

South Holland District Council

Annual Report to Stakeholders

2008



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Introduction

By Chief Executive & Leader

Terry Huggins
Chief Executive

The year 2007/08 has been one of consolidating and improving service delivery whilst working towards the Council's corporate priorities. In May 07 there was an election to all of the seats on the South Holland District Council. This did not see any change in overall political control and the Council's priorities for action have remained consistent. The report tells readers how we are doing in progressing each of the six priority areas. It also reports on our performance on essential public services run by the Council.

Throughout the year we have worked closely with the other local authorities in Lincolnshire to improve the efficiency of our services and improve the ways we work together for the benefit of our customers. Together we applied to the government and have been awarded the status of a "County Pathfinder" to demonstrate how two tier (that's District councils and County Council) can work more effectively to the benefit of its citizens.

We always take note and seek to learn and improve ourselves based upon the views of inspectors and assessors who audit our work and performance. I am pleased to say that once again we received an unqualified financial audit, the Use of Resources inspection scored us as three from four placing us amongst top performing authorities and a service inspection which this year was of Housing rated us as providing good services with promising prospects of improvement, again placing us amongst top performing authorities. One of the Council's best assets is its staff and we were pleased to be successfully reassessed for the Investors in People Award.

The area of South Holland is special to those of us who work for its people but it is not without its challenges. Sometimes we take decisions which are not universally popular, sometimes we make mistakes but we are always motivated by a desire to make life better for the people of South Holland. We work towards being excellent and celebrate when we do well but remain aware that we are not perfect.



Terry Huggins

Councillor Gary Porter
Leader of the Council

I was pleased to be re-elected this year and to be reappointed as the Leader of the Council. This enables us to continue with the programme of priorities such as providing more affordable housing. I am pleased that we are being recognised as an authority that is demonstrating good practice and innovation in this area. We continue to work on new ideas to achieve more housing and I'm proud that we remain one of only a few local authorities which are building council properties.

Key basic services such as refuse collection and recycling have regularly been the topic of national media coverage during the last year. We have resisted pressure to move to fortnightly collections and chase after government recycling targets which encourage more waste generation. We have listened to what our residents want and continue to provide a weekly collection of refuse from all homes and a weekly collection of recycling from 98% of homes. We are committed to helping our residents reduce waste in the face of a national growth in waste per household. Our recycling of dry materials continues to improve and is amongst the best.

Plans to improve the employment and economic prospects of residents continue to be pursued with vigour and in next years report I anticipate some key projects will have been agreed upon and moved on to the delivery phase.

I commend this annual report to you as an indication of what the Council is doing in serving your best interests. As always I welcome hearing comments or views which you may wish to send me.



Gary Porter

Introduction to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Governance and Audit

The Annual Report 2008 is a review of what we have achieved in 2007/08 against our priorities and performance measures

It links with the annual reports of the Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and Governance & Audit Committees to be the umbrella report for the Council.

Visit the attached links below to find the detailed reports:

Cabinet Annual Report (To be finalised)



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report



Governance and Audit Annual Report



Cabinet Membership and responsibilities



Councillor profiles



The Cabinet

Left to right: Cllr Howard Johnson, Cllr Paul Espin, Cllr Roger Gambba-Jones, Cllr Gary Porter (Leader of the Council), Cllr Paul Przystlak (Deputy Leader), Cllr Nick Worth (Deputy Leader), Cllr Amanda Puttick, Cllr Gary Taylor, Cllr Stephen Williams and Cllr Mick Seymour.

We have 37 councillors representing 18 wards.

The Conservative group, led by Cllr Gary Porter, holds the majority, with 25 seats, the Independent group, led by Cllr Angela Newton, hold 11 seats and there is one Non-aligned member.

Councillors 2007 - 2011



Cllr Brian Alcock
Crowland and
Deeping St Nicholas



Cllr Angela Harrison
Crowland and
Deeping St Nicholas



Cllr Paul Przyszlak
Crowland and
Deeping St Nicholas



Cllr Robert Clark
Donington, Quadding
and Gosberton



Cllr Paul Espin
Donington, Quadding
and Gosberton



Cllr Amanda Puttick
Donington, Quadding
and Gosberton



Cllr Shaun Keeble
Fleet



Cllr Stamford
Marthews
Gedney



Cllr Nick Worth
Holbeach Hurn



Cllr Francis
Biggadike
Holbeach
Town



Cllr Rita Rudkin
Holbeach Town



Cllr Michael Taylor
Holbeach Town



Cllr Simon Booth
Long Sutton



Cllr Dennis Tennant
Long Sutton



David Wilkinson
Long Sutton



John Michael Atkin
Moulton, Weston
and Cowbit



Anthony Casson
Moulton, Weston
and Cowbit



Andrew Robert
Woolf
Moulton, Weston
and Cowbit



Cllr James Avery
Pinchbeck and
Surfleet



Cllr Marion Bamber
Pinchbeck and
Surfleet



Cllr Douglas Best
Pinchbeck and
Surfleet



Cllr Gary Taylor
Spalding Castle



Cllr George Aley
Spalding Monks
House



Cllr Angela Newton
Spalding Monks
House



Cllr Graham Dark
Spalding St John's



Cllr Wayne Seaborn
Spalding St John's
(Non-aligned member
of the Council)



Cllr Howard
Johnson
Spalding St Mary's



Cllr Gary Porter
Spalding St Mary's



Cllr Jane Jones
Spalding St Paul's



Cllr Stephen
Williams
Spalding St Paul's



Cllr Roger
Gamba-Jones
Spalding Wygate



Cllr Christine
Lawton
Spalding Wygate



Cllr Michael Booth
Sutton Bridge



Cllr Chris Brewis
Sutton Bridge



Cllr Michael
Seymour
The Saints



Cllr Robert Creese
Whaplode and
Holbeach St John's

Priorities, achievements and future plans

You have told us what is important to you and our long term plans and priorities reflect this. We want South Holland to develop as a thriving, living and working rural community and to be:

- A safe, secure and healthy place to live and work
- A thriving, active, forward looking rural community
- A leading edge authority, providing value for money quality services
- A place where the community is listened to and involved in what goes on
- A place where we work well with our partners to provide what our communities most need.

