Councillors

“Thirdly, this evening I would like to wish all Councillors the very best of luck in the forthcoming elections which are just around the corner. However, there are some Councillors who have decided to step down from public life at this juncture for varying reasons.

Sean Lever and Peter Bedford –two of our younger members. I know I speak on behalf of everyone here this evening when I say thank you for your contribution to the District Council, the committees and outside bodies you were involved in - we wish you well for the future and I am sure you will continue to take an interest in the activities of the District Council.

Albert Campbell and John Richardson – two of our senior members. For these two, life is about to become very different! I thought it was only right that I try to help them in their transition and I also know that Shirley and Isobel will be very interested in what I am going to give them! Having been so used to the paper versions of the weekly schedules of council meetings, I have adapted it so Shirley and Isobel can get their own back at last. Shirley and Isobel – this is your chance to fill this in weekly, get all the jobs done you’ve ever wanted, all the errands you want doing, etc etc.

Albert – over 20 years dedicated service to this District – a tremendous achievement and a huge thank you for your friendship, wisdom, and commitment on behalf of all of us.

John – a pioneer of the District Council since its inception – you are part of the furniture. You have achieved an exemplary and distinguished reputation for nearly 40 years and have sacrificed so much of your time in duty to others by serving as a District Councillor. You have continued to serve on outside bodies for many years and have truly devoted your life to helping the less fortunate, being there to listen to other councillors’ problems and have been a fountain of knowledge to younger members and the electorate.

I have decided that for all the work you have undertaken over the 40 years, you are the most deserving of the Chairman's Volunteer of the Year Award and it is my pleasure to present this to you this evening."

The chairman then presented Councillor John Richardson with the award..

Councillor Albert Campbell thanked the chairman for her remarks and Councillor John Richardson responded as follows:-

"First of all I should like to thank our chairman, Sue Homer, for giving me this opportunity to speak to you on the occasion of my last council meeting.

I have enjoyed immensely my time as councillor, as you have probably noticed. I should like to thank everyone, councillors and officers, for their courtesy, help and forbearance over the years.

In deciding not to stand for the council this year, you will have noticed that physically I am a bit decrepit, but hopefully not mentally and I feel I would be far too old in four years' time if I was successful this time around.

I am reminded of the words that Chris Mullins, a Labour MP, said when he retired in 2010 (much younger than me I might add) that he wanted people to say "Why is he going?" not "When is he going?"

I have been a councillor for over 40 years, most of it with this council. I have seen many changes. This council was and still is an amalgam of six different local authorities, originally with six different offices and given short shrift by its neighbours who said that by joining forces we wouldn't last two years. Thirty seven years on we are still here, with modern offices and a council chamber, with a council that has consistently reacted positively to the problems of the day as shown by its response to the economic downturn of the last two years.

In recognition of the importance of trees in our environment, I have bought and planted a beech tree on the green area to your right when you arrive. It is in front of the Chief Executive David Oliver's window and I charge him with keeping a careful eye on it.

On behalf of Albert Campbell and myself, I would like to invite you all, members, officers, past members and officers, including past Chief Executives, to light refreshments immediately after this meeting.

Thank you all for your companionship, it has enriched my life. God bless you all. "

494. LEADER'S ADDRESS

There was no Leader's Address to this meeting.

495. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(a) Development Control Committee – 2 and 23 March and 13 April 2011

The reports of the above committee, presented by the chairman, Councillor Pauline Bradberry, were received.

(b) Licensing Committee – 9 March 2011

The report of the above committee, presented by the chairman, Councillor Glenn Harwood, was received. He reported on the work of the committee during the last cycle of meetings and through the twice yearly licensing seminars.

(c) Policy & Resources Committee – 14 March and 11 April 2011

The reports of the above committee, presented by the chairman, Councillor Richard Lewis, were received. He reported on the work of the committee during the last cycle of meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations in the following minutes be approved:

440 – Changes to Part 5.7 of the Constitution

That the changes to part 5.7 of the constitution, as set out at page 745, be approved.

472 – Prudential Indicators

That the Prudential Indicators (as set out in Appendix A on pages 784 to 788) be approved.

