

Service Plans 2013/14

Setting out our plans for the year ahead

Introducing the service plans for Kettering Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the service plans for 2013/14.

The service plans provide an important link between the high level ambitions and priorities of the Council and its day-to-day activity.

The Council is not unique in its approach to service planning. Indeed, producing service plans are a feature of most well run medium sized organisations. Clarity of purpose and understanding where we are now, where are going and how we will get there are clearly important components of any well run organisation.

This years service plans see some key changes. The format has been streamlined to make them shorter, more focussed and easier to read. In addition, the duplicated content that appeared in each service areas plan has been removed and put together in the following pages in this overview section.

It is important to keep in mind when looking at the service plans that they are not a finished product. They will always be work in progress and will continue to respond to the changing environment and pressures that the Council faces.

What is important however is that they provide clarity of purpose and focus. These two factors are essential given the economic and service pressures the Council faces today and in the future.

We hope you find the service plans a useful and informative read and as always, we welcome any feedback you may have.

Thank you.

2. The Council's Corporate Priorities

Sustainable Place Making	Area	Strategic Aim	Objective
Sustainable Place Making	1. Sustainable communities	1A. Stronger Town Centres	1A1. Retail growth and developing local centres 1A2. Safer Town Centres 1A3. Access and parking 1A4. Getting more from Council owned assets
		1B. Economy and Skills	1B1. Allocate land for employment 1B2. Co-operate with others to market the area 1B3. Work to develop a broader skills base
		1C. Design Standards for Buildings	1C1. Character, urban design and layout 1C2. Energy efficiency and eco homes standards 1C3. Secured by design standards 1C4. Protect the building stock
		1D. Managing Growth	1D1. Infrastructure (roads, utilities etc) 1D2. Affordable housing (rural and town) 1D3. Access to green space 1D4. Local facilities in urban extensions 1D5. Adequate public services e.g. health, police, transport
	2. Customer Service	2A. Access to Services	2A1. Expand shared Customer Service Centre activities 2A2. Extend electronic access to services 2A3. Ensure access to people with specific needs 2A4. Treating people fairly and equality of access
		2B. Efficient and effective Service Delivery	2B1. Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of services 2B2. Maintain high customer services standards 2B3. Aim to maintain front-line services
		2C. Reputation and Public Perception	2C1. Informed customers of the services available to them
		2D. Enhanced Local Government	2D1. Innovate to provide more efficient & effective services
	3. Environment	3A. Greener Borough	3A1. Reduce the Council's carbon footprint 3A2. Act as an environmental facilitator in the community 3A3. Improve biodiversity in the Borough 3A4. Efficient and effective waste and recycling services 3A5. Develop a greener infrastructure and green standards
		3B. Cleaner Borough	3B1. Keep the Borough clean and tidy
	3. Community and Rural	4A. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime	4A1. Visible presence on the streets to tackle ASB 4A2. Work for a safer and cleaner environment 4A3. Address concerns about anti-social behaviour
		4B. Active Citizens	4B1. Improve communication with local communities 4B2. Engage more with young people 4B3. Support older people to remain active 4B4. Enhance village communities 4B5. Develop community cohesion 4B6. Work to improve transport 4B7. Increase participation in play, sport, leisure & culture 4B8. Help people to improve their own health

2. A review of the Council's progress in meeting its aims

2012/13 has been a busy year. Significant progress has been made across the Council's strategic aims and objectives despite significant financial and service pressures.

A comprehensive list of achievements has been included in each of the service plans which provide more information about the achievement delivered. These should be taken in the context of:

- A zero percent increase in Council tax
- A zero reduction in front line services
- A zero reduction in grants provided to the voluntary sector

This has been no easy achievement. An important part of the Council's approach has been focussed on maintaining a motivated and creative workforce, fully engaging it in the process of delivering better services and savings. This has been an achievement in itself and has been one of the factors that resulted in national awards, accolades and led the Investors in People assessors to conclude that at Kettering Borough Council there is:

“An excellent level of focus and commitment by everyone within the organisation to work together in a ‘ONE TEAM’ approach in providing a high standard of ‘Customer Service’ as well as ‘Value for Money’ for all the people who live within the Borough of Kettering.

and

“A staff base that is totally engaged, and enthused by the management team in identifying and then implementing new ways of working. This has resulted in either improved and or maintained customer service delivery levels more cost effectively”.