The six priorities are:

- Affordable Housing
- Care of Towns and Villages
- Secure and Diverse Employment
- Improved Leisure Facilities
- Access to Services
- Democratic Community Leadership



Our Priorities

Affordable Housing

House prices have risen in South Holland and incomes have not kept pace. Our population is increasing at a faster rate and we have a higher proportion of older people than in the rest of the country. There is evidence of 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 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 Peterborough Sub-Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows a need for an additional 475 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. We are clear about

the type, tenure, density and affordability of housing we need to see developed on allocated sites over the coming years.

Our delivery plan is stretching but achievable and we have challenging development targets for the number of homes to be provided, including the number of affordable or special needs housing.

In 2007 the Audit Commission inspected our housing services and assessed our performance as 'good' with 'promising prospects for improvement'. In their final report they cited our approach to providing affordable homes as best practice and praised our, "innovation through partnership working with private developers to increase the supply of affordable housing and supported accommodation".

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 of affordable housing for the tenants

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

Our Achievements in 2007/08

- We delivered 110 new affordable houses including the construction of 15 council homes.
- We prevented 179 households from becoming homeless.
- We provided a tenancy management service in partnership with a local developer to assist in the provision of more affordable homes.
- We introduced a rent in advance and rent deposit scheme to assist households in obtaining alternative accommodation, this has helped prevent 61 people from becoming homeless.

- We made a successful bid for additional funding from the Regional Housing Group to help vulnerable people maintain their homes.
- We introduced a risk based system of inspecting Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and re-inspected all licensable large HMOs.
- We produced a database of empty properties and are taking action to bring them back into use.
- We have adopted genuinely innovative approaches for the delivery of affordable housing and secured substantial Housing Corporation investment of £3 million of Social Housing Grants for 2008-11. We support 'exceptions sites' to provide affordable housing in rural areas and cross boundary' working with Peterborough on strategic Housing Market Area assessment.
- We were the only local authority in Lincolnshire to achieve level 'B' quality assessment for our supported housing and are working towards level 'A'.



Plans for this year and future years

- We will work with landlords to raise the standard of temporary accommodation management and develop an accreditation scheme.
- We will give prospective and existing tenants more control on where they wish to live by developing a new way of letting our properties based on choice.
- We will continue working towards the achievement of the Decent Homes Plus standard by providing council tenants with new kitchens and bathrooms, external doors, roofs, central heating systems and insulation.
- We will set up a local housing company to build and manage affordable housing.
- We will work with our partners under the Lincolnshire Local Area Agreement to increase the provision of affordable housing.



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 environment and by judging the effectiveness and responsiveness of the council services that care for their neighbourhoods.

We want to maintain the special characteristics of our towns and villages and continue to deliver high quality services that help retain the unique nature of our communities. We want to help the residents of South Holland to feel part of the community by getting involved, taking responsibility for the local environment and contributing towards improvements.

We aim to provide attractive, high quality, accessible green spaces that are managed and developed, recognising local character, to meet the diverse needs of the community. We want green spaces to be safe, clean and maintained in a sustainable way, becoming an important element of everyday life, an asset for the community and for future enjoyment.

We plan to take a tough stand against environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping, graffiti, fly posting and anti-social behaviour. We will take appropriate action against offenders who show lack of respect for our towns and villages. We want people in South Holland to feel they

live in a safer place by tackling the fear of crime and to help people be reassured that they and their property are safe.

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.
- 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.

Achievements 2007/08

- We continued to collect refuse and recycling on a weekly basis and extended recycling collection to 98 per cent of households in the district.
- We helped 3,000 customers in South Holland to buy compost bins.
- We incorporated glass into weekly recycling collections.
- We introduced sacks for recycling instead of boxes which increased recycling rates from 25.4 per cent (Jan-March 2007) to 34.5 per cent (Jan-March 2008)
- We maintained 100 percent of scheduled inspections of food premises.
- The Spalding Town Centre Master Plan has identified opportunities for improvements to the town and its facilities.

- We introduced a partnership scheme to improve commercial historic buildings in conservation areas which attracted £680,000 to be spent over the next three years across the district.

Plans for this year and future years

- We will publish a Street Scene Strategy which will guide our improvement actions for the future.
- We will continue weekly refuse collection and extend our recycling routes to all properties in the district.
- We will enable garden waste to be taken for composting.
- We will visit schools and community groups to publicise the recycling centre's new education facility and run special recycling workshops for schools.
- We will introduce new taxi ranks, new hackney carriage specifications, provide formal training for licensed drivers and bring in compliance test standards for taxis.



Secure and Diverse Employment

The South Holland economy is predominantly based on 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 are a substantial number of people commuting out of South Holland for better paid jobs.

We aim to broaden the employment base by stimulating diverse and secure employment opportunities which will make South Holland an attractive place for both employers and employees to carry out their business and their trades.

Whilst there are relatively high employment levels and a greater number of full time jobs in the district, people are low paid; earning on average £6 less per week than workers in the East Midlands.

Fewer people are entering sixth form education in the district than in other areas; although those that do tend to do better than average. However, the lack of further education opportunities means that school leavers are obliged to go elsewhere to complete their education and when they have finished there is little in the form of professional career

structures to attract them back. For those who choose not to go on to sixth form, only 12 per cent are employed with structured training. 39 per cent of people aged 16 - 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:

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.