476 – Member Empowerment Fund

That the Executive Director and the Head of Customer and Community Services be authorised to approve applications and authorise payments for the MEF.

479 – Proposed Constitutional Changes

- (1) *That the changes to the terms of reference of committees and the Finance Working Party as set out in appendices D to F at pages 803 to 808 be approved.*
- (2) *That changes be made to article 7 and part 4.4 of the constitution to reflect the adjustments set out in the preamble and that any further consequential changes, if required, be made to other parts of the constitution to also reflect the adjustments.*
- (3) *That the changes to Parts 5.2, 1 and 4.3 of the constitution as set out in appendix G at page 809 be approved.*

(d) Planning Policy Committee – 28 March 2011

The report of the above committee, presented by Councillor Dudley Hughes, was received.

(e) Scrutiny Committee – 4 April 2011

The report of the above committee, presented by the chairman, Councillor Phillip Stearn, was received. He reported on the work of the committee during the last cycle of meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation contained in minute 461 (Annual Report) and set out below, be approved:-

That the 2010 annual report of the Scrutiny Committee be approved by the council for publication.

(f) East Northamptonshire Standards Board – 6 April 2011

The chairman, Graham Blagden, presented the report of the above meeting and commented on the board's work during the current meetings cycle.

496. OTHER REPORTS

(a) Outside Bodies

Councillor Richard Lewis reported on the work of Rushden MIND.

(b) Licensing Panels

The minutes of the Licensing (Liquor & Gambling) Panel held on 15 and 23 February 2011 were received.

497. MOTIONS

There were no motions.

498. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

499. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Finance Manager presented a report on adoption of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2010/11, and it was recognised that the following changes were required to the scheme proposed:-

- Re-wording of paragraph 1.9 of the summary to provide clarity
- Schedule 1 to refer to chairmen against Licensing Committee and Personnel Sub-Committee
- Schedule 2 to reflect the travelling allowance of 45p per mile following the Budget.

RESOLVED:

That the Scheme of Members' Allowances set out on pages 853 to 857 to these minutes (incorporating the above amendments) be adopted for the Municipal Year 2011/12.

(Reasons – budget provision has been made on this basis; there were no increases in the previous year; the recommendation is consistent with the council’s decision to freeze staff pay for all but the lowest paid)

500. CORPORATE PLAN

The Chief Executive submitted the draft Corporate Plan 2011-2015, outlining the council’s priorities in the next 5 years. It was emphasised that financial stability had now been included as one of these priorities.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to any final formatting and presentational changes to be signed off by the Chief Executive, the new Corporate Plan 2011-2015 (as set out on pages 858 to 874) be adopted.

(Reasons – to provide a direction for the council over the next 5 years; and ensure that the council’s priorities govern spending within the financial constraints that currently apply)

Chairman

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2011/12

1. Summary of Main Features

1.1 Members are entitled to -

- Basic allowance of £4,290 per annum
- Special Responsibility Allowance (for Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy, Regulatory, Performance and Scrutiny Committees; Chairman of Standards Board; the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader; Leader of the Opposition Group; Chairman of Licensing Panel; Council Champions; "Co-opted" Members of Standards Board - see Schedule 1). These are annual sums.
- Travelling and subsistence expenses linked to approved staff casual user travelling rates under the NJC national conditions of service (Green Book) (see Schedule 2).
- a carers' allowance of £5.55 per hour for the approved duties (see travel and subsistence schemes for approved duties) in Schedule 2 of the Council's current scheme.

1.2 Independent or Town/Parish Council representative Members of the East Northamptonshire Standards Board are entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance of £805 per annum.

1.3 Basic allowance is payable from date of declaration of acceptance of office to 4 days after an election or formal notification of the resignation of office.

1.4 Where entitlement to all or any part of the allowances is renounced, notice must be given in writing to the Executive Director/Chief Finance Officer.

1.5 Entitlements to special responsibility allowances are applied pro-rata to the period of office as a Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Leader. The allowance is normally payable from date of the formal appointment by Council to the office until any subsequent change in office or resignation. In the case of the Opposition Leader allowance the payment is payable from the date of formal notification of the Leader by the Group, to the Chief Executive, until the Group subsequently advises of any change of leadership.