Extract from the IIP Report

3. Key projects over the coming months

Some of the key projects that the Council will be focussing on over the coming months (which involve support and resources from across the Council) include:

- Supporting the delivery of the East of Kettering urban extension and other key development sites
- Business rates reform
- Council tax benefit changes
- Welfare reform and Universal credit
- Medium term financial planning and efficiency savings
- Supporting the delivery of sustainable energy generation in the Borough
- Town centre regeneration
- Delivering the budget 2013/14
- Helping to attract and create quality jobs to the borough
- Organising events that attract people into the area
- Partnership development in service delivery

These projects, along with the increasing pressures being placed day-to-day service delivery and the commitment to delivery a 0% increase in council tax, 0% cuts in front-line services and 0% cuts in voluntary sector grants reflect ambitious aspirations.

Focussing on the things that matter most, coupled with creative and innovative thinking will be critical in achieving these aims.

4. The Council's customer service standards

Please note that the Council's customer service standards are currently being reviewed. The aim is to ensure that they still represent a good standard of service to customers. An important part of this process is consulting with customers and this is currently underway.

We will aim to:

- ◆ Answer all phone calls within **10** seconds
- ◆ Reply in full to all written enquiries within **10** working days of their receipt
- ◆ We will aim to see customers who visit us within **10** minutes. If there is an occasion where we are unable to honour this commitment then we will offer to make an appointment

In addition, we will aim to:

- ◆ Acknowledge receipt of e-mails on the same working day as they are received, and we will provide an answer to e-mail queries within three working days
- ◆ Make an appointment when requested
- ◆ We will deal with 90% of enquiries without transferring customer calls to other areas of the Council
- ◆ We will provide a polite, friendly and effective response
- ◆ We will wear name badges and will treat customers with respect

Attitude - We Will:

- ◆ Demonstrate a positive attitude at all times, showing care, empathy, courtesy, respect and a willingness to deliver a quality service.
- ◆ Give fair and consistent treatment to all our customers, treating them as individuals, to ensure they have equal access to our services.
- ◆ Work as a team on behalf of the customer, demonstrating ownership, accountability and commitment to follow-through.
- ◆ Present ourselves as Service Professionals being neat, clean, well organised and dressed appropriately to the type of work we are doing.

Skills - We Will:

- ◆ Communicate honestly and effectively in listening, questioning and understanding.
- ◆ Ensure our written communication is professional and jargon free.
- ◆ Deliver on promises, keeping the customer informed at all times even when there is no news.
- ◆ Take the initiative to solve problems, deliver solutions and not excuses.
- ◆ Seek and act on feedback in pursuit of improving our performance.
- ◆ Challenge disrespectful behaviours and attitudes in colleagues that impact our goal of service excellence.

Approach: General Telephone Use

- ◆ We will always answer the telephone within 10 seconds/5 rings
- ◆ We will always greet people in a professional and personal manner e.g.; Greeting e.g. Good morning/afternoon, Name, Willingness to offer help
- ◆ If we are sitting at our desk and the phone rings we will answer it
- ◆ If we are occupied or having a meeting in our office and the phone rings, we will answer it - We will excuse ourselves and ask caller whether we can return their call
- ◆ If a colleague is not around, we will pick up their call and either deal with caller or take down a message on behalf of our colleague
- ◆ We will own all enquiries received on our phone and will not quickly dismiss caller who is incorrectly connected to our phone.

Approach: Mobile Phone Use

- ◆ Where a member of staff is working off-site they should have their mobile phone switched on, following the general telephone answering standards above, with the following exceptions:-
- ◆ Do not use in your car with the engine running (refer to Guidance note 3 'Use of Mobile Phones' in the Corporate Health and Safety Manual). Respond to any messages as soon as they are stationary.
- ◆ Whilst in meetings or with customers your mobile should be switched to the messaging service as per the general voicemail standards.

Use of Voicemail

- ◆ We will only use voicemail facility as a last resort and remember that customers or callers prefer to speak to people
- ◆ We will always ensure that there is a facility for a caller to leave a message and leave a professional greeting
- ◆ If out all day, we will change our greeting accordingly, say who and number the caller can contact in our absence.
- ◆ If the query can wait, we will give the caller the option to leave a message.
- ◆ If sick and away from work, we will get a colleague to change your greeting - say whom the caller can contact in our absence.
- ◆ We will always call back / respond to your messages on the same day whenever possible

Use of email

In receipt of an e-mail from a customer we will:-

- ◆ Send an acknowledgement within 24 hours, thanking the customer for their contact; indicating when the matter will be dealt with and who their point of contact is.
- ◆ Use the same response times as for letters received.
- ◆ Respond to external customers in the same way as we would if we were sending a letter.
- ◆ Not expect customers to email us as well as speaking directly to us.
- ◆ Use the 'Out of Office Assistant' if we are out of the office for the day.
- ◆ Check our email daily unless we are using the 'Out of Office Assistant'.
- ◆ Not use email to communicate with our customers when it is more appropriate to talk with them.

