

South Holland District Council

Annual Report to Shareholders



Part 2

Objectives, Priorities and
Improvement Programme

2007

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South Holland's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement

The Council's vision is develop South Holland as a thriving, living and working rural community. The mission statement that gives expression to what we want to achieve is:

- **To provide a safe, secure and healthy place to live and work**
- **To develop a thriving rural community**
- **To be a leading edge authority, providing value for money quality services**
- **To listen and involve the community and work with partners.**

Our Priorities for 2007-10

Affordable Housing

House prices are rising rapidly in South Holland but incomes are not keeping pace. Our population is increasing faster and we have a higher proportion of older people than in the rest of the country.

There is evidence of an inward migration of older people moving to South Holland and we have a higher proportion of housing that is owned without a mortgage.

While we have low unemployment, South Holland is on average a low wage economy. There is the issue of a growing migrant worker population, which, while it is performing a vital role for our economy, is putting pressure on the housing market.

These factors make it increasingly difficult for young people to enter the housing market.

The Council's Housing Needs Survey Update 2004 shows a need for an additional 269 affordable homes a year to meet present needs. There is a shortfall in every part of the district. It shows that new low cost housing, unless subsidised in some way, will not meet any part of that annual need for affordable homes.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

We have set out how we will achieve our ambitions for affordable housing in our Housing Strategy.

We have four housing priorities:

Priority 1

Increase the availability, diversity and accessibility of affordable housing

Priority 2

Determine the future of the Council's housing stock that will secure the provision of high standard affordable housing for the tenants and continue to provide alternative options to tenants to reduce under occupation of Council homes

Priority 3

Reduce the incidence of homelessness

Priority 4

Work with others in support of the housing needs of the district

environment and by judging the effectiveness and responsiveness of the council services that care for their neighbourhoods. We know that 67% of people in South Holland are satisfied with the standard of cleanliness, 90% of people are satisfied with our waste collection service and 72% of people are satisfied with recycling. However there is a strong perception that the standard of service varies across the District which must be dispelled. The Council will continue to provide the same level of street scene services in our smaller towns and villages as our larger settlements receive.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

- Continue to collect the refuse every week and maintain a high standard of service
- Keep the area clean and tidy and maintain open spaces to a high and quality assured standard
- Develop a street scene strategy and environment strategy
- Reinforce and enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness
- Develop and protect the green infrastructure.
- Provide consistent and effective enforcement activity when the character of our towns, villages and countryside is threatened.

Care of Towns and Villages

Research shows that most people judge the effectiveness of their local council by looking at the cleanliness of their local area, the quality of their local

- Support efforts to deal with vandalism and anti-social behaviour in all its forms
- Develop greater influence with partners who deliver things that complement or own work on this priority
- Continue to support Parish Councils so that they can take on more responsibility for services
- Work with the County Council Youth Service to target the perceived threat of groups of young people on our streets
- Make sure that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is working to make community policing more effective in the District.

While less people enter 6th form education in the District than in other areas, those that do tend to do better than the average. However because of the lack of further education opportunities in the District school leavers are obliged to go elsewhere to complete their education. And when they have finished there is little to attract them back in the form of professional career structures. For those that chose not to go on to 6th form only 12.1% are employed with structured training and 39% of people aged 16 to 74 have no qualifications.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

We have set out how we will tackle this priority in our Economic Development Strategy 2006-09. We have four economic development priorities:

Secure and Diverse Employment

The South Holland economy is dominated by agriculture and food processing which are typically low wage employers. There is a significant amount of seasonal work, which has attracted large numbers of migrant workers particularly from the accession states to the European Union. Our proximity to Peterborough has led to recent increases in house prices and there is a substantial number of people commuting out of South Holland for better paid jobs.

While there are relatively high employment levels and greater number of fulltime jobs in the District people are low paid earning on average £6 less per week than workers in the East Midlands.

Priority One

Help create an environment in which existing businesses can grow

Priority Two

Support the start up and location of new businesses in South Holland

Priority Three

Generate a high quality of life so that people will want to both live and work in South Holland

Priority Four

Work with partners to tackle issues holding back economic growth

In addition we will carry out research to determine what further contribution migrant workers can make to our economy through the skills they bring with them that are in short supply in South Holland.

Improved Leisure Facilities

Good leisure services are important because they help improve health and well being, attract employers and their employees, and positively engage with children and young people.

They are also important factors for quality of life and people's satisfaction with where they live. We know that while local people are relatively satisfied with the access there is to the natural environment in the area that they are not so satisfied with the level of cultural recreational and leisure services and their ability to access these services.

These present two challenges:

- Leisure provision is often concentrated in the larger towns of the district.
- The main sports centre in Spalding is in need of re-furbishment.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

- Improve the current leisure facilities in South Holland or replace them where a sound business case can be made.
- Develop an environment strategy and a cultural strategy.
- Develop new ideas for expanding the green infrastructure provision.
- Secure new inward investment.
- Use Planning policy and the future development of Planning policy to maximum effect.
- Pay special attention to the development of cultural events and venues for South Holland.
- Work with partners to develop more facilities for young people in our villages and towns.

