

## **Sprowston Town Council (STC) – LCAS “Ensures that the council delivers value for money” Statement – adopted 23 September 2015**

STC believes in providing value for money (VFM), defined as the relationship between *economy, efficiency and effectiveness*, attaining VFM means achieving a balance between all three: *relatively low costs, high productivity, and valued outcomes*. Consistent with the previous duty of ‘Best Value (LGA 1999), STC still chooses to strive to “secure continuous improvement in the way in which [it] exercises [its] functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” and is currently preparing a policy to this effect which reiterates section 10.3 of its Financial Regulations.

STC Members understand their corporate responsibility for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective, and has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of their functions and includes arrangements for the management of risk, through good governance, accountability and transparency.

STC endeavours to encourage a commitment to inclusiveness, openness and accountability to the community it serves. It also provides assurance that the public money managed by the Council has been properly spent according to governance rules and regulations. STC sets out in its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations strong financial and governance practices taking guidance from the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners’ Guide (England) 2014.

STC’s fifteen Members fulfil their corporate duty by compliance with the Council’s governing document/policies and sector specific best practices. Any changes in the legislation together with any identified risk are embedded by the Council in reviewing annually its processes and procedures and action is taken to mitigate or achieve to eradicate such risks.

STC’s adopted Managing Money Policy clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of Members of the Council and the role of the Responsible Financial Officer. STC is aware of the need to prepare two further policies to reflect Efficiency and VFM, and a Treasury Management Policy.

STC’s adopted Standing Orders (Financial Controls and Procurement d page 16) sets out procedures for proposed contracts for the supply of goods, materials and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £60,000 with minimum steps to be taken (d i-vi). Where the value of the contract is likely to exceed £138,893 (or as specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time) STC must consider compliance with EU procurement rules. STC Standing Orders will be amended, from 1 January, to ensure conformity to new legislation under Public Procurement – The Public Contracts Regulations 2015. STC’s current adopted Financial Regulations (pages 16-18) reflect the procedure where the contract is less than £60,000.

STC has a number of maintenance Service Contracts in place which are regularly compared at the end of the period with market leaders in a similar field to ensure best VFM. For instance we have a delegated function agreement with the County Council (NCC) who provide funding of £9,672 based on market rate contractors to cut grass verges in Sprowston. The Town Council have reviewed the prior quality and efficiency of that service and felt it appropriate to carry out the cutting, increasing the number of cuts through in house delivery. The outcome is for the same money we have doubled the output providing excellent value for money. External grants are sourced where possible, ensuring that the public purse is extended to its maximum effectiveness; the latest being refurbishment of the pavilion changing rooms through successful applications from The Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund awarding £70,000 and Veolia Environmental Trust grant of £35,000.

STC has a commitment to an effective efficient service delivery and believes in developing strong working relationships with the Principal Authority (BDC), NCC, other statutory bodies and voluntary/not for profit organisations, Norfolk ALC and SLCC, which allows it to serve the Sprowston electorate better through collaborative working practices, efficient service delivery and shared expertise. This partnership has secured substantial funding through DCLG in producing a neighbourhood plan as a second wave of front runners.

## **Sprowston Town Council (STC) – LCAS “Meets its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime disorder” Statement – adopted 23 September 2015**

STC has a strong record of adopting open spaces for recreation and as a public authority in England the Council has a duty to conserving biodiversity as part of its decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. STC has adopted the Biodiversity 2020: Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services. The Sprowston Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy to adopt an area of woodland known as Harrison’s Wood (made up of a breck and redundant planted plantation); making the woodlands publically accessible, protecting the existing wildlife and encouraging new. STC has adopted a Management Plan, developed by a professional ecologist part of the Natural Environment Team NCC, detailing the scope and objectives together with the necessary measures required to enable public access to the woodlands in the short, medium and long term for a period of twenty-five years, whilst addressing the aspirations and opportunities for woodland management and further community involvement in the longer term. The Plan includes detailed proposals for wildlife conservation and biodiversity considerations with the potential for existing ecological value on the site to support reptiles, amphibians, a wide range of invertebrates and nesting birds. The existing tracks were established between compartments for timber extraction and woodland management purposes and some have become a valuable habitat for butterflies/invertebrates, birds and potentially bat foraging and many species of moth. We are currently working with the local schools to encourage use of the woodland and enhance a pond into a dipping pond shown by informative signage, which will raise awareness of the importance of bio-diversity.

STC manages several parks and open spaces as well as another maturing woodland, and cemetery site which are all subject to the STC environmental policy. Extensive native hedgerow planting continues each year to support the ecology of the areas under STC control.

STC provides 92 garden allotments available for hire by residents, including two plots for disabled residents. These are extremely popular and there is a current waiting list of approximately 4 years before occupation. STC is currently exploring, with Sprowston housing developers, additional allotment sites.

STC recognises its duty to consider the impact of its functions and decisions relating to crime and disorder in its area, under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. As part of that process STC is fully involved as a partner within the Community Safety Partnership with a Councillor acting as Chairman; supporting community groups and agencies wanting to tackle a wide range of environmental and social community safety issues within Sprowston as a whole; the Police attending/reporting Crime Statistics at each Council meeting; and this Council participating in the community payback scheme with offenders working for the Council on community projects.

STC holds a community engagement event, engaging with a diverse range of the community, and actively supported by the local PCSO and crime prevention officers to give information to residents to aid security in their homes.

STC regularly updates its website and newsletter with information to reflect correspondence from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk. STC is currently working with this office to highlight to residents the need for vigilance against Cybercrime another area of serious growth of concern for the constabulary.

The Town Clerk is required to provide guidance to Members during meetings with regard to their duties concerning bio-diversity and crime and disorder as appropriate to the agenda.

## **Sprowston Town Council (STC) – LCAS “Provides leadership in planning for the future of the community” Statement – adopted 23 September 2015**

STC meets every three weeks with an advertised agenda detailing items to be considered and lists planning applications which the Principal Authority (BDC) invite STC to submit material considerations. The relevant meeting agenda is posted on STC noticeboards and published on its website. Planning applications are received electronically and advertised on the Council's website on receipt. To ensure that STC are able to represent community views on planning applications, the Town Clerk registers to speak on planning applications which are not under the local district council's (BDC) delegated powers but considered by their planning committee.

The Sprowston area was designated by BDC as part of their Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Submission Document February 2013, forming the Greater Norwich Development Partnership; as an area of major growth. Sprowston is an urban settlement to the north of Norwich, separated from the city by the outer ring road. It presently has a population of approximately 15,000 which has planning permission for approximately 7,000 new homes. As a result of this large scale proposed development the Sprowston neighbourhood plan was produced under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Comments and suggestions were invited before the Plan was finalised and submitted to BDC which undertook a formal consultation on the submitted document in late 2013. Following consultation the Plan underwent an independent examination and was amended to include the Examiner's recommendations, which were also approved by BDC. The public vote or referendum on the Plan in May 2014, with at least 50% of those voting being in favour, was adopted as part of the Development Plan. This means that it will be a major consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission by the local planning authority. The Plan will implement the Vision which parishioners have for Sprowston and shape its future to 2026.

The Plan addressed issues on the environment, housing, employment, maximising the quality of life local residents currently enjoy, respecting the patterns of living which characterise the area and ensuring that essential infrastructure, services and community facilities are provided. It contains the resident's key aspirations and spatial planning objectives with supporting neighbourhood-wide policies and nine site specific policies, which include two traffic calming measures; a brown field site for housing; development of local community facility; stronger commercial centre and balancing/protecting biodiversity of a mature woodland for use by the community, to be acquired by STC under s.106 planning obligation of a planning permission for 3,500 properties. These aspirations and objectives were explored during a series of community led planning events funded by the Princes Foundation.

Sprowston residents have in recent years experienced repeated flooding and lobbied the Town Council with this major concern having detrimental effect to their homes, as a result of water run off not feeding into existing watercourses. Residents remain concerned that the housing developments which have been (and continue to be) granted consent by the Local Planning Authority will exacerbate the problem; a concern shared by STC. Also, the northern suburbs of Norwich have experienced substantial housing growth since the 1950s and the surface water drainage systems currently struggle to cope with high rainfall levels. STC continues to lobby both the district and county councils to consider the risk of flooding and this is currently being addressed on sites by Sustainable Urban Drainage systems. During 2015 STC landscaped a new cemetery burial site of 2.5ha and part of the design included Attenuation Ponds to combat the effects of surface water run-off, identified through computer modelling. In April 2015 NCC were successful in its bid for Department of Transport Challenge funding and has been awarded £9.1 million to fund surface water drainage infrastructure improvement in the city and north city fringe area. The funding in the Sprowston area will allow an upgrade and improve surface water drainage systems and offer some reassurance to local residents that their quality of life will improve substantially once the installation of new positive pipework drainage systems, with new manholes and gully pots, has been carried out.

## **Sprowston Town Council (STC) – LCAS “Manages the performance of the council as a corporate body” Statement – adopted 23 September 2015**

STC is a proactive, forward thinking council. Our strategic aims and objectives policy reflect the strong sense of mission to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole of the Sprowston community; to improving the quality of life for residents of Sprowston and enhance the town as a place in which to live, work, visit or invest.

STC achieves its aims by:

- providing a democratic and representational voice for the community
- providing services directly, they are managed to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsible way, at an affordable cost
- providing services indirectly by others, STC endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively, and in accordance with the wishes of the community
- supporting and encouraging the various organisations, clubs and providing amenities to residents whenever possible.

In order to effectively represent the electorate of Sprowston and achieve strategic goals STC, with an elected membership of 15, holds full Council meetings every three weeks (an average of 18 per year) plus the capacity for convening Extra Ordinary Meetings as required; the Annual Council Meeting and the Chairman inviting electors to the Annual Town Meeting, all of which are advertised on our website and Parish Noticeboards giving the requisite notice in order that the public may attend. The council is represented on outside organisations whose nominated councillor reports back through the agenda process to full council. Members are appointed to panels which have specific remit set by council and can be timed and tasked, or in the case of the Staff Discipline, Grievances and Clerks Review Committee summons as required.

STC understands the responsibility of dealing with matters of strategic importance to the town and for dealing with matters set by legislation within a statutory framework. Many of these statutory powers relate to the provision of facilities and services which benefit the residents in the “local council” area. STC has adopted the Power of Competence.

STC adheres to strong financial and governance practices as set out in its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners Guide (England) 2014. Internal audit reports are published.

STC’s Insurers annually visit the council office to ensure that procedures and policies are in place and cover is sufficient to protect the public purse. Members also, at least annually, review all policies.

STC has a 5 year action plan which shows its medium and long term aims and objectives, it also has a Yearly Action Plan; all are linked to its budget forecast which identifies resources and monetary implications required to achieve its goals. Such aims and objectives are directly derived from consultation as outlined by STC Community Engagement Strategy, through public meetings, questionnaires and general specific engagement.

STC takes pride in promoting that Sprowston will be strong, cohesive, creative and forward-looking. The community will be safer, healthier, more prosperous, sustainable and inclusive. High quality homes will meet people’s needs and aspirations in attractive and sustainable places. People will have access to quality jobs, essential services and community facilities, with less need to use a car.

## **Sprowston Town Council (STC) – LCAS “Manages the performance of each individual staff member to achieve its business plan” Statement – adopted 23 September 2015**

Following extensive community consultation, STC adopted a five year Business Plan on 12 August 2015 with a five year financial forecast to accompany the Business Plan, to provide a framework to work within and a statement of the Council’s vision for the town, its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities. The aim of the Business Plan is to give Sprowston’s residents a clear understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve on their behalf, and how it intends to deliver this. It details what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next five years and will be regularly monitored and updated. The Chairman’s report at the Annual Town Meeting will refer to success, failures and delays of the plan. A yearly action plan linked to the five year Business Plan will provide detail of the aims of the Town Council for each financial year.

Large projects such as the Council’s decision to bid for an old school to convert it into a multi-use community centre, the Sprowston Diamond Centre, and the refurbishment of the Pavilion at Recreation Ground Road have been subjected to individual Business Plans linking into the five year Business Plan and financial forecasts.

STC employs 12 members of staff, Town Clerk (ft), Committee/Administrative Officer (ft), Finance Officer (pt), Head Groundsman (ft) 4 Grounds staff (ft); 2 Caretakers (ft) 2 Caretakers (pt). Regular team meetings are held and recorded. STC operates annual employee appraisals, ensuring individual performance is linked to the business plan. The issues identified and future training needs are fed back to the Council. STC adheres to its corporate duty in respect of Health and Safety and the welfare of its employees, and Members are reminded of their general duty to consider matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights. All staff are issued with a current statement of employment and employee handbook. Employees receive induction training linked to operational videos which give information on health and safety, use of fire equipment and specific duties guidance such as cleaning and hygiene and playground safety inspections.

All STC Councillors receive induction training (including Code of Conduct, Being a Good Councillor, Corporate Governance etc) and the Chairman receives chairman training, both provided by Norfolk Association of Local Councils. During their term of office specific tutorials are encouraged such as spatial planning and CIL payments training. A record of all training received is held and updated as legislation changes. The Town Clerk holds the Institute of Management (Certificate in Management), sector specific qualifications eg Working with Your Council and Certificate in Local Council Administration and records CPD points as stipulated by the Local Council Award Scheme.

Councillor and employee training needs are closely linked to the ambition of STC evidenced by its Strategic Aims and Objectives Policy.