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Foreword by the Leader of the Council.

This Corporate Strategy is a medium term strategy for the period 2004 – 2008 which sets out the goals we have set towards the achievement of our overall 20 year vision.

The original strategy that was adopted in 2004 was subject to extensive consultation with our communities. When we set the strategy we knew we would want to undertake a mid term review because financial and other resource issues keep changing and we need to ensure we are still on track and the objectives are still relevant. This means that some objectives will be changed, either because we have completed them or because the priorities for the organisation have changed. The strategy is complimentary to our Best Value Performance Plan which is published annually and reports on our achievements over the past year as well as what we hope to achieve in the next three years.

In particular since this strategy was adopted a new Kennet Community Strategy has been developed by the Kennet Local Strategic Partnership and we want to ensure we have the right resources in place to respond to those areas where Kennet District Council will lead and/or work in partnership to contribute to their goals.

We are also very mindful of our resources and in particular financial resources which in real terms have been reducing year on year. This means that very hard decisions have to be made on which services we can/cannot deliver in the future and what level of service we will deliver at. Obviously this means that some good services have to be reduced or even stopped all together, because although they we of value to the public we need to resource other major objectives. Kennet District Council has always prided itself on good corporate governance arrangements and we think it is important to ensure we can demonstrate that any of our plans can be backed up by resources for service delivery. If we say we are going to do something we want to deliver it.



Chris Humphries

Leader of the council

Corporate Strategy

In April 2004 the council rolled out its new Corporate Strategy which sets out our long term vision for the area with medium term goals as to how we will achieve our vision.

During 2006 the council is reviewing the corporate strategy to ensure it is still fit for purpose and also to ensure it integrates with our medium term financial strategy.

This draft has been drawn together after extensive consultation with members and taking on board issues that have arisen since 2004. Fundamental to this review is the need to make long term savings and the difficult financial decisions we are now facing. Thus, whilst the council recognises that there is a lot more it would like to achieve this strategy sets out what we think we can achieve given the resources available now and the resources we anticipate in the future.

The Kennet Local Strategic Partnership also adopted its community strategy for Kennet in September 2005. As a committed member of the partnership it is important that we identify those parts of the strategy where Kennet District Council can make a difference either through direct action and/or working in partnership with other.

That is not to say that we will lose all our aspirations. We will ensure that where we have aspirations, we also recognise that without the necessary resources we may not achieve them.

20 YEAR VISION

The council will maintain sustainable communities; provide a clean, healthy and safe environment; and good access to council services. The council will encourage the participation of residents in decisions about their communities.

ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR VISION

To achieve this Kennet District Council will:

Embrace the role of community leadership. Represent the interests of residents and use our influence and resources to enable the provision of services and facilities.

Use the community planning process to shape our work and work with and through the local strategic partnerships (LSPs).

Work in partnership with community groups, the voluntary and private sectors, and other public agencies (such as Wiltshire County Council, Wiltshire Constabulary, Kennet and North Wiltshire Primary Care Trust and the parish and town councils).

Ensure that Members and senior officers put in place proper arrangements for the governance of the authority's affairs and the stewardship of resources at its disposal.

Deliver our own services to the highest possible level within the resources available.

Is customer focused in the design and delivery of services, in particular to use the Implementing e-Government Statement process, to improve contact with the public.

Be committed to enabling the public to have ease of access to services, provided directly by the council and by other agencies. This is in terms of face to face access, electronic access, and access to public transport.

Communication between the council and the public is seen as being of utmost importance and the council will work to improve the two-way communication.

Enable elected Members to work for the communities that they serve in an effective and efficient way. They are in a position to promote the council and its aims and values to the community by the provision of help, advice and access to services. They also are in a position to present and promote the aspirations of the communities of Kennet to the council.

Endeavour to support staff to be enthusiastic, energetic and dynamic. They will be encouraged through good training and development opportunities, employee-friendly policies and a good working environment, intended to enable the council to recruit and retain quality staff.

We will know when we have achieved our vision when:-

- Satisfaction with the authority exceeds the national top quartile of 70%.
- We have enabled 2000 affordable homes.
- We are processing benefit applications in less than 36 days.
- We achieve level 4 of the equalities standard.
- We achieve a recycling rate of 36%.
- Crime has been reduced by 12.5%
- We will ensure that over 90% of areas meet the DEFRA cleanliness standards.

Context – Background to Kennet District Council

The district of Kennet covers 370 square miles and is one of the most sparsely populated districts in England with a population in 2005/06 of 76,700 living in 33,527 houses. There are 0.77 people per hectare compared to a national average of 3.45. (source: Office of National Census (ONCS) 2001). The district includes in the south, Salisbury Plain and to the north the Marlborough Downs. Scattered round the district are over 70 villages and

hamlets and the towns of Devizes, Marlborough and Tidworth. The physical size and the relatively large distances between our towns and villages, coupled with the transport and road infrastructure creates issues of access to services.

Almost two-thirds of the district lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there are over 70 designated conservation areas and more than 4,500 listed buildings. The Avebury area and some of its surrounds have been designated as part of the Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site.

One of four district councils in the county of Wiltshire the area, the people and the economy are strongly influenced by the commuter pull of the South East and the town of Swindon which provides much employment opportunity for the residents in our district. These two major influences have in fact influenced very heavily the population profile of Kennet with many people choosing to live within the Kennet area and commute.

An equally major influence on our community is Tidworth, Netheravon & Bulford Garrison, which provides employment for a significant number of our residents. To the extent that employment in public admin/defence is 14.39% in Kennet compared to 5.72% (ONCS 2001) nationally and this sector is proportionally the biggest employer.

Kennet traditionally has enjoyed low unemployment rates with a rate of 0.8% (at January 2006) 0.8%* compared to 2.6% nationally. (Source: Claimant Count, NOMIS). Despite this we still have over 4,200 benefits claimants and whilst the average salaries of the Kennet District residents are above the national average, salaries within the district are below the national average. We have for a long time recognised that there are pockets of deprivation in the Kennet district, however nationally these do not register because they are hidden by the overall wealth in the district. This makes it very difficult for us to attract additional funding from the government to tackle such issues.

We regularly ask our residents what they think our priorities should be and a peoples voice survey undertaken in September 2005 revealed that the top four priorities from local people were:-

- Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Providing more homes that local people can afford.
- Increase recycling.
- Protect the environment.

CORE SERVICES

The council undertakes a number of statutory and discretionary services to support the day-to-day quality of life needs for our citizens. We also have performance targets for those services to monitor and measure how well we are carrying out those services.

Key council front line services include:-

Elections and electoral registration for district, county and national elections.
Land Charges.
Community Planning.
Building Control.
Development Control.
Forward Planning.
Environmental Health
Leisure Centres
Leisure & Arts Development
Tourism development
Council Tax & Rates Collection
Benefits administration
Refuse Collection & Recycling
Grounds maintenance and street cleaning
Regeneration
Housing
Car Parkiing

In order to sustain these services the council also has support services to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the council.

Key support services include:-

Legal
Democratic Services
Finance
Policy
Human Resources
IT
Contact Centre

Some services are a combination of both, for example our web development team provides the front line interface for customers to contact the council and our finance team administer grants and rate relief to organisations. Our contact centre also act as first point of contact and response to most of our customer queries.

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

In order to ensure the delivery of this corporate strategy it is essential that each of the priorities is resourced. The council recognises that to meet that requirement it will be reliant on generating the resources needed from within its current, real terms levels of expenditure. This is because additional income from council tax and government grant will not even be sufficient to meet the increased costs of current levels of activity, leaving the Authority to generate the resources it needs to fund any development of services. In fact the council

will have to make significant savings just to maintain a standstill budget in real terms.

THE FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE COUNCIL OPERATES

Clearly, if adequate resources are needed to deliver the council's agenda, then the financial environment in which the council operates is critical, and any financial and corporate strategy must take that environment fully into account.

At the present time, and for the foreseeable future, the financial environment in which the council operates is difficult. The following factors are the most relevant in this context:

- minimal year-on-year increases in general government grant;
- the increasing costs of employing people, particularly important in a labour-intensive service organisation;
- external pressures to invest in new and improved services via new legislation and regulation and inspection;
- a buoyant national local authority labour market for professional and technical staff, with low unemployment locally, both demand competitive pay rates to secure good staff;
- reductions in income from investments;
- limitations on tax raising powers.

As this corporate strategy shows, the council needs to fit in additional investment in services in pursuit of its own agenda if at all possible, but in the situation described above, new investment in services has to be met by reductions in net expenditure elsewhere.

Key Priorities

In order to achieve this vision, the council has four key priorities that it wants to address over the coming years.

- Community Leadership
- Stewardship of the Environment
- Developing Strong, Safe & Healthy Communities
- Improving Services

How we are going to resource the council's priorities.

If the financial environment within which the Council operates is difficult, then it is essential that the Council adopts a range of responses to the difficulties with which it is faced.

Those responses can be summarised as follows:

- to seek alternative external funding streams to supplement the inadequate central government support by general grant, where such funding is focussed on priority services;
- to carry out best value and other service and structure/staffing reviews with a view to increasing economy and efficiency without undue impairment of effectiveness;
- to focus on those services which are seen as essential, and to curtail or cease activity in non-essential areas;
- to maximise income from fees, charges and other income;
- to plan ahead as far as possible in order to identify problems of funding in advance and devise policies for dealing with those problems;
- to adopt a taxation strategy of imposing a council tax increase each year at the capping level determined by central government;
- to seek efficiencies through the organisational changes made to respond to the 'Gershon' agenda, in particular to continue imposing cash-limited budgets where possible, (i.e. budgets that do not increase to take account of inflation);
- to identify key processes where economies of scale can be achieved through joint procurement or service delivery both internally and with external partners;
- to focus work force planning, staff training and development on the achievement of the identified priority services;
- to focus investment in new and replacement technology on priority services;
- to enable services to be delivered in a single way to multiple access channels, with increasing emphasis on self-service;
- to avoid introducing new services or increasing net expenditure in real terms on existing services, unless compelled to do so by law or unless the priority given to a service demands new investment.

None of the above responses would, on their own, represent an adequate response to the difficulties with which the Council is faced, but together they represent a reasonably powerful response.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Apart from the money needed to pay for the day-to-day costs of providing services, (staff costs, building and other running costs, transport etc.) the Council also spends money on new assets and the refurbishment of existing assets, such as leisure centres, vehicles and plant and ICT equipment and software. This is what is meant by 'capital investment'.

Funding of capital investment is met from the proceeds of the sale of assets no longer needed for operational purposes. To the extent that capital expenditure exceeds receipts from the sale of assets capital investment is funded from capital reserves. This in turn reduces the interest income derived from the investment of capital reserves. This means that capital investment has to be limited to what is essential and that which best serves the Council's corporate objectives.

Therefore, the Authority operates a framework for decision making about capital investment, which encompasses the Council's "Asset Management Plan" and "Capital Strategy".

In addition a separate, yet integrated system for capital bids has been introduced, whereby all bids for capital investment are assessed against the corporate objectives.

THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE POSITION

The following table summarises the Council's revenue position, and illustrates the need to make significant savings each year in order to produce a balanced budget within the constraint of a year-on-year council tax increase of 5%.

THREE-YEAR REVENUE ESTIMATES

<u>Notes</u>	<u>2006/07</u> <u>£000s</u>	<u>2007/08</u> <u>£000s</u>	<u>2008/09</u> <u>£000s</u>	<u>2009/10</u> <u>£000s</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>				
1				
Total Committee Spending Requirements	10,305	10,305	10,460	10,682
2				
Increases for Inflation:				
Staff Costs		650	350	360
Other		50	60	70
3				
Pensions Back-funding requirement		130	140	145
4				
Growth Requirements		357	150	150
Total Committee Requirements Repriced at Current Levels of Activity	10,305	11,492	11,160	11,407

<u>Income:</u>					
5	Investment Income	-1,350	-1,250	-1,150	-1,050
	Withdrawal from balances:	-39	0	0	0
6	Government Grant	-5,051	-5,184	-5,288	-5,393
7	Collection Fund Surplus	-107	-60	-60	-60
8	Efficiency Savings Required		-1,032	-478	-487
9	Council Tax Income Requirement	3,758	3,966	4,184	4,417
	Council Tax Base	30,458	30,610	30,763	30,917
10	Council Tax Requirement After Corrective Action	£123.38	£129.56	£136.02	£142.85
10	Increase over previous year	4.70%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%

Notes

1. This is the net revenue cost of maintaining services at their current levels after taking into account increased costs arising from inflation and new capital investment, and assuming that annual savings targets are met.
2. This assumes pay costs, including pensions, will increase by 3.5% per annum. However, in 2007/08 a one-off cost of a nationally agreed pay and grading review is estimated to add an additional £350,000 to the pay bill in addition to the annual cost of living award.
3. This assumes that the Council's employer contributions to the local government pension scheme will increase each year by 1.7% of pensionable pay. In common with most pension schemes, the Council's pension fund will be unable to meet pension liabilities unless contributions are increased.
4. Normally demands for new expenditure would be of the order of £150,000 per annum, but the situation is different in 2007/08 because of the full year effect of funding concessionary bus passes, and the withdrawal of a profitable contract with the Ministry of Defence for the collection of refuse.
5. As noted above, investment income is predicted to fall because of the need to use capital reserves to fund capital schemes.
6. The provisional grant settlement for 2007/08 has been announced, the assumption thereafter being that grant will increase by 3% per annum.
7. This adjustment reflects any surplus the council tax billing authorities may have in their collection funds.
8. This is the level of reductions in net expenditure that the Council will need to achieve if it is to keep within the constraint of a 5% year-on-year council tax increase.
9. This is the amount which, when divided by the council tax base, produces the council tax required expressed as a Band D equivalent.

10. The assumption made is that capping will apply to any council tax increase over 5% and that the Authority would wish to tax at the capping limit.

WHERE REDUCTIONS IN NET EXPENDITURE MAY OCCUR

As noted above, the Council has adopted a whole range of measures to contain or reduce net expenditure; by maximising income; better procurement; improved efficiency; and so on.

Those measures will be applied to all services regardless of whether or not they have a high corporate priority as it could be said that they simply represent “good housekeeping”.

However, in addition to the general approach for all services, the Council has identified a number of areas where it will be seeking to make reductions over and above good housekeeping.

Areas where additional savings are envisaged include:

- Environmental Health functions, (subject to meeting statutory requirements).
- Maintenance of play areas
- Parish litter grants
- Provision of litter bins
- Skip service
- Car parking
- Amenity lighting
- Leisure centres and leisure development
- Community transport, (transport being a County Council function)
- Housing advice
- Tourism

Priority 1:

Community Leadership

To provide community leadership by informing, listening, assisting, influencing and leading. We are committed to developing effective partnerships to achieve this.

The council recognises that as well as providing high quality services to our citizens it is important that we listens to our residents and advocate on their behalf issues of local concern. We recognise that by working in partnership with others we can achieve better outcomes.

Increasingly we are also finding that funding for activity in our area is been allocated through grant streams rather than direct to the council. More and more of this funding is being attracted through partnership working and we recognise the need to form strong partnerships to ensure funding can be levered in for Kennet residents.

The council also recognises that good communications are important and it is vital that our residents are aware of the services we provide and what we are doing on their behalf.

The council will contribute to this priority by:-

- Continuing to support to the Community Planning process and in particular the Kennet Local Strategic Partnership and four area Community Planning Partnerships.
- Ensuring that all sections of the community have equal access to our services.
- Ensuring that we continue to consult with people and reflect the outcomes of such consultations in the way we deliver our services.
- Through the Wiltshire Compact work towards greater engagement with the voluntary sector.
- Encourage involvement in the democratic process by administering elections and keeping the electoral register up-to-date.

The council has set the following targets to measure its performance.

- Continuing to develop the Local Development Framework in line with the statutory timetable.
- Satisfaction with the authority exceeds 70% in the 2009 satisfaction survey.
- Awareness of the community plans increases from 37% in 2005 to 45% in 2007.
- The % of people feeling fairly or well informed by the council increases from 56% in 2003 to 64% in 2009.
- We will achieve level 4 of the equalities standard by 2007/08.

Priority 2:

Developing Strong, Safe & Healthy Communities

Developing our communities to give people the opportunity to lead lives that are safe, healthy and fulfilling, acknowledging the diverse needs of the local population.

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour was seen as the highest priority for Kennet District Council to focus on in a Peoples Voice survey undertaken in 2005.

Kennet provides three leisure centres in each of the towns in the district. This equates to a swimming pool per 25,567 population. We believe the provision of leisure facilities is important for the health and well-being in the district.

The council can also contribute towards this objective through the regeneration work in Devizes, Tidworth & Marlborough and the provision of small business starter units to help local businesses.

The council will contribute to this priority by:-

- By working with members of the Community Safety Partnership to tackle national priorities and key local issues identified in the 3rd Crime and Disorder Partnership in particular to work towards the achievement of a 12% reduction in crime between 2004 – 2008.
- Implementing the Leisure Strategy by 2008.
- The provision of sports facilities in our three towns at Tidworth, Devizes and Marlborough, ensuring a high coverage per head of population and also that leisure centres are provided at different point in the district so that no community has too far to travel.
- We have a target of 30% of active 4 health participants to continue to use the leisure centre 3 Months after the completion of their course and 75% continue with a healthy lifestyle.
- Implementing the council's Health Strategy by 2008.
- Implementing and maintaining high environmental health standards aiming to score 100% against the environmental health best practise check list by 2008.
- Promoting equality of opportunity by tackling poverty and disadvantage by aiming to:-
 - Process benefits claims in less than 30 days.
 - Issuing notifications in changes in circumstances in less than 15 days by 2007.
 - Calculating correctly 98.8% of benefits claims by 2008/09.
- Working to provide sufficient good quality housing to meet the full range of need within our local communities by implementing the Housing Strategy for 2004 – 2008 and in particular delivering 400 new affordable homes by 2008.
- Implementing the homeless strategy and in particular ensuring that the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation is only one week for those in priority need by 2007/08.
- Bringing back at least 40 empty private homes per annum.
- Preventing 30 cases of homelessness through housing advice per annum.
- Adopting and implement the car parking strategy to help improve and encourage residents & visitors to our market towns by maximising the use of the parking space available.

Priority 3:-

Stewardship of the Environment

We will work with and enable our partners to care for and manage our built, natural, historic and cultural environment ensuring an inheritance for future generations that protects and enhances their quality of life.

Protection of the environment and increasing recycling were seen as two of the top four priorities in our survey in People's Voice. Kennet has an important role to play in ensuring the environment is looked after through ensuring the streets are cleaned and also through the enforcement of policies on littering.

We also contribute significantly towards the built environment through the development of the local plan and our development and building control regulations.

The council will contribute to this priority by:-

- Increasing the amount of waste recycled from 13.71% in 2004 to 36% in 2008.
- Reducing the amount of waste we collect per household from 423.53 kgs in 2004 to 410 kgs in 2008.
- To provide a high quality waste collection service that achieves top quartile satisfaction ratings of 89% by 2009.
- 100% of the district is covered by a multiple kerb side collection service by 2008.
- To maintain the highest possible street cleanliness standards by reducing the amount of land that falls below an acceptable level of cleanliness from 16% in 2004 to less than 10% in 2008.
- To protect and enhance the built, historic and natural environment by responsible decision making and advice by:-
 - Adopting the new Local Development Framework by March 2007.
 - To better the governments targets for dealing with planning applications as follows:
 - 60% of major applications within 13 weeks.
 - 65% of minor applications within 8 weeks.
 - 80% of other applications within 8 weeks.
- Ensuring all relevant building work conforms to statutory and regulatory requirements and increasing the performance standard for building control from 82.75% in 2004 to 87% in 2008.
- To ensure the council completes over 90% of pollution control improvements on time.
- Obtains sufficient information for 87% of sites of potential concern by 2008.

Priority 4

Improving Council Services

Improving our services by matching resources to provide, or facilitate, the services that the stakeholders have identified as being most important to them.

The council is committed to continuous improvement and high standards of governance as identified through our statement of internal control.

Given our financial environment we continue to seek efficiency savings and look for new ways of working to continually move forward. Our Corporate Action & Improvement Plan sets out the improvements the council will make and the service delivery planning process identifies the services responsible for these improvements.

Our data quality strategy is key to ensuring we are monitoring performance effectively and all staff are aware of the importance of data quality.

The council will contribute to this priority by:-

- Ensuring that no national indicators are in the bottom quartile by 2008.
- Introducing a single non-emergency number by July 2007.
- Developing and adopting an access strategy by 2007.
- Undertaking a programme between 2006 to 2009 of reviewing all major processes to achieve efficiency savings through the use of new technology.
- Implementing a pay and grading review across the council by April 2007.
- Developing a new Human Resources Strategy by 2008.
- Continuing to develop and review partnerships by developing a Partnership Strategy and implement a mapping system by 2007.
- Developing a Customer Charter by 2007.
- Continuing to develop the council's web as a key point of access to services and increasing the number of hits and unique users by 15% per annum.
- Increasing satisfaction with complaints handling from 32% in 2003 to over the top quartile of 36% by 2009.
- Achieving gershon efficiency savings of 2.5% per annum.
- Resolving over 80% of contacts at the first point of resolution by 2007.
- Ensuring that council tax collection rates remain above top quartile of 98.3%.
- Ensuring NNDR collection rates remain above top quartile of 99.14%

Risks Identified in Delivering This Strategy

The delivery of our vision will not be without significant risk. Risks have been identified at a high level for the whole strategy. As the strategy is implemented further risks will be identified. Risks will be managed at a

corporate and service level through the usual business procedures. The risks that have been identified at the start of the strategy period are shown below:

- Lack of human capacity to deliver the strategy. This includes resources, skills and management capacity both internally in the council and externally in our partner organisations.
- Government intervention and changes of policy.
- Effectiveness of the council's strategies
- Lack of commitment from Members and senior managers to implement changes.
- Failure to respond to changes in priority services and local circumstances.
- Adverse public reaction as some discretionary services are withdrawn to concentrate on statutory services.