



ANNUAL REPORT

2015/16



Welcome to our Annual Report

South Kesteven District Council has ambitious plans for the future despite a significant reduction in funding from government.

The last year has been both busy and challenging for us as we continue to provide over 140 services across one of the largest districts in the country.

This report looks back over the last 12 months and how we have performed as a council. It also sets out what we plan to achieve during the year that lies ahead.

We believe that 2016 and beyond will bring many opportunities. The district has great potential and by working with residents and focussing on growth we can achieve our vision, which is to help our towns and villages thrive by creating vibrant communities where people want to live, work and invest.

Our focus is on stimulating the local economy, increasing the number of businesses across the district and providing good quality housing for all, which will allow us to attract income and funding to deliver our plans.

For the past year we have had to look at innovative ways of working to deliver more with

less and we have put in place a 'Fit for the Future' programme to be internally self-financing by 2019. This includes the development of a Local Authority Controlled Company and service transformation.

We have also improved the way our residents can contact us by redesigning our website, making it much easier for local people to request services, report things to us and pay for things online when it is convenient for them.

We have continued with our building programme for new council homes and have invested more money into keeping the district clean. An extension to working hours and new equipment has resulted in 98% of our streets achieving grade A status and the number of complaints falling significantly.

Quality of life and ensuring South Kesteven remains a highly attractive and safe place to live and work remains a key priority. The district now has the second lowest level of anti-social behaviour in the county (just 22 per 1,000 population) achieved through partnership working and proactive action between SKDC and Lincolnshire Police.

As you read through this report you will see that we have achieved a great deal within our four

priorities – Grow the Economy, Keep SK Clean, Green and Healthy, Promote Leisure, Arts and Culture and Support Good Housing for All.

They are a key part of our new Corporate Plan and following recent analysis have been centred around two themes: ensuring the council is 'Open for Business' and 'Commercially Focussed'.

However, we do know that a lot more still needs to be done and we will be changing the way services are delivered, and providing more choice to help us bridge future budget gaps as funding continues to reduce.



Chief Executive
Beverly Agass



Leader of the Council
Cllr Bob Adams

Our Corporate Plan

Our new Corporate Plan sets out our direction over the next four years and our vision to create vibrant communities where people want to live, work and invest.

The plan will guide and influence the council's resources and actions and is an important link in the overall strategic planning framework and includes our short (over the next year) and medium (over the next four years) activities as well as what we want to have achieved by 2020.

At the heart of the plan is the desire to involve our residents and stakeholders in everything we do so they feel empowered and able to help shape the future of the district.

Monitoring performance

Monitoring of strategic performance indicators takes place on a quarterly basis, and is reviewed by the council's Scrutiny Committee. This enables Members to see where the council is performing well and where further attention is needed. Officers routinely monitor performance to ensure

we are on track to achieve the Corporate Priorities. The council also tracks progress against the Corporate Plan to see the progress made against objectives and targets.

Sets out the strategic financial direction of the council

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Local Plan

Corporate Plan - outcomes

Housing Strategy

Sets planning policy/ creates the conditions for delivery of infrastructure

Economic Development Strategy

Priority Plans

Describes how teams contribute to the overall delivery of the plan/how staff play their part

People Strategy

Our district is open for business

South Kesteven is going places. As well as being a beautiful and well located district with London just an hour away by train, it is home to relatively good value housing and high achieving schools.

Covering 365 square miles, the district is made up of distinctive market towns and over 80 villages and hamlets sitting in stunning countryside.

Grantham, the largest of our towns, has growth status and is earmarked for major development over the coming years (Sunday Times 2016 Going Places), and is joined by Stamford (voted the best place to live in the UK by the Sunday Times March 2013), Bourne and The Deepings.

Our communities are constantly evolving and our population is projected to grow from its current 138,000 to around 158,000 in 2037. This exceeds the overall growth rates for the East Midlands and England generally.

South Kesteven District Council is a £100m a year business providing 144 services to residents, businesses and visitors varying from business support, providing housing solutions, emptying bins, dealing with planning applications and managing award winning parks.