Achievements 2007/08

- In line with our *Economic Development Strategy* we have worked with businesses from outside the area to bring new jobs to the district and have worked with existing businesses to help them prosper and grow.
- We have worked with our partners at Lincolnshire Enterprise to purchase employment land to “kick-start” a small industrial site at Crowland.
- We have worked in rural areas to support small businesses with advice, mentoring and small grants. We met with 200 businesses, for which 37 were new and 35 jobs were created.
- We have worked with the police and local town centre businesses to rollout CCTV coverage across the district.
- We successfully bid for funding to establish the Safer Food and Better Business project which enabled us to assist 180 businesses to comply with changes in food law and to develop a food safety management system.
- We developed and launched the innovative "Safer Business, Better Health" online resource pack for businesses which provides key health and safety information in order that businesses are aware of all that affects them.



Plans for this year and future years

- We will continue to deliver the Economic Development Strategy which will focus on projects to develop the local economy around the district.
- We will manage the development of the Red Lion Street site in Spalding to implement this £6.7 million project and transform a brownfield site into a ‘cutting edge’ facility to promote and provide a first class retail and education facility for the food industry in South Holland.
- We will produce a development brief for urban extension, including employment land, west of Holbeach.
- We will work with Lincolnshire County Council and the utilities companies to make sure land across the district is adequately serviced for the provision of new businesses.
- We will review the support we provide to the tourism sector in the district with a view to increasing increasing visitor numbers and spend.
- We worked to develop parish planning at Crowland and Holbeach. We are working with businesses in Spalding on a Business Improvement District (BIDS) project which would result in extra funding which would be locally managed.

Improved Leisure Facilities

Excellent 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 and so we want to increase opportunities for participation in sporting activities across all of the district and the main sports centre in Spalding, which is over thirty years old, is in need of replacement if we are to continue to provide fit for purpose facilities for the next thirty years.

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.
- By implementing our *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.
- Work with partners to develop more facilities for young people in our villages and towns.

Achievements 2007/08

- We have introduced our Cultural Strategy to provide a clear structure of plans for the future.
- We have gained Level 2 of the Local Government Equality Scheme which measures the work we do to make sure that everybody in the community is dealt with equally and fairly.



- We produced a new Community Cohesion Policy which will make sure that resources are directed to encouraging the diverse members of our community to come together.
- We have passed our S11 Children's Act 2004 Audit which means that we have an up to date and fit for purpose Child Protection Policy. This makes sure that we have taken, and will continue to take, all reasonable steps to improve the well-being of children and young people.
- Ayscoughfee Hall Museum was voted Lincolnshire 'Museum of the Year 2007'.
- The South Holland Centre attracted over 150,000 users in 2007, more than in any previous year, which means that it is one of the leading arts centres in Lincolnshire.

Plans for this year and future years

- We will implement the Audit Commission Cultural Services Inspection Improvement Plan during next year which will improve the delivery of our services to our customers.
- We will deliver the Cultural Strategy and re-align initiatives to match it.
- We will work to make sure that the people of the district and visitors have access to the countryside.



Access to Services

The geography of the area and the transportation infrastructure can make it difficult for people to access our services through traditional routes. Less than half of residents that we have surveyed said that they find it easy to access our services., This is particularly so for the more vulnerable members of society.

Our aim is to make it easy for people to contact us through a variety of channels to suit their lifestyle and circumstances; for example by telephone, web and face to face.

Not only do we intend to make it easier to contact us but we propose to make the experience more 'customer centred' when you do. Amongst other measures we aim to do this by reducing waiting times and learning from feedback we receive.

How are we going to tackle this priority?

- Use Information and Communication Technology 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.
- 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 and make sure that there is fairness and equal treatment for all.

Achievements 2007/08

- We have installed Community Information Kiosks in libraries in Holbeach, Donington and Crowland to provide access to information about District and County Council services, details of vacancies, local councillors, local transport and information on local and county services.
- We have made public speaking at Development Control Committees a permanent feature.
- We have adopted the Equality and Diversity Action Plan which has included a review of everything we do in order to make sure that all members of the community can access our services.

- Our Planning service has reviewed the pre-application advice process which will give more effective access to our planning services.
- We have piloted webcasting to make meetings more accessible to people who can't attend. These include Development Control meetings and events in which there is high public interest.

Plans for this year and future years

- We will be undertaking a strategic review of our Customer Services Centre. This will cover all aspects of the services we provide and will explore all options available to us to make sure we meet the needs of our customers.
- We will be reviewing our complaints process to make sure that it is efficient, easy to understand and all complaints are logged and dealt with and that we learn from them.
- We will be working to achieve level three of the Local Government Equality Scheme by March 2009 to make sure that the services we offer can be accessed by all the community.
- We will be exploring the suitability of the Chartermark (a national scheme to recognise customer excellence) standard for our services.
- We will be upgrading our telephone system in a way that is suitable for our customers and meets our future needs.



Democratic Community Leadership

Lincolnshire is a 'Pathfinder County' for demonstrating how the two tier system of local government (county council and district council) can work more effectively.

Not forgetting the importance of parish councils in the rural parts of the county. Part of the challenge is for there to be clear and accountable leadership within communities from their elected representatives.

Alongside this leadership there is a desire to devolve more to local communities so that they are able to exert greater influence over their own environment and services.

These are complex issues and this year has seen a step forward with the creation of two pilot areas within South Holland each of which is being led by an elected member designated as Portfolio Holder of Place.

This priority also encompasses strengthening the role of those who have been democratically elected and to better support them in activities such as:

- Representing South Holland on National, Regional and sub Regional bodies covering areas such as housing, economic development, land planning, flood protection, environment amongst others.
- Effectively acting as ward members and representing and staying in touch with issues within their wards.
- Scrutinising the decision making and policies of the Council and also other public sector bodies whose work influences the lives of South Holland residents.
- Representing the interests of South Holland residents on a host of local bodies and organisations onto which the Council makes appointments such as internal drainage boards.