1.6 The Deputy Leader of the main political group may claim the "Leaders" Special Responsibility Allowance, in lieu of the Leader, in respect of planned absences, long term sickness or the death of the Leader. Formal notification of planned absence must be given to the Chief Executive in writing, in advance, by the Leader.

1.7 Basic allowances and special responsibility allowances are paid automatically - in instalments of one twelfth on the 27th of each month by BACS direct to a nominated bank account.

1.8 Only one Special Responsibility Allowance shall be payable in respect of Councillors holding more than one post.

1.9 Where a Member, elected or not, is entitled to an allowance from this Council, but is also a member of another authority (e.g. county, police or parish) the Member may only receive the allowance from one authority in respect of the same duties, including membership of outside bodies. This also applies to claiming travelling and

subsistence payments. Members have the responsibility to ensure they receive one allowance or make one expense claim.

- 1.10 Where a Member is suspended or partially suspended from his responsibilities or duties as a Member of an authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, all allowances in respect of the suspension period or partial suspension period will be withheld.
- 1.11 No Members will be able to have access to the pensions scheme but this will be kept under review for consideration in future years.
- 1.12 The year begins on the date of the Annual Meeting (AM) of the Council and ends the day before the subsequent AM.
- 1.13 The scheme can be amended during the year by full Council. Any amendments to the allowances that may be approved during the year that affect the sum payable for the year may be applied from the beginning of the year subject to Council approval to the back dating
- 1.14 The Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances will be increased annually from the date of the Annual Council Meeting to reflect the percentage increase received by staff under the terms of the NJC national conditions of service.
- 1.15 The scheme and sums payable are subject to review by the Independent Panel

Schedule 1

ALLOWANCES PAYABLE

	Basic Allowance £	Special Responsibility £	Total £	SRA = Multiple of Basic or Chair
Leader of the Council	4,290	7,508	11,798	1.75
Deputy Leader of the Council	4,290	3,647	7,937	0.85
Policy and Resources, Development Control and Planning Policy Committee – Chairmen (Tier 1)	4,290	3,647	7,937	0.85
Scrutiny-Committee – Chairman (Tier 2)	4,290	3,218	7,508	0.75
Independent Chairman of Standards Board (Tier 2)	0	3,218	3,218	0.75
Licensing Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee - Chairmen (Tier 3)	4,290	1,216	5,506	1/3 of Chairman of Tier 1
Policy and Resources, Development Control and Planning Policy Committee – Vice Chairmen	4,290	1,216	5,506	1/3 of Chairman
Scrutiny Committee – Vice Chairman	4,290	1,073	5,363	1/3 of Chairman
Licensing Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee - Vice Chairmen	4,290	0	4,290	-
Standards Board – Non-Council Members	0	805	805	0.25 of Chairman
Leader of the Opposition	4,290	3,647	7,937	0.85
Licensing Panel – Chairman	4,290	0	4,290	-
Designated Council Champions/Lead Members	4,290	805	5,095	0.25 of Tier 2 Chairman
Other Members	4,290	0	4,290	None

Note: Where a Member holds more than one post, only one SRA can be claimed.

Schedule 2

TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES

Travel and subsistence allowances will be paid with basic and special responsibility allowances on 27th of each month, subject to the receipt of a properly completed form. Completed claim forms for travel and subsistence must be received by the 10th of the month to ensure payment on the 27th.

Members should submit claims on a monthly basis.

There is an entitlement to reimbursement of travelling and subsistence expenses when a Councillor -

- *Attends a Council, Committee, Joint Committee, Board, Sub-Committee, Working Party, Panel, or formal Development Control Committee site meeting/visit, provided the claimant is a member of these bodies;*
- *Attends meetings of a body (or, in the absence of similar provisions operated by that body, a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of that body) to which he/she has been appointed as a representative of the Council. Where it is not possible for the Leader of the Council, as the appointed representative, or a Deputy appointed by the Council, to attend, the Leader shall be entitled to nominate another Member to attend instead.*
- *Attends meetings called at the request or invitation of Chief Officers or Heads of Service (including opening of tenders pursuant to paragraph 7 of the Council's Procurement Procedures);*
- *Attends any other meeting or function for which the Council or a Committee has decided, in advance, that travelling and subsistence expenses may be claimed to discharge the functions of the Council or any of its Committees.*
- *Undertakes duties in order to discharge the role of Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, as set out in Article 6 of the Constitution.*

TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES PAYABLE

Members are subject to the East Northamptonshire Council Staff Travel and Subsistence Scheme rates (set out below).