Response times for letters

- ◆ Acknowledge within 3 working days and a full response within 10 working days regarding process.
- ◆ If it is a complex problem, update the customer every 15 working days regarding the process.

5. Cross-cutting themes

Sustainable Community Strategy

Kettering Borough Council is working with its partners to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy for our Borough with themes of:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Employability & Skills
- Voluntary Sector
- Regeneration & Growth
- Community Safety

The Sustainable Community Strategy is a high level document which reflects the ambitions and aspirations of the Borough's residents and businesses and includes resourced actions plans where a partnership approach to delivery adds value. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Executive Board drives this joint working and is accountable for ensuring the strategy is implemented. It aims to address local priorities while also reflecting the requirements of other strategic documents such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Corporate Plan (Summary)

Kettering Borough Council's Summary Corporate Plan sets out in summary form the aims, ambitions and key future priorities for the Council. The Summary Corporate Plan overarches the Service Plans which collectively contribute to the achievement of the Council's aims, ambitions and priorities.

The aims and ambitions that were set out in the Corporate Plan have been included in this service planning document as a reference point.

Medium-term financial strategy

All service units play an important role in ensuring that the Council maintains a stable medium term budget position. Many of the initiatives outlined within the Service Plans and in the more detailed action plans that underpin them, ensure that the service unit operates within the budget that has been set.

One of the most important factors in delivering a balanced medium term budget position is staying focussed on agreed priorities and resisting new budget pressures which are desirable rather than essential. The Service Plans help to maintain a focus on priorities and deliver a balanced budget.

Investing In Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Investment programme has been brought together to deliver Members' expectations of infrastructure and jobs-led growth: The key aims are to deliver:-

- ◆ A better offer for our town centres
- ◆ A better education and training offer
- ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs

In order to help deliver value for money and add value to project delivery, the Programme is currently being resourced through a secondment and the assignment of project managers and sponsors from across the organisation. This is allowing the Council to provide more

capacity to the project than could otherwise be achieved, speeding up project delivery and the benefits of regeneration. The resource requirements for specific projects are therefore reflected in the respective service plan action plans where appropriate.

It is important to note that the Council has made a conscious and purposeful effort to drive forward the redevelopment project in the recent difficult economic climate with a view to helping support the economic recovery in the area. This is part of the Council's 'modelling for recovery' approach.

Partnership Working

The Council has an impressive track record of partnership working and is always looking for mutually beneficial opportunities to develop this further. Recent partnership successes include the partnership with Kettering General Hospital through the provision of a phlebotomy unit which was cited on the Communities and Local Government Department's website as an example of best practice.

Partnerships of scope

The Council also has well established partnership arrangements with a number of voluntary sector agencies to deliver frontline services to customers; these include the Citizens Advice Bureau, Welfare Rights and Accommodation Concern. Additionally the Council is working with other public and third sector agencies for a potential partnership to share front and back office space. Indeed, through its innovative approach to delivering budget savings and remaining focused on its priorities, the Council has been able to limit the impact on voluntary sector grants.

Partnerships of scale

Service delivery partnerships that the Council is involved with include:

- District Law, providing legal services to Kettering Borough Council, Daventry District Council and Wellingborough District Council.
- Emergency planning and health and safety
- Joint Planning Unit
- Internal Audit
- Licensing unit
- Financial Management System partnership

The Council aims to provide a truly integrated service to local people working with other public sector service providers including the police, fire and health services to deliver improved services whilst seeking out efficiencies and economies which benefit the tax payer. Partnerships are assessed strictly on the benefits they can bring, rather than the desire to pursue different ways of working alone.

Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy

The Council possesses an Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy that provides a strategic overview for the investment, maintenance, development and disposal of all Council's property and non-property related assets. Due to the strategic importance of the Council's asset portfolio and its role in the delivery of the corporate priorities, all decisions that impact on the future use of the Council's land and buildings are given strategic consideration including close scrutiny by Strategic Management Team.

Modern Local E-Government

All service units play an important role in the delivery of the Council's E-government programme. One of the key drivers here is using new technology to improve services and reduce costs.

The Council is actively trying a range of new technologies and is continuously seeking new and more efficient technologically enabled ways of working. Similarly, the Council carefully assesses and trials new technology, being careful not to jump on the latest technological bandwagon without carefully understanding the longer term impact on the organisation.