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.

Achievements 2007/08

- We have established two pilots for community leadership and devolved decision making. These are operating in the areas of Donington and Holbeach and are based around enhanced support to parishes in producing a parish plan and then delivering the action plan. This support is coming through the leadership of a Portfolio Holder of Place, co-ordinating and influencing

all public sector organisations delivering into that community. These pilots will be evaluated.

- We carried out an extensive induction and training programme for new councillors following the District Council elections held on 3 May 2007 which attracted a turn-out of 34.51 percent and resulted in 12 new councillors out of 37 being elected. Training needs analysis and further training continues and the Council has set a target of achieving the Members' Charter Award.
- We have met with members of the community and taken their views on board in the development of planning policy and guidance.
- The two scrutiny panels have evaluated their performance and established an action plan for continuous improvement.
- A Member panel has been tasked to bring forward recommendations for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which democratic community leadership may be monitored.
- We have made it possible for people to see how we do business by webcasting key meetings, specifically those in which there is a lot of public interest or specific personal interest. We have received very positive feedback on these broadcasts and 6462 people have tuned in through to the end of the 07/08 year, either live or after the event.

Plans for this year and future years

- We will finalise and publish a new Community Engagement Strategy to make sure we have designed our consultation and engagement processes to best effect and include the views 'harder to reach' groups.
- We will continue with our two pilot projects at Donington and Holbeach and evaluate their effectiveness.
- We will make sure that Members who attend meetings of outside bodies on behalf of South Holland are supported to best represent our interests.
- We will continue to improve Overview and Scrutiny.
- We will achieve the Member Development Charter to provide a foundation for councillors to lead and empower their communities.
- We will implement a new Standards scheme for assessment of complaints against councillors when it transfers from the Standards Board for England.



Our Improvement Priorities

The Audit Commission report on our progress toward meeting objectives set out in the Government's Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the council.

South Holland was last assessed in November 2003 as a 'fair' council. The annual Audit and Inspection letter includes a 'direction of travel' statement which looks at how the council is improving.

This year the Statement is very positive. It commends the council for making progress on its six priorities.

The main messages for the Council included in this report are as follows:

- ◆ Service performance over that last three years has continued to improve although performance improvement in the last twelve months is slightly below national averages.
- ◆ The Council has robust action plans to implement service improvements in line with its service priorities.
- ◆ The strategic housing function is providing a 'good' two-star service with promising prospects for improvement.
- ◆ The Council has continued to perform well in our use of resources assessment by maintaining level 3 - 'performing well'.

The positive Direction of Travel Statement, combined with a real and sustained improvement in performance as measured against our key performance indicators, has led the Council to apply for re-accreditation under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scheme for Local Authorities.

We know we have improved since then and believe that we are at least 'good', and probably 'excellent'. However, we continue to focus on improving.

Action needed by the Council

The Direction of Travel Statement includes some recommendations for improvement.

The key actions required by the Council are as follows:

What the Direction of Travel Statement said:

- Ensure that the momentum generated for achieving performance improvement continues, especially targeting lower performance areas.

What the Council is doing:

- Following improvements in performance reporting last year our Senior Management Team will monitor real time performance information each month and use performance clinics to improve performance in lower performing areas.

What the Direction of Travel Statement said:

Respond to the challenges from the strategic housing inspection to ensure the promising prospects for improvement are attained.

What the Council is doing:

We have set out in detail what the Council is doing to respond to the inspection (see below).

What the Direction of Travel Statement said:

Address the key issues arising from the Use of Resources assessment, in particular ensuring that Internal Control arrangements are strengthened.

What the Council is doing:

We are working to improve the way we manage risk. We commissioned a report from independent risk management consultants and are implementing their recommendations, including training councillors in risk management and increasing the awareness of fraud both within the organisation and in the community. We have established a new Governance and Audit Committee to monitor the corporate governance and audit arrangements for the Council.

Strategic Housing Inspection

Last year the Council's strategic housing service was inspected by the Audit Commission. They said that our service "is a good, two star service, with promising prospects for improvement.

There are many areas of strength, such as its approach to enabling the delivery of affordable housing and preventing homelessness. Some areas are not so well developed, such as diversity.

Since the inspection we have achieved level 2 of the local government equality standard and will reach level 3 (the highest level) by March 2009.

The report contained a number of recommendations:

The report said:

The Council should strengthen the approach to customer service by:

- Measuring and publishing performance against agreed service standards
- Reviewing the approach to delivering staff training to support the service standards; and
- Implementing a framework to capture and share learning from complaints.

What the Council is doing:

- We have carried out a self assessment against the Government's standard for excellence in customer service. We have analysed where to improve and there is a programme of work to address this.

The report said:

The council should improve access to services by:

- Capturing and using customer profile information to address any barriers to access to services; and
- Measuring satisfaction across services to include diversity monitoring.

What the Council is doing:

- We have started to capture more data about our customers which will allow us to build a detailed picture of who our customers are and whether there are any barriers in the way they access our services

- We regularly measure satisfaction of our services and now make sure that we gather information about disability, gender, age, race, sexual orientation and religion or belief and take action if people are discriminated against.

The report said:

The Council should strengthen understanding of diversity issues by:

- Reviewing the approach to provision of training for new and existing staff to include diversity awareness, extending to recognition and reporting of hate crime.

What the Council is doing:

- We have trained all existing staff in equality and diversity this year and include training on equalities issues for new staff as part of the induction process. We have a role in taking reports of hate crime and are training staff in key areas on the issue and on how to collect the facts.