1. Expenditure must have been actually and necessarily incurred.
2. Travelling
 - (a) The rate for travel by public transport shall not exceed the standard fare or any available cheap fare. Receipts should be obtained and attached to claim forms.
 - (b) Travel by taxi is allowed in cases of urgency or where no public service is reasonably available, and the amount claimed shall not exceed the amount of the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity. Receipts should be obtained and attached to claim forms.
 - (c) The rate for travel by a hired car shall not exceed the rate which would have been applicable for a member's own car.

- (d) Where a Councillor uses his own motor car (or one belonging to a member of his/her family), the rate claimed shall be as follows:

Cubic Capacity	Under	999 cc	45p
	1000	1199 cc	45p
	Over	1200 cc	45p

3. Subsistence – actual costs will be reimbursed subject to receipts and a maximum sum of:-

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--|-------|
| (a) | Bed & Breakfast | (full cost of reasonable & necessary expenses) | |
| (b) | Breakfast | | £5.75 |
| (c) | Lunch | | £8.00 |
| (d) | Tea | | £3.20 |
| (e) | Evening meal | | £9.85 |



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Corporate Plan 2011-15



Introduction

We live in challenging times financially. The Council's income has reduced dramatically and we can no longer afford some of the plans and projects that we envisaged just a couple of years ago.

The country's financial problems have had a major impact on many of our residents and communities too, creating a greater demand than ever on some of our services and those of our partners. The challenge for all of us is to do more with less.

We have a record of improving services, investing in technology or staff to embrace new ways of working and to tackle specific issues. We have reduced our management costs by nearly a third in the last four years, and have entered into a range of shared and contracted-out services to ensure that Council Tax payers get the best possible value for money.

We remain ambitious and will play a full part in ensuring that the District thrives and prospers. This Corporate Plan includes a small number of key priorities which we will be focusing on over the next four years:

- Sustainable development – the demand for housing in this area has not gone away. Indeed, it has increased as the number of housing completions has almost ground to a halt over the last couple of years. We recognise the need for growth and the benefits it can bring, particularly in helping to revitalise our town centres, but it must be sustainable. We will aim to accommodate sensible levels of growth while preserving the character of our historic towns and villages.
- Regeneration and economic development – allied to growth must be improvements to the quality of our town centres. We will work with the private sector to bring investment into the area and to reverse the decline of some of our towns, particularly Rushden. We will continue to consult local communities about the changes that they want to see and work with them to achieve their aspirations for their local area.
- Financial stability – we will continue to control our costs and to provide value-for-money services by maintaining our drive for efficiency and building effective partnerships.
- Customer-focused services – despite the economic downturn, the District is still relatively affluent. Many of our residents and businesses routinely use the internet and we will upgrade our website significantly to provide better quality information and to enable far more transactions to be carried out online. We will also work even more closely with our partners, particularly the County Council, to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.

East Northamptonshire is a great place to live, work and visit. This Council will continue to play its part in making it even better.

Cllr Steven North
Leader

David Oliver
Chief Executive

1.0 Corporate outcomes – where we want to be

This Corporate Plan sets out East Northamptonshire Council's key priorities and the outcomes that we intend to achieve over the next four years. These reflect a realistic balance between what we would like to do and what we can afford to do, and provide a basis for us to plan our work and to allocate our resources.

Our ambitions are challenging and we have limited resources but we believe we are right to be aiming high – our communities and our customers deserve that, and we all want a district that we can continue to be proud of.

We know we can't achieve all this alone. We will be working with other public sector partners and the private sector to achieve them.