Next Steps Improvement Programme

The Next Steps Improvement Programme is continuing to drive improvement across services. More information is contained within an update on progress with the Next Steps programme.

Treating people fairly and approach to equalities

Kettering Borough Council has a commitment to maximise the equality of opportunity and improve access to services.

The *Treating People Fairly* Strategy incorporates all the Council's legal duties under various equalities legislation, and aims to ensure that those people who are vulnerable, or who have special needs, or are at risk of experiencing discrimination, intentionally or not, are helped to access local services and opportunities. Services will be designed to ensure that those who need them do not face barriers because of their individual circumstances or background.

All service units are actively working to address issues of equality and social inclusion. All services have to comply with corporate policies and procedures regarding equality of opportunity as well as the legislative requirements.

Environment and sustainability

As an organisation, Kettering Borough Council is committed to being greener. We are working on a number of green projects that will help us work towards the delivery of our 'environmental' priorities.

The Council now has a Carbon Management Plan in place as well as a team of 'Green Champions' which comprises representatives from each service area who work together to:

- ◆ Raise awareness of how individuals can be greener
- ◆ Help the Council reduce its carbon footprint

The environment and our use of natural resources are key considerations when planning projects and new activities.

Natural resource use minimisation

The Council is working to minimise its consumption of natural resources in order to limit its negative impact on the environment of its own operations. This involves all service units being aware of the natural resources they use, such as energy, water, wood etc and putting in place measures that make the most efficiency use of it.

Procuring services

Kettering Borough Council's procurement strategy sets out how the Council will ensure that procurement processes and practices conform with relevant legislation, good practice and contract procedure rules (These form part of the Council's constitution); along with procurement Code of Practice (These also form part of the Council's constitution and set out the specific procurement procedures that will be followed in relation to contracts);

When procuring goods and services the Council will ensure that, at all times, it:

- ◆ maintains transparency and acts in an ethical manner;
- ◆ prevents anti-competitiveness at all stages of the procurement process;
- ◆ procures goods and services that provide best value for money rather than just provide least cost, and will be able to evidence the rationale for making decisions when challenged
- ◆ meets and exceeds the requirements of the Race Equality Standards as set out in the CRE's Race Equality and procurement in Local Government e. addresses the issue of sustainability of the environment

6. Approach to driving efficiency

The Council's approach to delivering efficient and economic services cut across all activities of the organisation. The approach of involving all staff in the process of increasing the organisations efficiency allows the Council to minimise the impact of the financial challenges on service users.

The foundations of the Council's Medium Term Financial strategy are the '*guiding principles*,' '*modelling for recovery*' principles and '*budget containment strategy*.' These three sets of inter-dependent principles have served the Council well and remain the Council's approved policy position going into the budget process for 2013/14.

Financial Strategy Guiding principles:

1. Revenue balances should not fall below £1m and overall revenue reserves should not fall below 10% of net revenue expenditure;
2. In setting the Council Tax, members should consider the medium term to ensure that a sustainable budgetary position is preserved (with due regard being given to any penalties that might apply);
3. The level of household Council Tax to increase each year in line with inflation at least, where the budget is in deficit, to ensure resources remain consistent with budgeted costs;
4. When setting the Capital Programme, consideration is given to allocating capital resources to schemes that are beneficial to the Council's overall revenue budget position;
5. To maximise the resources available to the Authority, the Council will actively lobby the Government on relevant issues (e.g. grant distribution/ planning fees).

Modelling for Recovery principles:

1. Wherever possible, continue with all planned investments and programmes, to protect the local economy and lever in other investments;
2. Given the strength of our Treasury position we should consider debt funding as a means of programme delivery or stimulus – if this can be shown to be sustainable and have a wider economic benefit;
3. Organise our fiscal structures and business models to attract and retain the maximum amount of revenue within the local economy;
4. To ensure all possible avenues are used within procurement rules to source locally;
5. Protect the performance of Council services which come under particular strain;
6. Work closely with partners in the voluntary, public and private sectors, to ensure optimum efficiency.

Budget Containment Strategy:

1. Where a specific grant which funds a specific service is withdrawn, the service stops;
2. Where grant funding reduces, which Kettering Borough Council passports through to another organisation, the reduced sum continues to be pass-ported, providing the end recipient organisation feels it can still provide a value-added service at that funding point.
3. Where a function is transferred to another provider, the Council leaves all service-provision discussions, including any top-up funding, with the new provider;
4. The Council would ordinarily neither seek to buffer nor profit from tax changes.
5. The Council should not substitute itself as a provider / funder of services when another public provider cuts such a service.

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