We also organise events like our hugely successful Gravity Fields Festival which celebrates the life and work of Sir Isaac Newton as

Grantham's most famous son, arguably the most influential scientist the world has ever known. This festival injected £500,000 into the local economy in 2014 and work soon started on Gravity Fields 2016. The Stamford Georgian Festival attracted over 50,000 visitors and generated nearly £1m extra spending.

To achieve all this our staff work alongside 56 democratically elected Members who represent 30 wards across the district. Officers help members shape what we do and bring together the needs and expectations of their communities in order to make informed decisions about the future direction of the council.

We maintain more than 200 parks and open spaces



16,394 tonnes of recycling were collected last year



There are 62,624 households in South Kesteven



We licence every SKDC taxi driver to keep you safe on the roads



We have 1,683 safe places to park your car



We inspect over 960 businesses with food hygiene ratings



We determined 2,664 planning applications



Growth...

What we have achieved in 2015/16

Helping the growth of business

Our SKDC4Business programme delivered more than 70 face to face advice sessions with start-up and micro business. specialist advice to 40-plus retailers through workshops and focused sessions at skills days.

Local Plan

Work is ongoing to review the evidence base for the new Local Plan shaping the future of South Kesteven. This includes technical studies to identify the limits of development in and around towns, review of the housing land supply, employment land capacity and a retail study.

Attracting visitors

We have been working with partners to explore opportunities to capitalise on visitors who already come to South Kesteven and ways to encourage more people to the area by organising events across the district such as the Stamford Georgian Festival.

New multiplex cinema

We continued to progress our plans to develop a new multiplex cinema in Grantham. The development will provide a huge boost to the economy and desirability of the town by increasing visitor numbers and the leisure offer.



A home for new business

Plans to build on the success of Market Deeping's Eventus Business Centre are beginning to take shape. Demand for managed incubation space has been identified in Grantham and Stamford.



Delivering an attractive retail offer

Seven shops in Grantham have been given a make-over with six more schemes in the pipeline thanks to our Shop Front Improvement Scheme, part funded by Historic England to create a more attractive business environment.



Grantham Relief Road

SKDC brokered the deal to deliver construction of the new relief road, now started, opening up fresh residential and commercial opportunities now being pursued.



Growth

Growing the economy remains our top priority. Our district is an established gateway into Greater Lincolnshire thanks to superb road accessibility provided by the A1 and the East Coast mainline railway which means London is only an hour away.

We will use this connectivity to our advantage, creating additional employment opportunities alongside the delivery of high quality housing and a step change in the leisure and retail offer for both residents and visitors.

With our business partners, we will continue to play a major leadership role in positioning South Kesteven as an area with rapidly improving productivity, making a major contribution to the growth of London and the wider Midlands area.

As we focus on our themes: ensuring the council

is “Open for Business” and “Commercially and Customer Focussed” we will:

- retain and increase employment opportunities in the district
- work to secure an infrastructure that meets our housing and growth priorities
- build towards economic health of successful commercial partnerships
- maximise opportunities for development of employment land

Over the next year we will:

- develop and submit a new Local Plan to promote economic and housing growth
- identify opportunities for growth on large brownfield sites
- continue to ensure the delivery of high quality, well-planned developments

- work in partnership with other public sector agencies to provide development opportunities through the use of council-owned land and property
- encourage the redevelopment and regeneration of key sites in Grantham Town Centre and other market towns
- put in place a development framework/contracts for new town centre leisure and commercial development
- bring forward the cinema and leisure developments at St Catherine’s Road, Grantham, and develop plans for subsequent phases
- continue to prioritise the delivery of the Grantham Southern Relief Road
- work with further and higher education providers to improve employment skills

94.7% of retail units in key town centres across the district are occupied

92% of planning applications approved

Over the last two years **91.4%** of our major planning applications have been determined within time

