

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 24 March 2026 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Committee Members: Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Kyle Abel, Councillor Pam Bosworth, Councillor James Denniston,
Councillor Tim Harrison, Councillor Robert Leadenham, Councillor Habib Rahman
and Councillor Lee Steptoe

Agenda

This meeting can be watched as a live stream, or at a later date, [via the SKDC Public-I Channel](#)

- 1. Public Speaking**
The Council welcomes engagement from members of the public. To speak at this meeting please register no later than 24 hours prior to the date of the meeting via democracy@southkesteven.gov.uk
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Disclosure of Interest**
Members are asked to disclose any interest in matters for consideration at the meeting.
- 4. Minutes from the meeting held on 27 January 2026** (Pages 3 - 9)

Published and dispatched by democracy@southkesteven.gov.uk on Monday, 16 March 2026.

☎ 01476 406080

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

www.southkesteven.gov.uk

- 5. Updates from the previous meeting** (Pages 11 - 12)
To receive updates on actions agreed at the previous meeting.
- 6. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service**
- 7. 'We are Undefeatable' Campaign - Presentation** (Pages 13 - 22)
We are Undefeatable is a collective movement supporting people with a range of long-term health conditions, developed by 15 leading health and social care charities. The campaign offers free resources to encourage movement, no matter how big or small.
- 8. Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – review of activities 1 October to 31 December 2025** (Pages 23 - 56)
- 9. Crisis and Resilience Fund** (Pages 57 - 67)
Following the publication of the Crisis and Resilience Fund Scheme guidance on 15 January 2026, this report set out the details of the CRF guidance and work in progress to develop the required delivery plan to utilise the three-year funding.
- 10. Community Engagement Update 2024-2025** (Pages 69 - 92)
To provide an overview of community engagement for 2024/25. It highlights actions taken to deliver against the aims of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy - Our People, Our Place and provides detail on achievements and includes plans for the coming year.
- 11. SK Community Fund** (Pages 93 - 114)
To consider the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund which include amendments to grant levels and eligibility criteria. The proposed changes will allow for the Fund to re-launch for the 2026/27 financial year.
- 12. Work Programme 2025 - 2026** (Pages 115 - 117)
To receive the Work Programme for 2025 – 2026.
- 13. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 27 January 2026, 2.00 pm

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Habib Rahman

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Philip Knowles

Other Members present

Councillor Anna Kelly

Officers

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Community)
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection
Christian Polzin, Environmental Health Manager - Commercial
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Bethany Goodman, Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead
Nicola Moore, Customer Service Manager
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer
Stephen Cheetham, Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire representative [external]

42. Public Speaking

There were none.

43. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lee Steptoe.

44. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

45. Minutes from the meeting held on 10 December 2025

The minutes of the meeting held 10 December 2025 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

46. Updates from the previous meeting

The updates from the previous meeting were noted as complete by the committee.

47. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

There were none.

48. Citizens Advice - South Lincolnshire presentation

The representative from Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire outlined that the organisation was a local charity relying on the following income streams:

25% - District and County Councils

60% - National contracts

15% - Charitable trusts, Town Councils and Parish Councils.

In 2025 the organisation came under new leadership. One of the first issues to address was a national 25% reduction in funding which impacted at local level. The organisation was therefore forced to review such things as its staff structure, and service delivery model, overseeing the core service, advice line, outreach support, and debt advice and support.

The three areas where support from Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire was most sought across South Kesteven was Benefits (31%), Housing (11%), and Debt (9%).

It was noted that follow up appointments and a callback service were facilitated for individuals whose issue could not be resolved in a single appointment. Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire also made referrals to third-party organisations when specialist support was needed.

Between April and December 2025, across all Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire service areas, 1982 people were seen, 6436 issues were dealt with, and there was £2.6 Million financial gain.

It was noted that the work of Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire aided SKDC's corporate priorities.

Councillor Anna Kelly entered the Chamber.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The representative from Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire noted that the organisation was considering the reintroduction of ward reports. This was widely supported by the committee membership.
- Members sought reassurance that the organisation was pursuing further funding streams. It was confirmed that the organisation were considering the Crisis Resilience Fund, national lottery funding, and further trusts that offered research grants.
- The representative outlined research gaps to be his biggest concern, stating his desire to identify and reach further sections of society, such as those in rural areas.
- Confirmation was also given that Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire regularly meet with SKDC and other partners, and during these meetings the level of returning individuals is monitored. A visiting Member noted that this demonstrated a level of trust by the individuals that they felt supported by the organisation.
- The representative confirmed his intention for Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire to be the ‘consistent partner’ in the face of local government reorganisation.
- Members expressed appreciation for the representative, the presentation, and the wider work of Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire.

The Citizens Advice – South Lincolnshire presentation was noted by the committee.

49. Food Health and Safety Enforcement Workplan presentation

The Food Health and Safety Enforcement Workplan presentation was introduced by the Environmental Health Manager – Commercial.

The presentation outlined the following:

1. Meet the team – the Environmental Health Manager – Commercial confirmed that whilst the team had a regulatory role, they sought to support local businesses.
2. Overview of what we do – ranging from food safety and hygiene to private water supplies.
3. Examples of cases – cases and outcomes within the district.
4. How do we plan? – outlining the Workplan for Food, Health and Safety Enforcement and reflecting on progress made over the previous year.
5. Collaborating our work on the national stage – outlining the information sharing opportunities such as national conferences, blogs, coaching and linking with other services.