The Council's vision is

Working with our communities to sustain a thriving District

The corporate outcomes that we will focus on for the next 4 years to achieve this vision can be summarised as:

	A good quality of life where the district will be:	Priority outcomes
Improvements for the community	Prosperous	Regeneration and economic development
	Sustainable	Sustainable development Strong communities High quality built environment
	Clean	Effective management of waste Clean streets
	Healthy	High levels of participation in active recreation Improved housing Good public health
	Safe	Low levels of crime Low levels of anti-social behaviour
	Council services which provide good value for money	Financial stability Good value for money
	Effective processes	High quality service delivery
Effective partnership working		Strong strategic partnerships
Strong community leadership		A proactive and listening Council
Effective management		Committed staff Good use of resources Legal compliance Effective business continuity
How we learn and grow	Knowledge of our customers and communities	Customer and community insight
	Councillors and staff with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours	Continuous development Appropriate behaviours

These outcomes form the basis for the content of this Corporate Plan.

2.0 Where are we now?

We keep track of national statistics on a range of things that contribute to quality of life. These statistics consistently show that East Northamptonshire is generally safer, cleaner, healthier and more prosperous than most parts of the country.

We also regularly encourage views and feedback on services, and consult and engage with local people and partners on our future plans and development. Much of this happens through:

- Surveys of our Residents' Panel of around 900 residents
- Consulting with local communities about how they want to see their area or neighbourhood develop, and involving them in the planning process.
- Community Focus groups on specific service developments
- Surveys and "You say, We do" articles in Nene Valley News
- Day-today customer feedback through comments, compliments and complaints
- The feedback buttons on our website and in our customer service areas
- Standard questions in our service area questionnaires to give us customer feedback across the whole Council
- Opportunities to speak at Council meetings
- Councillors' surgeries and meetings with their communities

Analysis of feedback over the past few years provides a major part of the background to the preparation of this Plan. In addition we have considered the impact of the recent recession and current economic climate on local residents, communities and businesses, together with the changed policy direction of the coalition government.

Many of the issues about which residents regularly express concern are primarily the responsibility of other public sector bodies, such as:

- crime (the police)
- health (the NHS)
- the condition of roads and pavements (the County Council or, for major 'A' roads, the national Highways Agency)

Other concerns, like job prospects or shopping facilities, are largely dependent on national factors such as the economy.

This plan focuses on what we can do to deliver what our communities and customers want and it also recognises that we will need to work with a range of partners to achieve our vision of **Working with our communities to sustain a thriving District**

Our approach to achieving the outcomes set out **[ON PAGE X / IN SECTION 1.0]** is outlined in the following sections.

3.0 What will we do to achieve our goals?

We need to make the most of limited resources, so we will focus on the quality of life issues that are most important to our communities and that we can do something about.

3.1 A good quality of life – Prosperous

East Northamptonshire is a relatively prosperous District, and unemployment is low. We have already invested in improvements to the town centres of Raunds, Irthlingborough and Rushden to make them more attractive and to encourage people to visit and to shop, and we will build on this.

Regeneration and Economic Development

The economic prosperity of the District is driven primarily by national factors, but there are a few key actions that we will carry out to help to provide the best possible climate for business growth.

We will:

- Pursue opportunities for high-speed broadband to be installed across the District
- Free up land for development in Rushden and complete the improvements to the High Street to make the town centre more inviting for retailers and shoppers
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify the regeneration needs of their areas and to put plans in place for meeting those needs
- Develop a Local Infrastructure Plan that sets out the facilities and transport links that local communities need and use the government's New Homes Bonus to deliver some of those locally-decided requirements.
- Provide a business-friendly planning service, within the constraints of planning policy, designed to make it as easy as possible for companies to set up or expand
- Help businesses to find the support they need to help them thrive in challenging market conditions
- Provide equality of opportunity for businesses through regulation and enforcement.

3.2 A good quality of life – Sustainable

Demand for housing in East Northamptonshire has continued during the recent recession and we can expect further growth as the economy picks up. Our challenge is to ensure that this growth is resilient to future changes in climate and benefits the local economy and local communities by improving the quality of the environment.

