

Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 7 December 2021



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

The Leader: Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Adam Stokes, The Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Barry Dobson, Cabinet Member for Leisure
Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities
Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Jacky Smith

Officers

Karen Bradford (Chief Executive)
Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)
Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director of Growth and Culture)
Andrew Cotton (Director of Housing and Property)
Gary Smith (Director of Commercial and Operations)
Richard Wyles (Assistant Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer)
Graham Watts (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Karen Whitfield (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
Claire Moses (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Susie McCahon (Leisure and Corporate Operations Team Leader)
Emma Sharpe (Leisure and Events Officer)
Chris Prime (Communications Officer)
Alex Woolf (Communications and Policy Officer)

61. Register of attendance and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nick Robins and Linda Wootten.

62. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021, were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as a correct record.

63. Disclosure of Interests (if any)

There were none.

64. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Purpose of the Report

To provide Cabinet with an opportunity to review the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme in advance of the 2022/23 financial year.

Decisions

That Cabinet:

1. Recommends to Council the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 based on the same overarching criteria as the current year scheme as detailed in paragraphs 1.11 and 1.12 of the report.
2. Approves the continuation of the £20,000 Discretionary Payment Fund for 2022/23 in its budget proposals.

Options considered and rejected

Other options considered and rejected were set out in the body of the report and associated appendices.

Reasons for decision

The options in relation to the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme were considered by the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 December 2021 where it supported the recommendation set out in the report.

Further to public consultation on the proposed scheme, 8,236 surveys were sent out of which 308 were returned which equated to 3.74%. 81,82% of those who had responded supported the current scheme with 87.99% supporting the continuation of the Discretionary Payment Fund.

Consultation with major preceptors had also been undertaken, with the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Lincolnshire County Council being supportive of the current scheme remaining in place with the existing criteria for 2022/23.

Councillor Kelham Cooke, Leader of the Council, supported the retention of the existing scheme and felt that it was right to continue this tried and tested entitlement.

He added that it was always a challenge to ensure sustainability alongside offering support where it was required, stating that the existing scheme worked well in this regard. He acknowledged that the consultation undertaken demonstrated a consensus to implement the 2022/23 scheme based on the existing criteria, which had also been supported by the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

65. Council Tax Base 2022/23

Purpose of the Report

To provide Cabinet with an opportunity to recommend to Full Council the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2022/23.

Decisions

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year (2022/23) equating to 48,706.7 in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Options considered and rejected

None.

Reasons for decision

The Council Tax Base formed part of the calculation of the Council Tax for the local area and the number of properties that formed the Council Tax Base must therefore be agreed.

The Council tax varied between different bands according to proportions laid down in legislation. These proportions were based around Band D and were fixed so that the bill for a dwelling in Band A would be a third of the bill for a dwelling in Band H. Applying the relevant proportion to each band's net property base produced the number of 'Band D' equivalent properties for the area.

Councillor Kelham Cooke, Leader of the Council, supported the increase of the Council Tax Base as highlighted in the report and the expansion of affordable homes in the district. An increase in the tax base would further help support residents in South Kesteven and help deliver the priorities set out by the Council.

Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, highlighted that the Council's collection rate was often overlooked, with the Council's target rate of performance being 98.75% for 2022/23. This level of collection represented a remarkable achievement from officers, which was also achieved with the blend of having a good Local Council Tax Support Scheme in place, and was a clear demonstration of the fairness and outreaching efforts that applied across all Council Taxpayers.

It was noted that these continued to be difficult times for people across the district and that support was available either by the Council or other external organisations which should be promoted in order that people knew how to access them.

66. Deepings Leisure Centre Options

Purpose of report

To provide Cabinet with an opportunity to consider potential options in relation to the future of the Deepings Leisure Centre and provide a recommendation to Full Council.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the feasibility work undertaken to establish options for leisure provision in the Deepings.
2. Recommends to Full Council approval of Option C with a budget allocation of £10.663m for leisure facilities to meet the local needs in the Deepings area, subject to meaningful community consultation and the inclusion of a financial review.
3. Recommends to Full Council that it includes the implications of the borrowing costs associated with Option C in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and further work be undertaken to ensure financial sustainability.
4. Recommends to Full Council that it requests the relevant Cabinet Member to call upon the Department for Education and the Anthem Trust to resolve the lease of Deepings Leisure Centre in order to allow LeisureSK Ltd and South Kesteven District Council representatives to reopen the Deepings Leisure Centre as soon as possible.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Full details of other options considered and rejected were set out in the report, which consisted of:

- Option A – basic refurbishment.
- Option B – basic refurbishment and enhanced gym provision.
- Option B Plus – basic refurbishment and enhanced gym provision with the addition of an enhanced entrance to the leisure centre, the accommodation of a larger studio on the first floor and the replacement of the male and female swim change areas to a changing village.