What the report said:

The Council should: Improve the approach to making best use of existing homes by:

- Developing and monitor targets and outcomes for combined activity in the private sector; and
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the current approach to provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.

What the Council is doing:

- We now monitor how long it takes the Council to process applications for grants and have targets for the separate parts of this process
- We have set up a Disabled Facilities Grants user group to review how we provide grants which includes the Portfolio Holder, tenants, an Occupational Therapist, and representatives from disabled groups.

What the report said:

The Council should strengthen the approach to performance management and value for money by:

- Undertaking an evaluation and comparison of different resource streams to deliver affordable housing;
- Applying agreed procurement principles to all areas of activity;
- Engaging in cost and performance benchmarking for the strategic housing service;
- Developing comprehensive monitoring arrangements for delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants; and
- Ensuring that learning needs identified through appraisals inform development of the annual corporate training plan.

What the Council is doing:

- We are establishing a local housing company in South Holland to enable us to apply for funding from the

Housing Corporation to build affordable homes which we would not otherwise be able to finance.

- We have established a new purchasing unit and are investing in a shared service central procurement service for all Lincolnshire councils
- We regularly benchmark our services with others in terms of performance and cost. We survey the residents of new build affordable housing and act on the results to improve our performance
- We are carrying out a corporate training needs analysis which will identify areas of training need to be addressed through a learning and development strategy.

A Statement on Contracts

The council did not enter into any contracts in 2007-08 that fell under the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

Listening and Learning

We pride ourselves on being a listening and responsive Council. We achieve this through a range of engagement methods using 'traditional' survey and consultation processes and more innovative information and communication technology.

For example, through our *website* any interested person with access to a computer is able to view webcasts of Development Control and other key meetings (live or archived), participate in surveys and access the results.



During 2007/08 we asked for opinions on important issues and satisfaction with local quality of life, giving people the opportunity to influence our priorities, plans and strategies, spending decisions and service quality.

- The 2007 Quality of Life Survey picked out as top issues satisfaction with neighbourhood, community safety, empowerment, community cohesion and transport. These are all being addressed through our corporate priorities.
- Our priorities were the focus for scrutiny and public debate using a select committee style examination of the priorities, public opinion testing and a web-cast Question Time session with the Leader and Deputy Leaders of the Council.
- Year six of the annual leisure and cultural survey included a 'shadow' questionnaire for young people. The survey showed that young people use our services differently from adults and hold different views on the value of our services, which has helped to shape our cultural strategy.
- Consultation on the cultural strategy identified priority groups of people that we need to consider. Among them are younger and older people and migrant workers. Disabled people said that they didn't want to be treated as a priority group but agreed that we should take steps to take their views and needs in to our mainstream proposals.

- The Govmetric touch screen, telephone and web feedback scheme for customers to tell us how helpful our services are and identify areas for improvement. Overall satisfaction for 2007/08 from the customers who provided feedback was:

Website - 60% rate us good or average

Face to face - 69% rate us good or average

Telephone - 98% rate us good or average

- Following feedback from web customers we are reviewing our web content and making improvements so that the website is fit for purpose.

- We have responded to suggestions about improving housing advice; recruiting specialist housing advice officers and installing new software to make sure that we provide an efficient customer focussed service.
- The South Holland Youth Council wanted to develop a youth garden and chose Whaplode St Catherine as the location. We worked with partners to secure funding which enabled the Youth Council to deliver this.



Partnerships Report

Rural Action Zone (RAZ)



The council coordinates the work of RAZ, the local strategic partnership of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors; a forum for making sure that organisations which have a significant impact on the quality of life in South Holland are communicating and planning in a joined up way.

We listen to the collective views of the people in the district and work together to deliver against needs and aspirations. We also have regard to, and work with, central Government and its regional agents. RAZ actions are guided by a published community plan for the area and its communities which can be found on the website www.ruralactionzone.com

The RAZ partnership has achieved many things for South Holland in the last year under the themes of community safety, economic development, health, learning and sustainable communities, not least:

- Funding eight additional Police Community Support Officers
- Making the Walk your Way to Health programme possible

- Helping the Fairplay Football programme to flourish
- Supporting communities in Holbeach and Spalding in their efforts to improve their areas
- Helping the South Holland Youth Council to secure grants in excess of £10,000 to support their activities and projects
- Establishing a Community Cohesion Commission to make sure we are prepared to tackle cohesion and integration issues in a proportionate and considered way

The partnership will continue to play a vital role in improving the quality of life and well-being for those who live and work in South Holland.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Under the RAZ umbrella, the council is part of a partnership that is responsible for devising the strategy to tackle crime and disorder in South Holland. The aim is to make sure that organisations which have a significant impact on crime and

the fear of crime in South Holland are communicating and planning together effectively. Through its activities in the last year, the partnership has played in a key role in delivering:

- A reduction in overall crime of 20 per cent
- A programme of visits to secondary schools by high impact speakers to drive home messages about respect, hate, prejudice and anti social behaviour. Some of the visits focused on life in prison and generated discussions around life choices with a strong anti drugs message.
- 16 sessions of drug/alcohol outreach work targeting young people across the District. A specialist 'preventative' team visited anti-social hotspots providing advice and support to young people.
- Purchasing equipment to assist the fire and rescue service in establishing a young fire fighters scheme. The aim is to raise aspirations and introduce young people to what it takes to be a fire fighter.
- Providing care line alarms for domestic abuse victims and vulnerable residents.
- Securing funding to purchase specialist equipment for removing graffiti

The partnership has navigated its way through a fundamental change in the way it functions in order to make sure that it remains fit for purpose and focused on working together to deliver results. The

end product is a new partnership for South Lincolnshire, working jointly with South Kesteven. The new arrangement has drawn very favourable comment from the Government Office for the East Midlands which is monitoring the process.