Access to Services

People's lifestyles in South Holland are changing as the profile of the people who live here changes. The geography of the area and the transportation infrastructure make it difficult for our most vulnerable people in particular to access services through 'traditional' routes. Indeed less than half of residents find it easy to access our services.

However just more than half of residents have access to a computer and more have access to the world wide web. Technology offers new opportunities and partnership offers better ways of

working. It is a priority for the Council to make sure that, where it is a

provider of services, these can be accessed through a variety of channels to suit the lifestyles and circumstances of the community.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

- Use the Information and Communication Technology Strategy to increase the range of access channels and the speed, ease and convenience of access.
- Better inform and make it easier for the public to find out about what the Council can do and proposes to do.
- Develop collaborative working partnerships to join up access to public services
- Develop 'Get Connected Next Steps'.
- Strengthen our system for learning and improving through customer feedback.
- Influence other service providers to improve access to all services.
- Increase awareness of access to services for those whose first language is not English.

Democratic Community Leadership

In the face of the growing influence of regionalisation, the Council believes that district level is the tier of elected government best suited to lead and champion the needs and desires of its communities. Proposals for local government restructure, changes to local government finance and devolved responsibilities are creating a complex picture of local

governance which needs clear vision, appropriate leadership and capacity. It is a priority to support elected Members in this leadership role and to enable communities to be able to better influence their own destiny.

This is a priority because SHDC wants to be prepared and equipped to respond to changes in local governance and to take account of the benefits that can be delivered to the public and service users. To improve democratic community leadership, Members need to be better informed of issues within the District and at neighbouring authorities which may have an impact on SHDC. SHDC Members need to be sufficiently confident to influence and/or lead on issues.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

- Make sure that the Council's internal organisation supports Members in developing their role as advocates and community leaders.
- Develop a new strategy for engaging communities, including the most appropriate democratic forums, and tailor it to support different needs in different localities.
- Support Members to develop and improve community engagement.
- Develop the role and influence of Scrutiny.
- Make sure we are effectively represented and well briefed in forums where we should have a strong voice.
- Make sure we play a leading role in developing strong strategic and collaborative working partnerships.