Sustainable development

We will:

- Work jointly with our partners in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, covering the area known as North Northamptonshire, to revise the Core Spatial Strategy so that it balances effectively the overall need for housing and business growth and the wishes of local communities.
- Produce Master Plans for Higham Ferrers and Thrapston, building on their development for the other towns in the District, to give local people a say in how all our towns should develop over the next 10 years.
- Develop Neighbourhood Plans for those villages and rural areas that want them and work with Town and Parish Councils and local communities across the District to implement them.

High quality built environment

We will:

- Involve local people in the planning process
- Concentrate housing growth in those areas where development can be sustainable
- Ensure that new developments provide adequate infrastructure, including high quality green and open space, and that new buildings meet high environmental standards

3.3 A good quality of life – Clean

We know that the services that the public values most are refuse collection, street cleaning and recycling, so we will continue to invest in them. Waste management is becoming increasingly expensive because of Government fines for putting household waste into landfill sites, so we will provide a service that is both high quality and low cost.

Effective management of waste

We will:

- Maintain a weekly refuse collection service for food waste as part of a new, improved waste and recycling service
- Reduce the amount of domestic waste that is taken to landfill
- Increase recycling rates through continued education and enforcement

Clean streets

We will:

- Adopt a 'zero tolerance' policy to clearing litter from privately-owned land. The responsibility lies with the landowners but, where necessary, we will clear the land ourselves and recover the costs from them
- Continue to act promptly to deal with graffiti, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and other eyesores

3.4 A good quality of life – Healthy

People are living longer than ever before, and we will continue to provide services to help everyone stay fit and active.

Increased participation in active recreation

We will:

- Continue to provide opportunities for leisure and recreation throughout the District
- Develop opportunities for sport and recreation on the River Nene
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify and protect open and green spaces and use them for active recreation
- Deliver further sections of the “Greenway”, a network of routes for walking and cycling from Raunds and Thrapston through Stanwick Lakes to Wellingborough Railway Station

Improved housing

We will:

- Seek, through our planning policies, to ensure that appropriate types and levels of affordable housing are provided as a result of new developments
- Address poor housing standards through grant aid and enforcement
- Work with our communities to put problematic empty properties back into use.

Good public health

We will continue our mix of advice, education and enforcement to ensure that:

- Workplaces are safe
- Food premises are hygienic
- The water, air and land we enjoy is clean and safe

3.5 A good quality of life – Safe

Low level of crime

Levels of crime in East Northamptonshire are already low, and we will continue to work with the police and other partners to keep it that way. While crime prevention and detection are primarily the responsibility of the police, we will:

- Engage with local communities in vulnerable areas to help them improve their own personal and home safety
- Ensure that new developments are well-designed to minimise the opportunities for crime

Reduced anti-social behaviour

While crime levels are relatively low and anti-social behaviour has been decreasing, there are still problems in some areas, particularly town centres. This leads to people feeling unsafe.

We will:

- Target the few prolific offenders who cause most of the problems
- Work with the police and other partners to target the areas where anti-social behaviour is most common

4.0 Good value for money

We have suffered a significant cut in government funding at the same time as our investment income and revenue from fees and charges have fallen. Because of these reductions in income we have had to cut costs significantly, but we aim to maintain high quality services while keeping Council Tax low.

Most of our Council Tax payers think that our current low level of tax – just over £2.00 a week, and less than 10% of the total bill – represents good value. Many people's everyday household costs are rising significantly, though, so now it is more important than ever for us to continue to provide good value for money.

Financial stability

We must ensure that our finances remain healthy so that we can continue to maintain high quality services. We will:

- Balance our budget by 2012/13, leaving a reasonable level of reserves to cater for major unexpected costs
- Manage our finances carefully so that we can afford our future plans

Value for money

We will:

- Focus our resources on the priority areas set out in this Corporate Plan, spending money only on those things which are important to our local communities or essential for the effective running of the Council
- Continue to keep Council Tax levels as low as possible
- Continue to look for opportunities to reduce costs and increase flexibility, for example through joining up services with other councils

Achieving these outcomes for our communities depends on our carrying out certain key processes well

5.0 High quality service delivery

Our main aim is to provide high quality, customer-focused services to the public. This is sometimes challenging, because many of the services we provide are governed by various laws, some of which require us to ensure that businesses and members of the public comply with them. We are inspected by a number of regulators and government departments to ensure that we are complying with those laws and enforcing them effectively.