Other options considered and rejected included:

- An option which included a 50-metre pool.
- An option at an alternative site at the Landis & Gyr Building in Market Deeping.

- An option at an alternative site at Linchfield Road.
- An option for a smaller leisure facility for the Deepings.

Reason for the decision

Cabinet considered a comprehensive report which provided Members with the background relating to The Deepings Leisure Centre and options available relating to the provision of a Leisure Centre in The Deepings.

Councillor Barry Dobson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, presented the report and made the following points:

- The joint meeting of the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered this report at its meeting on 30 November 2021. Members of the two Committees were provided with the opportunity to ask questions of the consultants appointed to undertake the feasibility and design work, namely David Rushton from Sports and Leisure Consultancy and Paul Weston of Paul Weston Architects.
- An extract of the minutes from the meeting held on 30 November 2021 had been published and circulated to Cabinet, which set out in detail the aspects of the report considered by Overview and Scrutiny Members, a detailed overview of the points made at the meeting and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree, unanimously to recommend to Cabinet that Full Council:
 - Approves Option C with a budget allocation of £10.663m for leisure facilities to meet the local needs in the Deepings area, subject to meaningful community consultation and the inclusion of a financial review.
 - Requests the relevant Cabinet Member to call upon the Department for Education and the Anthem Trust to resolve the lease of Deepings Leisure Centre in order to allow LeisureSK Ltd and South Kesteven District Council representatives to reopen the Deepings Leisure Centre as soon as possible.
- Approval of Option C would be an important first step to bring the existing Leisure Centre back into use and enable the Council to provide a facility that local people needed and deserved.
- The Proposed refurbishment and remodelling work had proven to be the best option based on evidence both in terms of current demand and projected demand for the future. It would improve the offer in the area and provide enhanced facilities which would help residents adopt healthier lifestyles.
- Investing in high quality leisure facilities across the district was a key part of the Council's corporate ambition and a vital part of achieving this was good quality facilities which were sustainable and met customer expectations.
- This investment would need to be considered in conjunction with the Council's priorities and its financial position and require a review of the Authority's spending priorities to account for the cost of borrowing.
- He, as Cabinet Member for Leisure, was resolute in trying to achieve the best possible outcome for the Deepings.

- In terms of the legal interest in the building, there was still some work to do with regard to the leasing arrangements but good progress was being made.
- Cabinet had made a promise to bring a report before a joint meeting of the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to a meeting of Cabinet and subsequently Full Council all before Christmas, which had been delivered subject to considered of this report at the extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 14 December 2021.
- Councillor Dobson supported the recommendations of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and commended Option C.

Councillor Kelham Cooke, Leader of the Council, agreed that it was important for the Leisure Centre to be reopened as soon as possible and that a simple refurbishment would not suffice. A full refurbishment and remodelling of the Deepings Leisure Centre not only sought to return the centre to its former glory but also provide a more modern complex to meet the needs of its users. Councillor Cooke said that it made sense to enhance and reconfigure the swimming pool, gym and other facilities and that the Council needed to press ahead to deliver this proposition. This was needed by a range of health and sport groups in the area, as well as for the community, and was important right now more than ever given the current circumstances.

Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, reminded Cabinet of the journey that had occurred over the last couple of years in respect of leisure centres and the leisure industry generally, adding that the current circumstances represented a different scenario to that of the MACE report especially in terms of what was now considered affordable. He outlined that Cabinet had listened, it took into account the comments, views and recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Committee, had listened to various groups as well as members of the community in the south of the district and supported Option C as the best facility which the Council could afford to deliver.

Councillor Cooke made the point that the Council was seeking to invest in its Leisure Centres, whereas there were still some Leisure Centres in other areas that had not yet re-opened following closure during lockdown due to the operational costs of running them. Other Local Authorities had cancelled their leisure plans and it was estimated that approximately 2,000 Leisure Centres may yet close altogether across the country. There was a significant private sector offer as well, but the Local Authority through the public sector was able to offer something different.

Councillor Adam Stokes, Deputy Leader of the Council, proposed an additional recommendation to Full Council to ensure that the implications of the borrowing costs associated with Option C be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and further work be undertaken to ensure financial sustainability.

The Leader of the Council invited contributions from other Members of the Council in attendance and the following points or questions were noted:

- There had been initial promises of a new Leisure Centre which it was hoped could have been deliverable through the Landis & Gyr, but Option C

represented a much better prospect than that of earlier in the year when consideration was given to closing the Leisure Centre altogether.