The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)

The partnership has met regularly throughout the year. It has revised and refreshed the Lincolnshire Children and Young People's Plan and has a comprehensive monitoring programme in place to assess the impact of the plan.

The Plan essentially delivers the Children and young people's block of the LAA. The CYPSP's vision for local delivery is through the establishment of Local Children's Partnerships, one in each district. This movement has suffered from delay but is hoped that one will be established in South Holland next year.

The CYPSP has been very successful in developing its programme of children's centres and there are 23 centres in phase two of the programme. Spalding, Sutton Bridge and Holbeach will each have a centre opening to children and families very shortly. (The official opening of all 23 will be held on the 23rd May).

Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board

The Board has met regularly through out the year. It has undertaken an audit into its members' compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and found only one organisation out of 18 failed to meet its statutory responsibilities.

There are however a number of areas of common weakness especially around contract compliance in sub-contracting situations and provision and attendance at some specialist training events such as Safer Recruitment Training. The Board ran a full training programme during the year including rolling out Common Assessment Framework training to support the standardisation of safeguarding reporting.

An important part of the Board's work is Serious Case reviews which has continued throughout the year but has not impacted on District Councils.

Lincolnshire Shared Services (LSSP)

We have been working with the other Lincolnshire districts and Lincolnshire County Council to identify better ways of working together.

The LSSP Programme now has operational services in place and growing in strength. There are also several new and ongoing pieces of work which hope to bring new services into action in the near future.

Services already addressed are:

Procurement and Legal Services.

The new, and ground-breaking, Lincolnshire Shared Legal Practice has been established. This has seen the five members of our legal team transferring to the new legal practice which combines all of the legal expertise in Lincolnshire in a central team.

Procurement Lincolnshire has seen the arrival and induction of new staff and arrangements are being made for a dedicated Procurement Officer to work with each partner.

The first annual work plan has now been finalised and approved by the Member Management Board.

The draft Sustainable Procurement Strategy has been widely circulated in all partner authorities for consultation and presented to a number of corporate management teams and elected members. The draft strategy is being launched to the business community for consultation.

Lincolnshire Assembly

The Lincolnshire Assembly is a forum for the local government and its partners to discuss issues of importance to Lincolnshire, secure a common voice for Lincolnshire and promote action in support of our communities.

It provides a means for public, private and voluntary sector organisations to have a say and improve the way we develop co-operative solutions to the important issues facing the county.

The Assembly is chaired by the Bishop of Lincoln, the Right Reverend Dr John Saxbee. There are currently around 60 member organisations. South Holland District Council is represented by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

Follow the link for further details about current membership and the [Lincolnshire Assembly](#).



Lincolnshire Local Area Agreement

The Local Area Agreement was signed in June 2008 between central government and local government and its partners. This a three year agreement which sets out the priorities for the county and is linked to spending priorities. The objective is to deliver genuinely

sustainable communities through jointly agreed targets to deliver better outcomes for local people. It is the principal action plan for the longer term Lincolnshire Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out a broad vision for Lincolnshire's future under the banner 'Big County, Big Skies, Big Future'. The priorities are to:

- Make sure people are connected to services and information
- Develop strong communities where people want to live and can realise their potential
- Ensure opportunities for good health and healthy lifestyles
- Have a strong diverse economy
- Make best use of our environment; and
- Find ways for the partners to the Agreement to work together and be innovative and dynamic

The Local Area Agreement and the Sustainable Communities Strategy are being managed through a Strategy Board which was established by the Assembly.

Further detail about the local area agreement can be found on the [Lincolnshire Assembly](#) website.



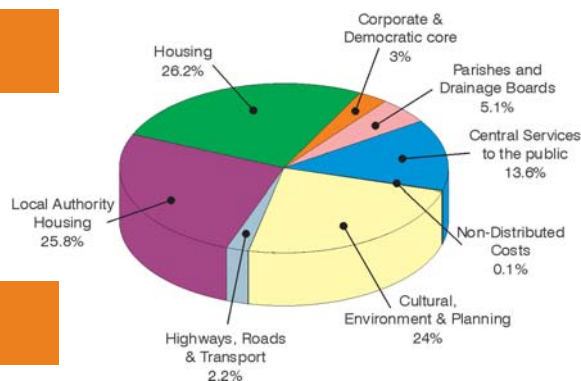
Our Financial Performance

Summary Financial Report

These summary accounts are subject to audit

The Council's Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Statement of Recommended Practice. This is a summary of the information to make it more meaningful for you.

We spent £47.792 million on providing services in 2007/08



Services Provided 2007/2008

| Service Areas | (£000s) | We paid for these Service Areas as follows: | (£000s) |
|--|---------------|---|---------------|
| Central Services to the public | 6,511 | Fees and charges and other credits | 8,737 |
| Non-distributed costs | 24 | Council Tax payers | 4,595 |
| Cultural, Environment & Planning | 11,471 | Grants | 23,120 |
| Highways, Roads & Transport | 1,075 | Interest we earned | 887 |
| Other Housing | 12,511 | Housing Rents | 10,453 |
| Local Authority Housing | 12,347 | | |
| Corporate & Democratic core | 1,426 | | |
| Payments to Parishes and Drainage Boards | 2,427 | | |
| Total | 47,792 | Total | 47,792 |

AMOUNTS HELD IN RESERVES (£M)

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| ■ Specific | 3 |
| ■ HRA | 1 |
| ■ General | 2 |
| ■ TOTAL | 6 |

The Accounting Services has a quality award ISO 9001:2000. We are proud to announce that we follow the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Best Value Code of Practice & Standard Practice Notes when preparing our accounts.

The Council under spent by £7,000. We overspent by £146,000 on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The additional spend was used to improve the Council's Housing stock.