Our Planning Process

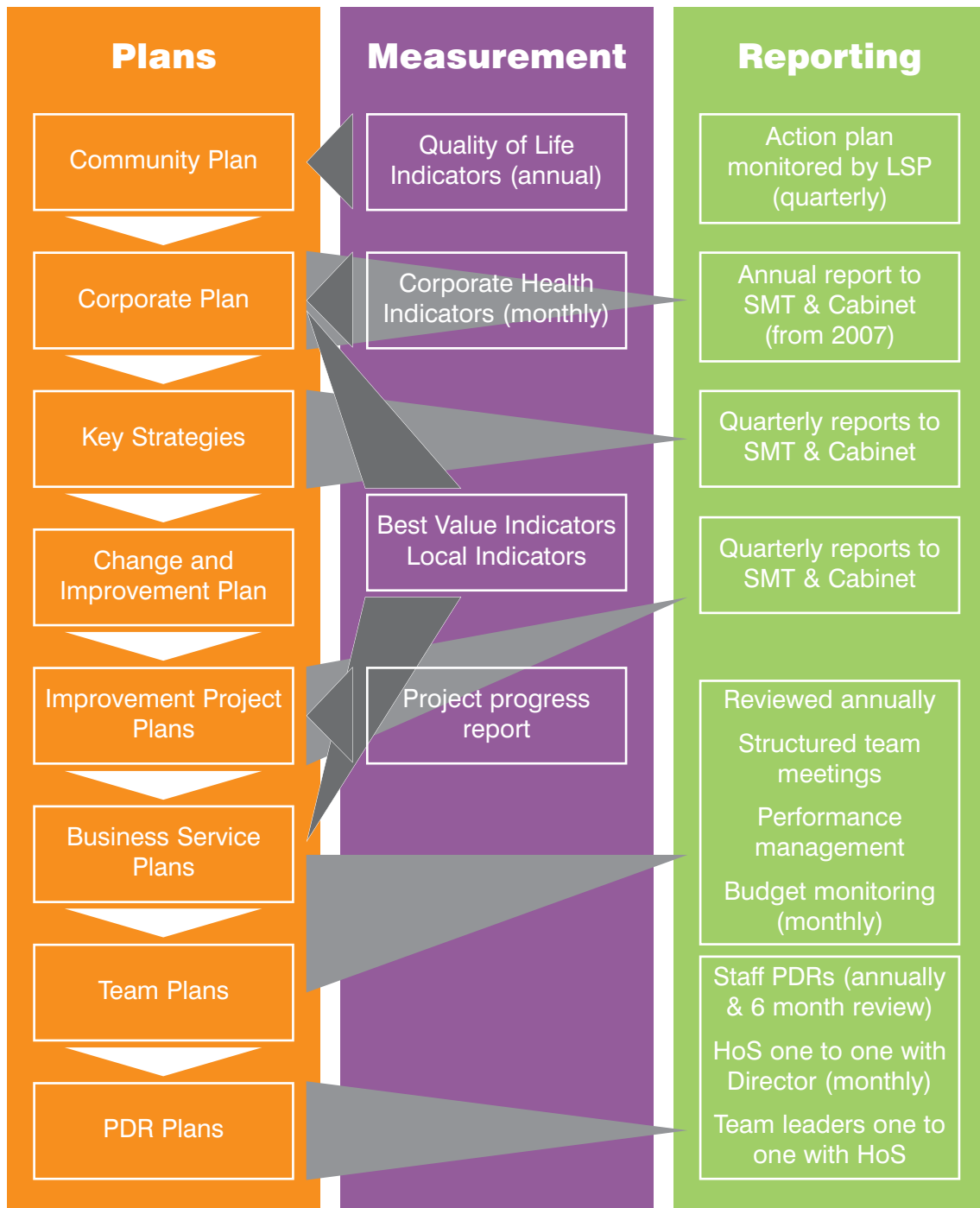
Corporate and Strategic Planning

The vision, mission and six priorities set out above are contained within our three yearly corporate plan which is reviewed and robustly challenged every year. This document is the driving force behind our strategic objectives.

The Corporate Plan is one of many documents that we use to aid us in meeting our corporate objectives.

The priorities set out in our Corporate Plan have been informed by extensive consultation and by our work with our RAZ partners.

The Corporate Plan is linked to and has been informed by our Community Plan.



Arrangements for addressing the Council's Improvement Priorities

Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment

CPA Report 2003

The Audit Commission inspected South Holland District Council in November 2003 as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and concluded we were a Fair council.

It said we had the following strengths:

- It provides some good quality services such as street cleaning, recycling, refuse collection, housing repairs and housing benefits. Public satisfaction is high.
- It engages with younger people well and has provided a good range of activities for them to use.
- It has received national recognition for engaging partners well through the Rural Action Zone in delivering a range of initiatives which address local needs.
- It is successful at gaining outside investment and manages its finances well.

And it highlighted the following areas for improvement:

What the Audit Commission said:

- It needs to improve some services, including planning and increasing the number of council homes which meet government standards.

What we have done:

- Planning performance has improved dramatically - we have improved from bottom to top quartile for dealing with planning applications (minor and other applications) over two years.
- The number of Council Homes that meet government standards has increased.

What the Audit Commission said:

- It needs to be clearer about what its priorities are and what it wants to achieve for residents.

What we have done:

- We have reduced the number of priorities in our Corporate Plan to six which are clearly focused on issues that are important for our community

What the Audit Commission said:

- It needs to continue to strengthen the way it manages the performance of its services.

What we have done:

- We have improved the way that our business plans fit into our planning process
- All staff talk to their managers about their performance twice every year
- We are embedding a culture of performance
- We have created an Organisational Development Team to drive improvement across the Council. This team brings together the following disciplines to make sure that improvement is joined up:
 - ◆ Performance management
 - ◆ Business improvement
 - ◆ People - pay and reward
 - ◆ Training and Development

What the Audit Commission said:

- It needs to work to ensure more affordable homes are built in the district.

What we have done:

- We have worked through the planning system and with registered social landlords to provide more affordable homes

- 144 affordable homes were provided in South Holland in 2006 - 2007
- We will provide 110 affordable homes in 2007 - 2008

Direction of Travel

The Audit Commission report on our progress toward meeting objectives set by our CPA report (see above) every year in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

The report commends us for reducing our corporate priorities, the work of the Improvement and Development Team, our Matrix Groups, performance on homelessness and planning and our migrant worker project.

The report identifies the following areas where it believes the council could improve:

What the Direction of Travel Report said:

- Re-directing funds to Council priorities

What we have done:

- Our Corporate Plan shows how our funding follows our priorities

What the Direction of Travel Report said:

- Clearer links between the Community and Corporate Plans

What we have done:

- We have been working to ensure that the Community Plan Theme Groups which are working on action plans are closely aligned to the SHDC Corporate Plan Priorities.

What the Direction of Travel Report said:

- Improving performance on household waste, recycling and the checklist of environment best practice

What we have done:

- We recycled 24% of household waste in 2006 - 2007
- We have improved our score on the checklist of environment best practice.

What the Direction of Travel Report said:

- Benchmarking performance with other authorities

What we have done:

- We have introduced top quartile benchmarks to our monthly reporting regime and for key services managers have set targets to meet the top quartile figure

What the Direction of Travel Report said:

- Making sure that the Council's housing strategy is fit for purpose

What we have done:

- The housing strategy is fit for purpose

A statement on Contracts

The Council did not enter into any contracts in 2006 - 07 that fell under the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.



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