- Swimming and leisure were very important to people in the area but it was not necessarily the building or centre itself that was much loved by those users of The Deepings Leisure Centre, it was having a swimming pool and other facilities that were fit for purpose that people in the area had an affection for.
- The proposition to include this investment in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was welcomed.
- What progress had been made in respect of the lease arrangements and had all relevant third parties been contacted?
- The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation included reference to meaningful community consultation. Some of the specific design elements of the proposed refurbishment and renovations were not quite what users of the facilities in the Deepings would necessarily want so it would be beneficial for the community to be able to contribute to the debate in terms of specific design proposals. This needed to be a meaningful consultation process as faith needed to be restored within the Council's leisure programme as many people in the south of the district felt let down.
- There were lots of knowledgeable people in the area who had a vested interest in the Deepings Leisure Centre with a substantial group having been established on social media. It would be useful if a representative from that group could participate in any discussions regarding design proposals in order that the community felt it was being represented and listened to.

Councillor Cooke confirmed that no decisions had been taken around the governance arrangements for the next stage of the proposition at this stage and that Full Council would still need to take a formal decision on the Options at its meeting on 14 December 2021. In respect of the suggestion to involve representation from a local interest group, the point was made that other people outside of the Deepings would also make use of the centre and may also be interested in participating. Further public meetings would also be held as the scheme developed.

Councillor Dobson reported that legal proceedings regarding the lease were progressing very well, and expressed confidence that necessary arrangements would be in place in the shortest timescale possible in order that the design and build stages could commence.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services reported that a series of meetings had been held with Lincolnshire County Council and the Anthem Trust, the latest of which took place on the 3 December 2021. Positive progress had been made and the County Council had now submitted the approval paperwork to the Department for Education to enable the leasehold arrangements. The County Council had been actively engaging with the Department for Education in order to progress the application as quickly as possible. It had been hoped that the matter would meet the criteria for an expedited process. Unfortunately, this was not the case, but the Department of Education had agreed that there did need to be a quick resolution to the matter, and would be attending a meeting with County Council representatives on 10 December 2021 to discuss this.

Councillor Reid made a closing point that the Chief Executive and two excellent officers involved in this project had already delivered a similar scheme at the OneNK Leisure Centre in North Hykeham which should give the Council every confidence that South Kesteven District Council would deliver for The Deepings Leisure Centre.

67. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members considered whether it was necessary to exclude the press and public at this stage of proceedings.

It was agreed that, since there was no need to discuss any information that would disclose exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public could remain in the meeting.

68. Deepings Leisure Centre Options - Exempt appendices

This item was considered as part of minute number 66. No discussion ensued on the exempt appendices so the press and public were not excluded from the meeting.

69. Asset Disposal Programme to Support Growth

Purpose of the Report

To provide Cabinet with a proposed methodology to dispose of Council property assets for a range of purposes, including direct delivery of services, revenue generation and supporting corporate plan objectives.

Decisions

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the sequential disposal methodology outlined in the report with regard to General Fund Asset disposals.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, the Deputy Leader, Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, to dispose of General Fund assets up to a value of £2 million, exclusive of any applicable VAT, subject to legal and valuation advice.

Options considered and rejected

There was not currently a specific process for asset disposal so the methodology set out in the report recommended a way forward to ensure capital receipts could be generated in a timely manner.

No other options were considered.

Reasons for decision

In responding to the Council's challenging budget position, the Authority was required to be innovative in how its property assets would be utilised to stimulate economic growth activity, attract investment and create income to support service delivery in keeping with the ambitions of the Corporate Plan 2020-2023.

The report set out principles and process that would ensure good governance and best value was achieved with regards to a programme of General Fund land and property disposals over the timescale of the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy. This would involve:

- Identifying assets for disposal
- Asset valuation
- Disposal and methods of disposal
- Officer delegation

It was reported that a review of the Council's assets was underway in order to identify those which had strategic, operational or income generating potential.

Councillor Kelham Cooke, Leader of the Council, agreed that it was really important for the Council to use its role as an ambassador of the local economy to not only identify General Fund capital projects but also identify those assets which no longer served to benefit the Council's residents or local businesses. Creating such a framework would assist the Council to set out those assets which could be transitioned to more beneficial projects whilst, in the interests of residents, provide necessary governance and ensure that schemes were fiscally prudent and responsible, limiting borrowing wherever possible. The framework aimed to prioritise best value in the Council's land and property assets, assessing their contribution to the local economy and communities and would be measured via in-depth analysis on a case-by-case basis. It was important, however, to recognise that the Council needed to be commercially minded as well as fair in its appraisals.

Councillor Cooke highlighted recent examples whereby the Council had worked with Town and Parish Councils regarding assets the District Council held which had now been transitioned over, as Town and Parish Councils sought for more ownership and investment in their respective areas and their sense of 'place'.

70. Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

Purpose of the report

To provide Cabinet with an opportunity to formally adopt a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for South Kesteven District Council, which set out the Council's vision, mission, aims and objectives for increasing rates of physical activity over the next five years.