We collect council tax for the County Council, Police and the parishes.

We are known as a billing Authority.

Our collection rates are high. We collected 98.36% council tax and 99.29% business rates in 2007/08.

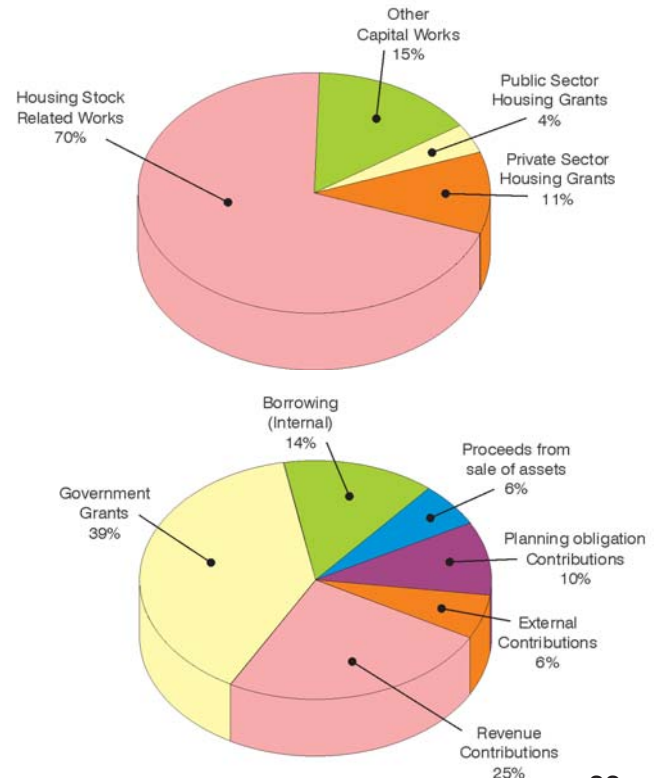
Capital Expenditure

In 2007/08 the council spent £3,588m on capital projects which mainly represents our expenditure on purchasing, upgrading and improving our assets, see diagram opposite.

The Council under spent on its capital programme in 2007/08. This has arisen as some projects did not start as early as planned. This money is "rolled" into the following year to finance the completion of these projects.

Funding Of The Capital Programme

The spend on capital projects was funded as shown in the diagram opposite.



Improving Standards

To make sure we maintain and improve our high standards of performance and efficiency we have to change the way we do things.

During the last 12 months we have:

- Addressed homeless accommodation issues.
- Started to build our own affordable homes.

Amongst the financial achievements of the year, it is particularly pleasing to note that:

- We have exceeded our expectations in cash management.
- The capital programme has delivered on corporate priorities.
- The authority has received a Comprehensive Performance Assessment for Use of Resources score of 3. Consistently above minimum requirements - performing well in the way we use resources.

| HOUSING | (£000'S) |
|---|-----------------|
| Rent arrears owing at 31st March: | |
| Current Tenants | 109 |
| Former Tenants | 101 |
| Garages | 2 |
| Total Rent Arrears | 212 |
| | |
| OUR ASSETS | (£000'S) |
| Council Dwellings (Council Houses and Sheltered Accommodation) | 196,062 |
| Other Land and Buildings (South Holland Centre and Swimming Pool) | 15,907 |
| Vehicles and Plant (Computer Equipment) | 569 |
| Infrastructure (Sewerage Stations) | 1,543 |
| Community Assets (Parks and Open Spaces) | 671 |
| Non-Operational Assets (Investment Land, Surplus assets) | 2,954 |
| | 257 |
| Intangible Assets | 217,963 |
| Fixed Assets Total | |

The value of assets included in the balance sheet is reviewed each year.

Environmental Accounting

This approach that considers the financial impacts of environmentally related activity. To be effective, environmental performance measures should be integrated into core financial processes which allow environmentally significant expenditure and issues to be monitored such as energy, water and travel.

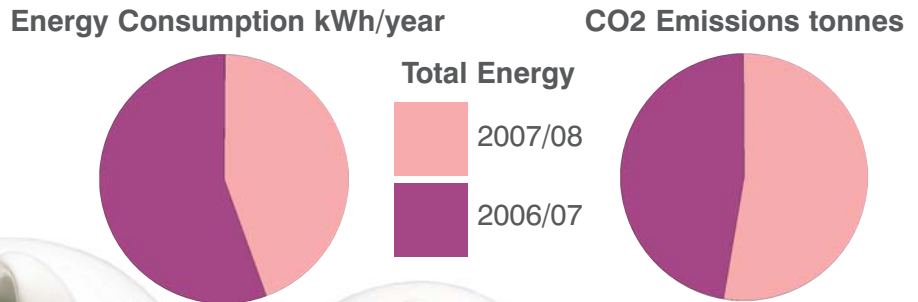
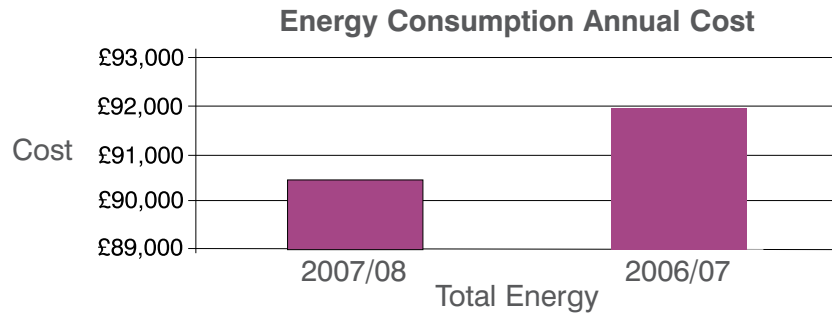
The Carbon Trust are our advisors on reducing emissions at the Council Offices and the South Holland Centre.

Our Recycling Strategy emphasises waste minimisation and recycling contributing to reduced energy use and CO₂ emissions.

Table above shows the total energy consumed for both the Priory Road Council Offices and South Holland Centre split between electricity and natural gas:

| Utility | Energy Consumption | | Cost | CO ₂ Emissions | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| | kWh/year | % | £/year | tonnes | % |
| Electricity | 820,244 | 71.0 | £70,551 | 428.98 | 86.0 |
| Natural Gas | 336,152 | 29.0 | £19,891 | 69.25 | 14.0 |
| Total Energy | 1,156,396 | 100.0 | £90,442 | 498.23 | 100.0 |

(Natural Gas figures are based upon the calendar year.)



Other Facts

- The Council paid £1,672,853 into the Lincolnshire County Council's Pension Fund.
- The amount of allowances paid to Elected Members was £247,183.
- South Holland District Council had £11 million invested at the end of March 2008.
- We disposed of assets worth £0.687 million yet added £2.964 million.
- The Construction Services Unit returned a surplus of £36,000.
- South Holland undertook agency services work for Lincolnshire County Council for waste collection, amenity grass cutting and delittering and bin emptying for the Environment Agency.
- Our publicity costs totalled £124,000.
- Our statutory audit costs were £117,000.
- At the 31st March 2008 South Holland District Council owned 3,930 council houses.
- At the 31st March 2008 we held provisions for bad debts totalling £364,000.

Income From Council Tax

In 2007/08 the council set a band D of £1,287.66. The charge for each band is a ratio of band D. The 2007/08 charges are:

| Band | Ratio | Council Tax £ |
|------|-------|---------------|
| AA | 5/9 | 715.37 |
| A | 6/9 | 858.44 |
| B | 7/9 | 1,001.51 |
| C | 8/9 | 1,144.59 |
| D | 9/9 | 1,287.66 |
| E | 11/9 | 1,573.81 |
| F | 13/9 | 1,859.95 |
| G | 15/9 | 2,146.10 |
| H | 18/9 | 2,575.32 |

The Council Tax is the means of raising income from local residents to pay for council services.

South Holland District Council only accounts for 11% of the total bill.

Treasury Management

We invest surplus funds on the money markets:

We earned £887,000 in interest 2007/08

We follow the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice and make sure we place investments with banks and building societies that have good credit ratings.

Corporate Governance



To achieve its priorities the Council needs to deliver value for money services for local people. We have rules and regulations to make sure that we are honest, open, fair and accountable for what we do.

Corporate Governance is about the direction and control of our business. We need to

- Focus on the outcomes for our community
- Make sure officers and elected members work together towards a common goal
- Demonstrate high standards of conduct
- Make well informed decisions, open to effective scrutiny
- Develop staff and members to be able to deliver services efficiently and effectively
- Engage with the local community.

Code of Corporate Governance

We have our own Code of Corporate Governance to make sure we are accountable and act with integrity.

Every year we review our performance against the principles of good governance. We produce an Annual Governance Statement which is signed off by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

This gives us assurance that systems of internal control are working well.

During 2007/08 we have set up a Governance and Audit Committee. Their role is to:

- Review the financial statements
- Assess internal controls and risk management systems
- Monitor the internal audit plan
- Consider the appointment of external auditors.

We reported to the Governance and Audit Committee that our governance arrangements have improved in many areas.

To continue to strengthen our governance we will develop our risk management arrangements and improve our procurement practices by working with Procurement Lincolnshire.

Risk Management

Risk is a complex issue for the public sector, not only because of the range of services we provide but also because of the political dimension.

We want to ensure that we can continue to deliver on our corporate priorities to our local community, it is essential that we take into account and plan for any risks that may arise.



Using partnerships to deliver wider outcomes and improvements to the community has been a key theme for 2007. We have worked with partners to identify our key risks in our partnership projects.

We are members of the Greater Lincolnshire Risk Management Group. The Group comprises of 'risk minded' representatives from Lincolnshire County Council, the seven District Councils in the administrative County of Lincolnshire, the two Unitary Authorities of North and North East Lincolnshire on the bank of the Humber Estuary, plus the Lincolnshire Police Authority and Lincolnshire NHS and we have worked collaboratively to ensure that significant partnerships have effective risk management arrangements such as the RAZ and Crime and Disorder partnership.

The Corporate Risk Management group has played an active part in the review of our risk management procedures, developing a new framework for identifying risks and managing them through the group. We have an

improvement plan that will be implemented early in 2008. This will see risk management fully integrated into our day to day business processes and no longer seen as an 'add-on'. One of our key actions is to re-write our risk policy and strategy to reflect the way South Holland District Council operates.

Our approach to business continuity has been reviewed with a new corporate and service business continuity plans. Some of these plans were also put into action during the year.

Members have received training in risk management and our Governance and Audit Committee will have a key role in monitoring our risk management arrangements next year as they start to get fully established.

Strategies have been developed to protect the way data is used in the authority and we are working on a county wide information security action plan.

How to contact us

South Holland District Council
Council Offices
Priory Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire PE11 2XE

tel: 01775 761161
fax: 01775 711253
email: Info@sholland.gov.uk
www.sholland.gov.uk

Finance Service email addresses
and contact numbers:

benefitfraud@sholland.gov.uk
benefits@sholland.gov.uk
businessrates@sholland.gov.uk
counciltax@sholland.gov.uk
invoiceunit@sholland.gov.uk

Benefit Fraud confidential
hotline: 0800 0851 737

This document can be made
available in large print form.
If you would be interested
please call Customer Services
on 01775 761161

This document can be made
available in other formats on
request - translation available.

Please telephone
01775 761161 and ask to
speak to Customer Services.





www.sholland.gov.uk

tel: 01775 761161