196,172 people visited our shopping areas

Environment

What we have achieved in 2015/16

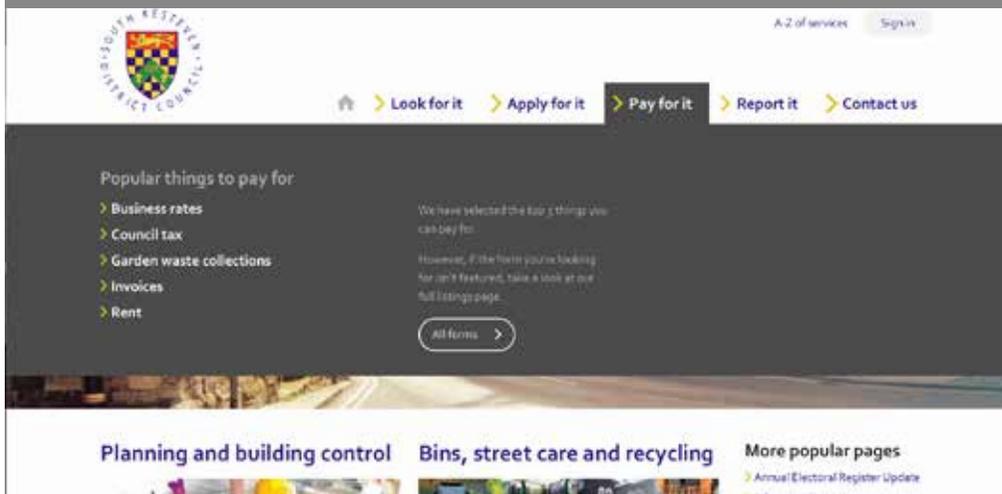
We collected more green waste over the last year which contributed significantly to SK recycling just over 43% of our household waste. Green bins used by customers increased from 28,300 to 30,000 with 9,922 tonnes composted.



The introduction of new equipment and an extension of working hours over the weekend resulted in improvements to street cleanliness with 98% of our streets achieving a Grade A and complaints falling significantly.



We have improved our technology to support and improve our customer contact. This included a new direct debit offer for garden waste (59% uptake) and our new council website which makes it easier for residents to do things online.



With our support food businesses achieving a level 3-5 in our Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was over 98%. This demonstrates the maintenance and improvement of standards in food premises, allowing us to focus on poorer performing outlets.



We gained the prestigious Green Flag Award for Wyndham Park in Grantham for a fourth year running. This shows our commitment, and that of our contractors Glendale, to maintaining high standards and excellent facilities at one of our prized assets.



Quality of life and ensuring SK remains a safe and attractive place to live is a priority. Levels of anti-social behaviour reported to the police fell once again with 22 per 1000 population (7% reduction) which is the second lowest in the county.

Environment

Creating the environment to keep SK clean, green and healthy is a priority for us and we recognise the importance and value this has to our residents, visitors and businesses.

Refuse collection, street cleansing, recycling and open spaces are just a few of the areas covered by this priority and all are crucial to making the district a great place to live and work.

So we will continue to invest in this, making sure we deliver a high quality service at low cost, which is vital as government funding continues to reduce and we aim to be self sufficient by 2019.

We also know that there is a strong link between people's health and their environment and that there are a wide range of factors that impact on health outcomes.

As we focus on our themes: ensuring the council is "Open for Business" and "Commercially and Customer Focussed" we will:

- Implement with partners the approved Air Quality Management Action Plan to deliver improvements in Grantham town centre

- Implement an awareness campaign for bus and taxi operators to reduce pollution from stationary vehicles in town centres
- Promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport
- Provide a greater choice for customers by offering larger refuse bins for families and landlords of multiple occupancy properties, and smaller bins for those who need them

24,058 customers participated in our green waste service

98% of our streets reached clean streets standard

43.2% of household waste recycled

A reduction in fleet vehicle mileage and lower fuel use has seen our CO2 emissions drop from

6,430 to 4,850 tonnes

Housing

What we have achieved in 2015/16

Work continued on improving the energy efficiency of our council homes. More than 690 properties had improvement works including boilers, external wall insulation, loft insulation, heat pumps and cavity wall insulation.

We are carrying out a programme of work to test and upgrade smoke detectors in council homes across the district to ensure our tenants are protected from the risk of fire.



A budget of £8.1 million was allocated for new social housing across the district.



We invested £3.38 million in improving homes across the district to ensure they meet Decent Homes standards and continue to deliver our standard. This included new kitchens, bathrooms, central heating and rewiring.



We successfully completed the final phase of a programme to deliver 33 new homes on land owned by the council and work started to identify and bring forward the next tranche of sites for a further 27 new homes.

We looked at how we could make better use of community facilities at our sheltered housing schemes.

We reviewed our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure we make best use of our properties and that the people in greatest need get priority access to our housing stock.

Improving our private sector housing stock is essential. As a result of enforced actions, 68 privately rented homes were made safe for occupation and an additional 103 vulnerable owner occupiers were supported with grant assistance.



Housing

We are committed to creating the environment to provide good housing for all across South Kesteven.

SKDC recognises that housing is important not only in providing shelter and security but also in helping to shape places, neighbourhoods and communities and in having an impact on health, education, employment and independent living.

The building of new homes also has a hugely beneficial impact on the district as it contributes positively to the local economy.

The growth plans for the district anticipate the development of thousands of homes in Grantham at the North West Quadrant/Poplar Farm and the Southern Quadrant creating employment and skills development opportunities over a number of years and encouraging people to live and work in the district.

So far 230 properties have been completed at Poplar Farm and a further 287 can be built before the start of the next phase. With three developers on site we estimate that 150 houses will be built each year.

Growth plans also include the development of new housing in Bourne, Stamford, The Deepings and in a number of our rural villages.

The council helped 26 first time buyers get keys to their own property through the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme which saw SKDC guaranteeing 20% of the deposit with the applicant needing to find only 5%.

And we also supported people with disabilities to continue to live in their own home. During the last year we carried out 391 adaptations to council-

owned properties and awarded a further 75 means tested disabled facilities grants for private rented or housing association accommodation.

For the future we have streamlined our focus ensuring the council is “Open for Business” and “Commercially and Customer Focussed” we will:

- Update the council’s Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to ensure long term sustainability and identify opportunities to invest in estate management, refurbishment and new affordable housing developments
- Use the council’s own land to develop new low cost housing
- Build further new council homes and deliver more low cost housing in the district

160 affordable homes delivered

33 new council homes built

495 new homes built across the district

287 Private sector properties improved through advice/assistance/enforcement

Culture...

What we have achieved in 2015/16

A specialist French market visited Bourne and Grantham to add a flavour of the continent to two of our town markets.

We worked with the Football Foundation to secure nearly £400,000 of funding to deliver improved facilities at the Grantham Meres Leisure Centre.

More than a 1,000 children took part in the eighth annual Inspire+ Mini Olympics at the Meres Leisure Centre themed around the 2015 Rugby World Cup.

We have significantly increased user numbers at our leisure centres across the district from 823,671 in 14/15 to well over a million last year.



More than 53,000 people attended Stamford's second Georgian Festival which helped generate £973,000 for the local economy. It once again celebrated the town's heritage and culture.

A refurbishment at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre was carried out to provide new gym and training facilities. The overall cost was £600,000 funded by SKDC (£400,000) and 1Life (£200,000) with the provision of fantastic new fitness facilities.



Wyndham Park in Grantham is officially one of the very best parks in the UK after being given a prestigious Green Flag Award for the third year running. It has also just been awarded over £800,000 in Heritage Lottery funding which will be used to develop the park over coming years.



A host of great events were staged at our arts centres in Grantham and Stamford. The Meres Live in Grantham attracted top national artists including Strictly's Brendan Cole and his show A Night to Remember which proved a huge hit with the audience.



Culture

Our district has a wealth of cultural assets that span a wide range of areas including built and natural heritage, architecture, museums, sports, leisure, visual and performing arts, festivals and events, specialist retailers, markets and fairs.

Our focus is for the district to be recognised as a place that offers an excellent quality of life with a leisure and cultural offer to match.

We run successful leisure centres in Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings and our arts centres in Grantham and Stamford offer a variety of shows and entertainment to suit all tastes.

The Meres Live at Grantham, a 1,200 seater venue, hosts national artists like Jimmy Carr and Elaine Paige. Stamford Arts Centre cinema alone sold 49,712 tickets for 2015/16.

We also organise successful festivals across the district including Gravity Fields and the Stamford Georgian Festival which not only promote the area but also attract thousands of visitors to the district helping to boost the local economy.

As we focus on our themes: ensuring the council is “Open for Business” and “Commercially and Customer Focussed” we will:

- Raise the profile of South Kesteven as a great place to live, work and invest
- Consider leisure provision across the district and review options available for the delivery of arts activities
- Promote local cultural attractions to raise the profile of the district to attract inward investment
- Contribute to the success of local tourism and leisure business through a range of promotional activity including a programme of local festivals
- Enhance the facilities available at Wyndham Park through Heritage Lottery Funding
- Maintain the attractiveness of our towns and villages

97.3% of visitors are satisfied with our leisure centres

1,039,008 visitors attended shows and events at our arts centres

1,125,883 leisure centre visitors

What have we achieved

Our customers are able to request services, report problems, look up information and pay online on the council's improved website at a time that is convenient to them. We had over 722,000 visits to our website and came 37th out of 191 councils for our website's content, clarity and accessibility.

To ensure the most vulnerable receive the help and support they need, we've improved performance in our benefits section with changes to claims now being completed in less than four days rather than nine days last year.

Individual Electoral Registration was introduced making the change from householder registration to individual. By March this year 106,672 people were registered which involved individual checks through the Department for Work and Pensions and supporting documents. This compared with 105,584 registrations in 2014 through the householder registration scheme.

The combined parliamentary, district, town and parish council elections were successfully delivered as well as five local by-elections and two neighbourhood plan referendums. All this was achieved in the wake of the Boundary Commission

review of the district which resulted in a reduction in the number of Members serving from 58 to 56. The review produced revised ward boundaries which had to be taken into account during each election process.

We registered 14 properties in the district on the Register of Assets of Community Value, mostly public houses where the local community and organisations have expressed an interest on their future use.

During the year over £80,000 was allocated by the Community Fund panel, run by the CVS on behalf of the council. Funding went to various organisations across council wards to help improve community amenities or buildings and support community enterprise, celebrations, sports events, street festivals, arts and cultural events.

We have looked at how we can use our assets more effectively and have generated income by letting out part of our St Peter's Hill offices in Grantham to private sector partners.

Looking forward to the year ahead we will:

- Continue to deliver customer and business improvements to enable and support a more commercial organisation, reducing cost whilst improving customer experience
- Continue to use cutting edge technologies to deliver efficiencies
- Continue to support and encourage people to use our website to transact with the council at a time that suits them.
- Ensure that the right level of support is provided by benefits to those with specific needs within the community. This will involve supporting affordable housing and ensuring that individuals can sustain tenancies whilst also using discretionary funds to reduce levels of over-indebtedness within our most deprived areas

Running our business

Over the last year we have continued to experience a reduction in the amount of government funding we receive. This, coupled with an increased demand for our services, has meant we have had to work even harder to make the most of the money we have. Despite these challenges, we remain an ambitious council and going forward we are adopting a commercial approach to the way we do things. The district has tremendous potential and by working in our communities and concentrating on growth we can achieve our vision, which is to help our towns and villages to thrive by creating vibrant communities where people want to live, work and invest. We will continue to use our influence with Government and engage with stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for the people of South Kesteven.

To help us manage our resources our finances are divided into three separate areas. These are:

- The General Fund
- The Housing Revenue Account
- Capital Expenditure

The General Fund

This is where the day to day costs of running services such as recycling and waste collection, street cleaning, building and development control and arts and leisure facilities are accounted for. They are funded through business rates, government grants, fees and charges and council tax.

The Housing Revenue Account

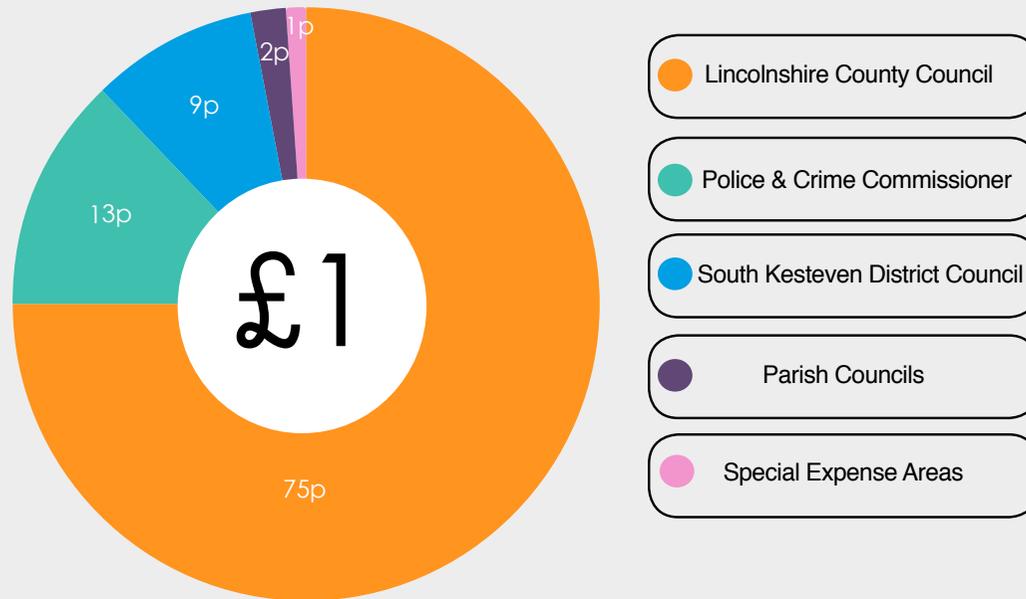
This is where the day to day costs of managing and maintaining our council housing stock is administered. We act as landlord for over 6,000 properties and deal with repairs and estate management issues. It is funded solely from the rents that are collected from tenants.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on items that are likely to benefit us for more than a year such as a new refuse collection vehicle - is called capital expenditure. It is funded from the sale of assets, capital grants and contributions, the major repairs reserve and direct revenue financing.

What happened to the money we collected?

We collected nearly £66 million in council tax in 2015/16 - on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and parish councils, keeping around £6 million to help fund the services we provide. The pie chart below shows how every pound we collect is split between the organisations.



We collected **98.7%** of council tax due
We collected **98.6%** of business rates due

We also collected just over £38 million in business rates - retaining just over £4 million. The remainder was distributed to Lincolnshire County Council and central government.

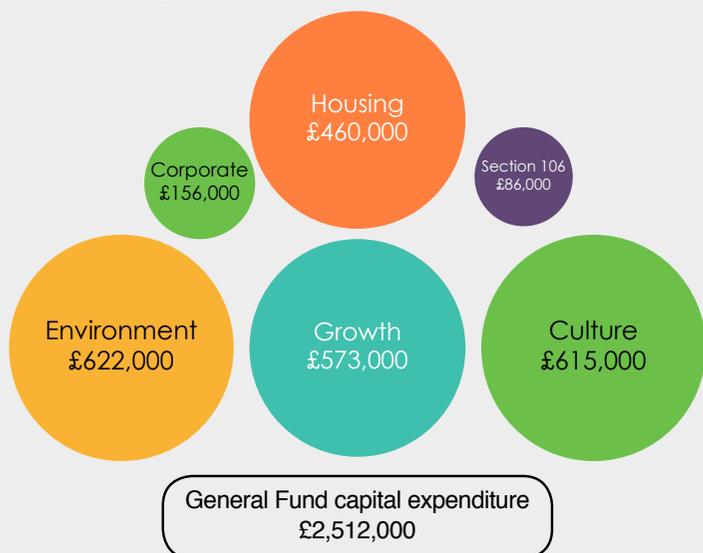
At the end of each year we prepare an income and expenditure account which shows how much we spent on services, how much income we received and how we were funded. This account includes the costs of services from both the general fund and housing revenue accounts and also other costs like capital and pension adjustments.