Customer-focused services

We will:

- Use our customer knowledge to shape service delivery and improve the ways in which customers can access our services
- Identify those services which people would like to be able to access online, and provide those services online in a simple and convenient way
- Continue to identify and reduce 'avoidable contact', where our customers really shouldn't have had to call, e-mail or write to us
- Enforce relevant legislation sensitively, ensuring that our customers understand the reasons for our actions and feel that they have had a fair hearing
- Ensure we deliver services fairly and equitably to all our customers

6.0 Effective partnership working

We can only achieve many of our priority outcomes by working in partnership with other councils, the police, the health service, the voluntary sector and others.

Strong strategic partnerships

We will:

- Focus our efforts on those partnerships that make a significant contribution to our and our partners' priority outcomes
- Ensure that we play a full role in all those partnerships

7.0 Strong community leadership

A proactive and listening Council

We will:

- Lead by example, providing open and transparent government and clear decision-making arrangements
- Seek to engage Town and Parish councils and local communities in plans and developments that affect their areas
- Aim to support and develop capacity within local communities to help them to help themselves
- Provide opportunities for residents to influence council decisions
- Ensure we have regard to equality issues in our decision-making
- Explain our decisions and give feedback to the public on all the consultation we carry out

8.0 Effective management

Our management of people, finances, assets, information and risks is crucial to our providing high quality services and value for money.

Committed staff

We maintain a fundamental belief in the value of our staff and the contribution they make towards the success of the organisation. It is important to us for them to feel positive and motivated.

We will:

- Maintain competitive pay and benefits packages
- Treat our staff fairly and equitably by monitoring employment data and putting policies and procedures in place to deal with any issues that might arise
- Provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which to encourage and motivate staff to achieve high standards
- Seek to achieve a good work/life balance for staff, including managing workloads carefully as staff numbers reduce
- Consult staff about policies and issues that affect them and tell them about the progress of reviews, new council programmes/policies and progress towards the achievement of objectives and targets
- Listen to the views of staff and their trades unions and take them into account

Good use of resources

We will:

- Plan our future workforce requirements to ensure that we will always have the right people with the right skills in the right jobs
- Manage our finances carefully, procuring goods and services to achieve the right balance between cost and quality and applying effective internal controls and accounting procedures
- Ensure that we have the assets we need to operate cost-effectively, maintaining those assets and dispose of others that are surplus to requirements
- Store information securely, manage it effectively by ensuring that it is relevant, accurate, up to date and accessible, and make it available as required under Freedom of Information legislation
- Identify and effectively manage corporate and service risks
- Monitor and report on our performance, taking remedial action where necessary

Legal compliance

We will:

- Comply with all the statutory requirements that govern our activities

Effective business continuity

We will:

- Maintain effective business continuity arrangements to ensure that we have procedures and back-up plans so that we can continue to provide services in the event of major disruption, such as a fire or a significant ICT failure

Two things underpin everything we do – understanding the needs of our different customers and communities, and having staff and councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours

9.0 Knowledge of our customers and communities

We recognise that all our customers and communities are different, and will reflect those differences in the way we deliver services.

Customer and community insight

We will:

Develop our understanding of how customers currently use services and how, when and where they want to use them

- Engage with local communities to understand their needs
- Continue to use our Residents' Panel and surveys in Nene Valley News to gauge opinion and understand the issues that residents are concerned about

10.0 Staff and councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours

It is vital that all our staff and Councillors have the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their duties.

Continuous development

We will:

- Continue to invest in training and development for staff and councillors, to ensure that they have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their roles into the future

Appropriate behaviours

We will:

- Use our knowledge, skills and behaviours framework as a basis for recruitment, induction, appraisal, training and development

Other important documents that support this Corporate Plan

Medium Term Financial Strategy

This strategy sets out how we will use our resources to achieve our priorities.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

We are working with partners to review the planning policies and proposals that will comprise the LDF.

East Northamptonshire Council Constitution

East Northamptonshire Council has agreed a constitution which sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

To view the above documents, go to:

www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/corporateplan

All of the Council's strategies, policies, press releases and details of any ongoing consultation can be found at www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk