

# Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



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Thursday, 16 January 2020 at 12.30 pm  
Witham Room, South Kesteven House, St Peter's Hill,  
Grantham NG31 6PZ

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**Committee Members:** Councillor Ray Wootten (Chairman)  
Councillor Sarah Trotter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mike Exton, Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown, Councillor Penny Milnes, Councillor Ian Stokes and Councillor Amanda Wheeler

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**Invited Cabinet Members** Councillor Barry Dobson, the Deputy Leader of the Council  
Councillor Robert Reid, the Cabinet Member for Communities and HR

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## Agenda

- 1. Comments from Members of the Public**  
To receive comments or views from members of the public at the Committee's discretion.
- 2. Membership**  
The Committee to be notified of any substitute members.
- 3. Apologies**
- 4. Disclosure of Interest**  
Members are asked to disclose any interest in matters for consideration at the meeting.

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☎ 01476 406080

Paul Thomas, Interim Chief Executive

[www.southkesteven.gov.uk](http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk)

**5. Healthy Conversation**

Presentation by the Chief Officer Lincolnshire CCGs (East, South, South West & West), John Turner.

**6. Action Notes from the meeting held on 21 November 2019** (Pages 5 - 11)

**7. Updates from the previous meeting**

**8. Housing Strategy Refresh** (Pages 13 - 46)

Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council.

**9. Customer Experience Strategy** (Pages 47 - 78)

Report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and HR.

**10. Stop the Knock**

A presentation on the Stop the Knock publication and a briefing on the current practices of the Council with respect to the use of civil enforcement agents to inform the scope of any further work to be commissioned by the overview and scrutiny committee if deemed necessary.

Motion submitted to Council on 28 November 2019 by Councillor Baxter

In 2018/19, South Kesteven used bailiff services on 2,115 occasions. Over 96% of these concerned overdue Council Tax payments while the remainder related to Business Rates. This figure has increased by 3% since 2016/17.

The use of bailiffs can be expensive and time-consuming for the council. It can also be very stressful for the debtors especially if they are already suffering financial hardship.

The Money Advice Trust, the charity that runs the National Debtline, recommends six steps for all lower-tier local authorities to implement in order to improve debt collection practice. More details are available at <https://www.stoptheknock.org/>

This motion recommends South Kesteven adopts the Six Steps (Currently the Council only has one of the six steps in place which is 'step 2' concerning referrals to free debt advice).

This Council resolves to:

- 1) make a clear public commitment to reduce the council's use of bailiffs over time.
- 2) review the council's signposting to free debt advice, including phone/online channels
- 3) adopt the Standard Financial Statement (SFS) to objectively assess affordability
- 4) put in place a formal policy covering residents in vulnerable circumstances
- 5) exempt council tax support recipients from bailiff action
- 6) sign the Council Tax Protocol and review the authority's current practice against the 'Supportive Council Tax Recovery' toolkit

The detail implementation of the six steps above shall be the responsibility of the Rural and Communities OSC in collaboration with the relevant portfolio-holder.

**11. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**