

Democratic & Legal

Service Plan 2005/06



DRAFT

*'Working with and
on behalf of local
people'*

Kettering
Borough Council

1. SERVICE SUMMARY & OBJECTIVES

Service Summary

The 17 members of the Democratic & Legal Services Team together provide a wide range of front-line and support services, including support for the democratic process and members (including Mayoral functions), legal services, property services (non operational) and the electoral functions of the Council.

Key Service Aims:

Key service aims for 2005/06 are:-

Key Commitment	Improving the quality of life	Protecting & improving the environment	Economic regeneration	Local involvement in decision	Equality of opportunity	Integrity and best use of resources
Service aim						
Continue to be a best practice exemplar in respect of ethical governance						✓
To provide training and support to members				✓		✓
To implement the Anite agenda management system						✓
To manage the County Council (and possibly the General) Election and, if appropriate, any referendum				✓		
To increase the capacity of the legal services section (particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour and planning) and to explore possibilities of (and if appropriate action) joint provision of legal services with other authorities	✓	✓	✓			✓
To review the delivery of the property management service						✓

Key Service Objectives

We want to review and where possible increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, evidenced through our Key Service Aims that are, for the moment short term.

Links to cross cutting themes:**Community Plan:**

The Community Plan for 2005 to 2008 is being consulted on with a view to strengthen the partnership working of organisations within the Borough, and to clarify the Local Strategic Partnership's overall strategic aims. The Council's commitments to the Community Plan are delivered via the Corporate Improvement Plan. A number of the unit's Key Aims and Priorities link to the Plan.

Corporate Improvement Plan:

The Corporate Improvement Plan will be updated in the spring 2005. This plan will act as a driver for prioritised improvement across the organisation over the next three years.

Next Steps Programme and organisational improvement:

The Council's next steps and organisational improvement programme activity will be intensified during 2005/06 including: the delivery of efficiency savings, the development of procurement, the establishment of systems that improve the delivery of services and supporting the implementation of major change initiatives.

Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy:

The Council attained 'good' ratings for both The Asset Management Plan, and The Capital Strategy last time they were subject to external validation. The Capital Strategy will be reviewed / refreshed during 2005 with the overarching aim of continuing to identify opportunities for making best use of the Council's resources. Due to the strategic importance of the Council's asset portfolio and its links with the delivery of key priorities, such as economic development, all decisions that impact on the future use of the Council's land and buildings will be given strategic consideration, including discussion at SMT. The Head of Democratic & Legal Services is the Corporate Property Officer and is responsible for the publication of the Asset Management Plan. This role is supported by the Corporate Asset Management Team.

E-government

E-government cuts across all service areas and aims to ensure that efficiency savings are made as a result of investment in technology, maximising access channels and choice and transferability of front-line staff.

Social Inclusion

The work of the unit aims to address issues of equality and social inclusion and comply with corporate policies and procedures regarding equality of opportunity and all legislative requirements.

The Housing Strategy, which assesses housing need within Kettering Borough and sets out a framework for meeting this need over the next three to five years across all tenures. This links to the Key Aims and Strategic Aims.

The **Crime, Disorder and Drug Strategy** which is a three stage strategy (2005 – 2008) to tackle crime and disorder and the misuse of drugs in Kettering. It has been developed jointly by the Council, county council, police, police authority, fire authority, and primary care trust in co-operation with the probation service and others. Key Aim 4 above and the Priority 2 (2005 draft) – Reduce Incidents of anti-social behaviour including criminal damage and racist incidents.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2004/05

- Democratic services internet accessibility – amongst other things making agendas, reports and minutes (leading to a reduction of more than 22% in circulation of paper copies)
- Comprehensive member training programme
- Successful organisation and management of the annual State of the Borough event in September 2004 – including a major consultation event in the Newlands Shopping Centre
- Successful European Election
- Completion of the Annual Canvass culminating with the publication of the Register of Electors with a 93% return rate
- Successful first phase of a Further Electoral Review
- Working with Housing to ensure 100% access to council housing stock for gas servicing
- Increased fee income from legal agreements
- Working with the Northamptonshire Police and Housing to secure eviction or improved behaviour from 8 households

3. STANDARDS OF SERVICE

We will aim to achieve the Council's customer service standards as set out below.

Corporate Customer Service Standards

- All our staff will be polite and helpful
- We will answer telephone calls within 15 seconds or 5 rings and answer calls professionally and courteously
- All our correspondence will be acknowledged within 3 working days and full responses provided within 12 working days. We will use plain English so that they are easy to understand
- We will return telephone messages within 1 working day
- We will acknowledge e-mails the same day providing a full response within 2 working days
- All staff will carry identification with a photograph and wear a name badge

In addition, we will aims to:

- Produce and circulate draft minutes to members of the relevant committees within 10 working days;
- Achieve 70% customer satisfaction from ongoing customer surveys;
- Achieve 60% staff satisfaction from twice yearly staff surveys;
- Achieve less than 8.4 days per employee per annum lost due to sickness;
- Maintain the Service budget in line with our budget forecast;
- Report monthly on our performance, budgets and projects to the Senior Management Team regularly;
- Regularly report other local PI's to the Service's sponsoring Deputy Chief Executive; and
- Report on our Property PIs to the Monitoring & Audit Committee and in the Asset Management Plan.

4. WHAT CUSTOMERS SAY

A. Kettering People's Panel 2004

The recent *People's Panel* autumn 2004 survey asked respondents to rate the importance and satisfaction of a range of council services including electoral registration services on a scale of 1-10 (1 = totally unimportant/lowest possible satisfaction and 10 = extremely important/highest possible satisfaction) in order to help gauge public opinion of the level of priority in this area.

The service shows an upper quartile level of satisfaction both in respect of importance and performance.

B. Member consultations

Training events: Throughout the year, members participated in the following training events at which surveys were carried out to assess usefulness.

- Planning
- Anti-social behaviour
- Recycling
- New Planning Act and joint working
- Housing stock options
- Freedom of information

The general perception of members was the high quality of the course content with need to improve facilities. Key comments made in relation to the sessions are as follows:

Subject	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good knowledge & information sharing ▪ Clarification for members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need for larger room ▪ Improve timing
Anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excellent information session and increased awareness ▪ Case studies met objectives ▪ Public Housing procedures enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to be longer ▪ Need to encourage more members to attend
Recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acquiring info on how the scheme is going to be implemented ▪ Useful information – very plain understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publicity material could be improved ▪ Need bigger room
New Planning Act and Joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good explanation of a new and complicated subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bigger room and clearer handouts
Housing Stock Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very explanatory ▪ Lots of facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food - More healthier options preferable
Freedom of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excellent software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longer time needed in IT suite

Civic Ball:

A customer survey was carried out on the Mayor's civic ball 2004. The key findings were that 75% of those answering felt that the ball was organised well, compared with 14% who did not and just over half (59%) thought that the level of service received was better than previous years.

5. HOW WE PERFORM

Democratic Services are not responsible for any best value performance indicators

Ref No.	Description	Year End 2003/04	04/05 to Date	Year End Estimate	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	Target 06/07
LPI 09c	Time taken to process right to buy sales (Stage 3)	2.5 days	1 day	1 day	3 days	3 days	3 days
LPI 37	Percentage of council owned commercial properties let	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
LPI 38	Average time commercial premises are vacant	43 days	73 days	75 days	45 days	45 days	45 days

Management PI's (Balanced Scorecard)

PI Source	PI	Year end 2003/4	04/05 to date	Year end estimate	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	Target 06/07
BS 1	Answer 95% of telephone calls	86.5%	85%	87%	95%	95%	95%
BS 2	Reply to written enquiries within 10 working days of receipt	Not recorded	71%	70%	90%	90%	90%
BS 3	Achieve % customer satisfaction from customer surveys	93%%	80%	80%	70%	75%	80%
BS 4	Achieve less than 8.4 days per employee per annum lost due to sickness	13 days	22 days	15 days	5 days	5 days	5 days
BS 5	Achieve % staff satisfaction from twice yearly staff surveys	78%	56%	70%	70%	75%	80%
BS 6	Circulation of draft minutes within 10 working days	Not measured	89%	90%	100%	100%	100%

Detailed performance indicators for the Elections Service (full details available from Ian White) and the Property Service (full details are to be found in the Council's Asset Management Plan) are collated. Headline PI's from these are set out below:-

Elections & Electoral Representation - Annual Indicators

PI Source	PI	2005/6 Target	2004/5 Actual	2004/5 Target	2002/3 Actual
EC11	% of polling station venues accessible for people with physical disabilities	100%	96%	100%	96%
EC01	% of returned form 'A's	99%	93%	99%	93.54%

6. HOW OUR PERFORMANCE COMPARES

Democratic Services

We have designed and implemented a spreadsheet to record information that we would expect to benchmark. Benchmarking is usually undertaken through the Tamworth Benchmarking Group or the Inter Authorities Group. Limited benchmarking has been undertaken in respect of scrutiny meetings.

The Elections Service

Part 5 of this Service Plan details the headline performance indicators for the Elections Service that recommended by the Electoral Commission as standard performance indicators. We are one of 24 authorities who use this facility. We are top quartile in 13 of the 24 indicators.

Legal Services

Legal Services are part of an established benchmarking group within the Tamworth benchmarking group. There has been no substantive benchmarking undertaken by that group recently.

7. OUR PLAN FOR PROGRESSING PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT (WITH RISK ASSESSMENT)

Monitoring Officer

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
1	Local Government Act 2000	Continue to be a best practice example in respect of ethical governance	Joint working between members, statutory officers and the Standards Committee			03/06	JE	4A, 6
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
<i>Impact</i>		<i>Measurable customer outcomes</i>	<i>Risk of failure</i>	<i>Consequence of failure</i>	<i>Risk Priority</i>	<i>Recommended action</i>		
Promote and encourage active citizenship		Number of complaints dealt with.	LOW	MEDIUM Reduced confidence in local democracy	MEDIUM	Report to the Council's Standards Committee and compile a work programme to achieve this aim		

Democratic Services

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
2	Member Accreditation Programme	Develop effectiveness of elected members	Achieve East Midlands Councillor Development Charter Standard			31/3/06	VC/JE	4A & 6B
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
<i>Impact</i>		<i>Measurable customer outcomes</i>	<i>Risk of failure</i>	<i>Consequence of failure</i>	<i>Risk Priority</i>	<i>Recommended action</i>		
High			MEDIUM	MEDIUM We do not achieve charter standard	MEDIUM	Secure support from Democratic and Legal Services to VC		

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
3	E-government	Access to Information	To implement the Anite agenda management system			12/05	JE/AI	5A, 6B
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
Impact	Measurable customer outcomes		Risk of failure	Consequence of failure	Risk Priority	Recommended action		
To improve the service to Councillors and the public and to increase efficiency	Increased efficiency in agenda management, easier accessibility to documentation and process improvement		LOW	MEDIUM Less efficient working systems	MEDIUM	Delivery in accordance with the detailed project plan		

The Elections Service

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
4	Statute	Maximise democratic participation	To manage the County Council (and possibly the General) Election and, if appropriate any referendum			05/05	JE/IW	4A
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
Impact	Measurable customer outcomes		Risk of failure	Consequence of failure	Risk Priority	Recommended action		
To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote and to ensure that the choice of the electorate is implemented	See election PI's		LOW	HIGH Election petition	HIGH	County, and if relevant, General elections will be managed using a detailed project plan Potential referenda on Business Improvement Districts and the European Constitution		

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
5	Statute	Maximise democratic participation	To participate in the phases of the Further Electoral Review			03/06	JE/IW	4A
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
<i>Impact</i>		<i>Measurable customer outcomes</i>	<i>Risk of failure</i>	<i>Consequence of failure</i>	<i>Risk Priority</i>	<i>Recommended action</i>		
To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote and to ensure that the choice of the electorate is implemented		Improved elector councillor equalities across the Borough. Improved ward based community representation	LOW	HIGH A boundary solution is imposed on us	HIGH	Respond to Boundary Commission for England consultation in accordance with established timetable		

Legal Services

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
6	Need identified via performance clinics and discussions with neighbour authorities	To increase the capacity of the legal services section (particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour and planning)	To explore possibilities of (and if appropriate action) joint provision of legal services			08/05	JE/GD	1B, 4A, 6B
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
<i>Impact</i>		<i>Measurable customer outcomes</i>	<i>Risk of failure</i>	<i>Consequence of failure</i>	<i>Risk Priority</i>	<i>Recommended action</i>		
Efficient use of resources		Increased client satisfaction – measured through survey	MEDIUM	LOW We continue with the existing legal service	LOW	Assess business case and if relevant delivery in accordance with more detailed project plan		

Property Services

REF:	SOURCE OF ISSUE	PERFORMANCE ISSUE	ACTION			WHEN	WHO	CORPORATE PRIORITY
7	Executive report – 15/10/03	To review the delivery of the property management service	Produce an updated version of the Council's Asset Management Plan			May 05	JE	6B
			Review options for delivery of the property management service and implement short and long term solutions			Mar 05	JE	
CUSTOMER FOCUS			RISK ASSESSMENT					
Impact	Measurable customer outcomes		Risk of failure	Consequence of failure	Risk Priority	Recommended action		
Efficient protection, use and sustainable management of resources Improved customer service	Customer satisfaction surveys – Commercial tenants		MEDIUM	HIGH Failure to maximise the use of our assets	HIGH	Possible future assessment of Asset Management Plan		

8. RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

A summary of the service unit budget for 2005/6 is set out below.

	Budget 05/06
	£000
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	541,500
Premises	171,000
Transport	13,900
Supplies & Services	510,400
Third Party Payments	0
Transfer Payments	0
Support Services	253,700
Capital Charges	345,200
GROSS EXPENDITURE	1,835,700
INCOME	
Grants, Fees & Charges	664,700
Recharges	756,800
GROSS INCOME	1,421,500
NET EXPENDITURE	414,200

Delivering economic, efficient and effect services

Kettering Borough Council is committed to increasing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the services it provides in order to continually improve value for money in service provision. It is the Council's aim to exceed the 2.5% efficiency target set by the Government. The Democratic and Legal Services Unit will identify and deliver efficiency savings within its own operations, and also promote the delivery of efficiency through providing a professional legal service that adds value to the services provided by the organisation. A number of actions set out in this Service Plan aim to deliver more economic, efficient and effective service delivery. For example:

- Potential partnership working on the legal services;
- the implementation of the case management system in democratic services and
- a review of staff responsibilities

In order to comply with the requirements of the new national efficiency framework, the Council will set out more specific information relating to the delivery of efficiency savings in its Annual Efficiency Statement. This will be published in April 2005 in line with national timetable.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

KEY CONTACTS

POSITION	NAME	TEL. (01536)	E-MAIL
Head of Democratic & Legal Services	Jonathan Eatough	53 4209	jonathaneatough@kettering.gov.uk
Democratic Services	Anne Ireson	53 4398	anneireson@kettering.gov.uk
The Elections Service	Ian White	53 4200	ianwhite@kettering.gov.uk
Legal Services	Gary Duthie	53 4293	garyduthie@kettering.gov.uk
Property Services	Jonathan Eatough	53 4209	jonathaneatough@kettering.gov.uk

KEY SERVICES

SERVICE

Right to Speak at Planning
Elections
Electoral Register

Who is my Councillor
Member's Enquiries
Committee Enquiries

CONTACT DETAILS

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