Decisions

That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy as the Council's strategic document to underpin the Corporate Plan 2020-2023 priority of Healthy and Strong Communities.

Options considered and rejected

Not to implement a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

Reasons for decision

On 22 June 2021 the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update on the development of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. It was proposed that the Strategy would focus on providing opportunities for residents to be more active and identify a broad range of opportunities to incorporate sport and physical activity into everyday life.

In further developing the Strategy it was recognised that the Council alone could not deliver its corporate ambition to build healthy and strong communities. To maximise the opportunities for residents to increase their physical activity levels and adopt a healthy lifestyle, importance was placed on the Strategy reflecting the collective ambitions and views of partner organisations and key stakeholders.

Alongside the work of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, it was reported that the Council had committed to the Mental Health Challenge for Local Authorities and had acknowledged the role it needed to play in improving the mental wellbeing for everyone in the community. Initial conversations had taken place with the National Health Service, the Neighbourhoods Team and social prescribers and further work would take place to look into delivering a whole systems approach and develop integrated care systems. Discussions had also taken place with Active Lincolnshire, the county's Active Partnership, to consider how the Strategy aligned with the county-wide agenda and to update their local club and activity finder. Alignment with Sport England's 'Uniting the Movement' campaign had also been considered.

A copy of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy was appended to the report.

Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities, commended the well written Strategy which covered all the necessary areas, linked well into the Mental Health Challenge and included a very clear action plan. The report also included one of the best Equality Impact Assessments she had read and took this opportunity to thank Emma Sharpe, Leisure and Events Officer, for an excellent piece of work.

Councillor Kelham Cooke, Leader of the Council, added his thanks to the team for the work they had undertaken on the development of the Strategy and said that this was important for the Authority, not just for residents but also the district's local NHS services. Access to sport and physical activities was crucial, acknowledging that everyone currently lived in times of stress and anxiety. It was important to emphasise the improvements to mental health that fresh air and exercise could make, with the nature of South Kesteven providing great opportunities for people to enjoy their communities and make the most out of what was locally available to them. The

Strategy would also help address risks regarding obesity and diabetes and provided a platform to continue to work with other stakeholders locally and nationally.

Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, highlighted that this was a good example of the Council delivering initiatives that were not statutory responsibilities and that the Authority would strive to continue to provide services such as these alongside its statutory functions in line with a balanced budget.

Councillor Cooke agreed, adding that as a District Council the authority had a huge lever of influence in South Kesteven's communities and elected Members should be an active part of this Strategy, acting as enablers in the areas they represented.

It was noted that 46% of children in the district were classed as being physically inactive which would contribute significantly to the longer-term health issues, particularly in relation to obesity and mental health. Something therefore needed to be done to get young people more active. Tree planted work being done in the district together with aspirations for Jubilee Park were welcomed but there was lots more to do in order to address this issue, with the role of the Council's Planning Committee being key. Aspects such as cycle routes and play areas needed to be promoted more as part of the consideration of planning applications and development.

A question was asked as to how Cabinet intended to work with public sector partners, private sector partners and the voluntary sector in delivering the aspirations of the Strategy. Councillor Dobson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, provided an assurance that the Council would engage with representatives from those sectors and that approval of the Strategy was the early stages of this initiative. He was confident that its implementation could progress very quickly, acknowledging that the Council could not undertake this on its own.

Councillor Cooke highlighted that there was a huge amount that LeisureSK Ltd could do to support this Strategy, but reiterated that individual elected Members in their own wards also had the ability to take the lead and deliver initiatives. He cited the Connect Stamford scheme which encouraged walking around the green areas circling Stamford, working in partnership with the County Council, local businesses and landowners. Other supportive initiatives already occurring in the district were the introduction of free outdoor gyms, investment in the Council's parks and access to the Community Grant Fund. There were lots that could be done and it was important to note that the four market towns in South Kesteven were all very different, so a single approach would not necessarily work meaning that locally led initiatives by local Members as community leaders would add significant value.

Councillor Mason, referring to the Action Plan, reported that the Mental Health Working Party would be able to help in respect of a number of areas included within it. She agreed that more needed to be done to promote walking and cycling, particularly in response to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. Referring to the green tourism agenda, Councillor Mason suggested that this was something the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee could potentially take the lead on.

71. Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers

There were none.

72. Cabinet's Forward Plan

Cabinet noted the content of its Forward Plan for the period 29 November 2021 – 28 November 2022.

In closing the meeting, reflecting that this was the last meeting of Cabinet in 2021, the Leader of the Council thanked all officers at South Kesteven District Council for their contributions in what had been a very challenging year. He said that they had all stepped up to the mark in making South Kesteven a better place to live, work and visit and added his particular thanks to the Chief Executive for her leadership.

The meeting closed at 14:55