For further information on our spending please refer to our 2015/16 statement of accounts which can be found at www.southkesteven.gov.uk/budgets

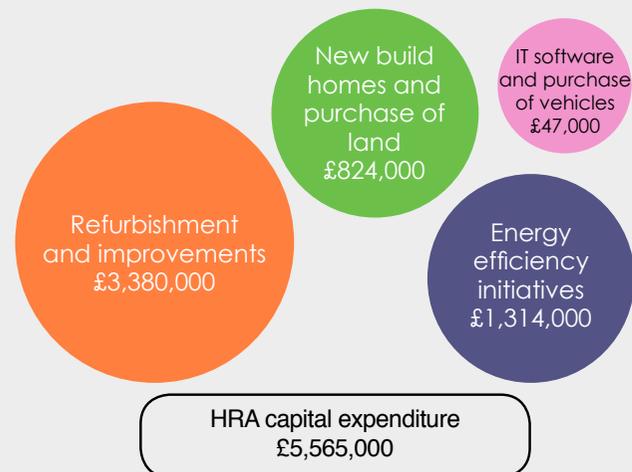
What about capital expenditure?

During 2015/16 we spent just over £8 million on capital projects - £2.5 million on general fund projects and £5.5 million on housing revenue items.

The General Fund - Capital expenditure on each of our priority areas is shown below:



The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital expenditure on housing initiatives is shown below:



General fund projects included:

- The procurement of street cleansing vehicles at a cost of £536,000
- £460,000 on grants for housing
- An extension costing £457,000 on the council-owned Park Air Systems building in Market Deeping
- The investment of £400,000 on new gym equipment at the Meres Leisure Centre, Grantham in partnership with the operators 1Life
- £144,000 on the replacement of the Astroturf pitch at the Meres Leisure Centre, Grantham
- An investment of £115,000 on our customer relationship management (CRM) and document management systems
- The replacement of wheelie bins at a cost of £86,000

Housing Revenue Account projects included:

- £1.314 million on energy efficiency initiatives including boiler replacement schemes and LED lighting for the communal areas in our sheltered housing communal areas
- £3.38 million on various refurbishment and improvement initiatives including the re-roofing of council properties at a cost of £1.3 million, the refurbishment of 232 kitchens and 165 bathrooms in council homes at a cost of £893,000 and £895,000 on insulating the external walls of our council properties
- £740,000 on completing the development of new council homes in Stamford

We funded this through a combination of our major repairs reserve (£4.726m), capital receipts (£2.535m), capital grants and contributions (£455,000), direct revenue financing (£161,000) and other reserves (£200,000).

Help shape the district?

We all need to feel that we live in a place where we belong. Getting involved is a great way to increase your sense of belonging and to contribute to the local community.

If we are to deliver the services which are important to our residents, we need more of you to get involved to help us shape our plans. There are several ways you can do this, whether you have lots or only a little time to spare.

You can:

- Attend any of our public meetings, details of which are on our website www.southkesteven.gov.uk
- You can become a member of our Citizens' Panel and respond to consultation exercises
- You can join one of the groups that the council works with to improve services
- You can either email or write to your local councillor on any matter that concerns or interests you
- Or if you can think of any other ideas about how you would like to get involved please email us on pr@southkesteven.gov.uk or call on 01476 406080



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The Annual Report is also available in larger print and Braille, on our website, on CD or in other languages.