6. What does the future hold? – Identifying upcoming challenges and opportunities, including Local Government Reorganisation, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and new regulations.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- In anticipation of upcoming regulatory changes, it was queried whether the Environmental Health Manager – Commercial believed the team were sufficiently staffed. The Environmental Health Manager – Commercial confirmed that management had undertaken forecasting which, given there was also no significant backlog, meant the team were sufficiently well placed to manage.
- The Environmental Health Manager – Commercial confirmed that the team worked with a proactive focus, as outlined within the workplan. The biggest risk that the team faced would be investigating a fatality which would take significant team resource over a sustained period.
- A Member praised the team, confirming they had received positive public feedback.
- A visiting Member praised the locality of the team.
- It was confirmed that all tattoo and piercing facilities were required to register with the Environmental Health team at least 28 days prior to the facility opening.

The Food Health and Safety Enforcement Workplan presentation was noted by the committee.

50. South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

The South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement.

The report was broken down into two key areas:

- A. An overview of South Kesteven's Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and progress made to date.
- B. An update on the progress of Age Friendly Communities work in South Kesteven.

Regarding the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, since June 2025, Officers continued delivering the actions on the Action Plan which could be found within Appendix One of the report. Many of the actions within the Action Plan were considered as 'ongoing' as some of these were continuous or span several years.

Regarding the update on the Age Friendly Communities work, a survey was launched in July 2025, targeted at organisations that worked directly with, or support, older adults. A total of 44 organisations responded.

A further survey was due to be circulated in early 2026 to residents aged over 50 within the district, to understand what it was like to live, work and age within South Kesteven. The Centre for Ageing Better noted that inequalities started to form in individuals aged 50 and over.

This survey would seek to gather insights from people in specific geographic areas. The data would be reviewed, and this would form the Council's three priority domains for the work that would be undertaken within South Kesteven over the next 4 years.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The Cabinet Member for Property & Public Engagement praised the thoroughness of the report and the detailed work undertaken.
- A Member sought reassurance that the action plan actively reduced inequality, rather than just the level of activity. The Cabinet Member responded by acknowledging that it was difficult to attribute this to specific initiatives within the plan but noted that the revised measures of deprivation were thorough and the situation would deteriorate further were the plan not in place.
- Clarity was sought about the World Health Organization's (WHO) four-step programme. The Physical Activity & Wellbeing lead confirmed SKDC were approaching the end of step one, which had successfully seen SKDC gain Age Friendly Community status. The baseline profile that had been established by the research undertaken during step-one would inform the action plan for step-two, following April 2026. The request was made for the findings of the research undertaken to be presented to the committee at a future date. **ACTION**

15.09 – The Leader of the Council entered the Chamber.

- It was confirmed that SKDC were engaging with neighbouring authorities that were also undertaking the WHO programme through quarterly meetings and regular dialogue.

The South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan was noted by the committee.

51. Customer Service Update - Quarter 3 (2025/26)

The Customer Service Update - Quarter 3 (2025/26) was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing.

The Customer Service Team handle customer interactions in various ways for 17 high contact service areas, as well as general public enquiries. The report provided an update regarding customer interactions for these service areas for Quarter 3 (2025/26).

In comparison to Q2 2025/26, on the whole, contact decreased. This was expected as each year the Council tended to see a reduction in contact during December.

In comparison to Q2 2024/25, there had been a significant reduction in website contact of 380,095.

During Q3 2025/26, on average, 93% of calls were answered, with just 7% of calls being 'abandoned' to other service channels. This was an improvement from Q3 2024/25, where these figures were 84% and 17% respectively.

During December 2025, the call handling increased to 95%.

Customer feedback via the Council's corporate feedback process was monitored with headline information being reported to Governance and Audit Committee. During Q3 2025/26 there was a total of 588 feedbacks received, of which, only two had a 'root cause' identified as 'ability to contact the Council'.

During December 2025 the website contact increased by 26,180 (compared to November 2025). This was in correlation to the reduction of 10,453 face to face, telephone and email contact during this month.

During this period, there had been a total of 166 individual 'was this page useful' interactions; 33 responded 'yes', 133 responded 'no.' Of the 133 respondents which advised the page was not useful, only one provided comments.

A Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029 action plan had been developed which would support the Strategy and its priorities – this was detailed within Appendix 3.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- A Member queried what could be done to encourage feedback from individuals that had recorded the webpage as not being useful. It was confirmed that the Customer Service team actively encouraged feedback from individuals that use the website.
- Some Members suggested that the website was difficult to navigate, the search engine was inaccurate, and the server of the Planning Portal was temperamental. The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community) noted that SKDC had not received many complaints about the website, however, encouraged feedback and pledged to act on feedback received. She also offered to hold a workshop for Members to discuss their experiences with the website. There was support for this amongst Members. **ACTION**
- The Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement also pledged to note Member's comments about the website.

- A Member expressed appreciation for the difficult job of the Customer Service team and queried whether call dropouts were regularly experienced. The Customer Service Manager confirmed this did not occur often and was monitored regularly. Should Members be aware of any instances of this then they were encouraged to inform the relevant officers.

The Customer Service Update - Quarter 3 (2025/26) was noted by the committee.

52. Work Programme 2025 - 2026

It was noted that the 'Fire stoppers' presentation may occur at the March meeting, and the Drone Policy would be considered by the joint-Environment and Rural & Communities OSCs at the 24 February meeting.

The Work Programme 2025-26 was noted by the committee.

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

There was none.

The meeting concluded at 15.29.

This page is intentionally left blank

Action Sheet

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Actions from meeting of **27 January 2026**.

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
50	South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan	Clarity was sought about the World Health Organization’s (WHO) four-step programme. The Physical Activity & Wellbeing lead confirmed SKDC were approaching the end of step one, which had successfully seen SKDC gain Age Friendly Community status. The baseline profile that had been established by the research undertaken during step-one would inform the action plan for step-two, following April 2026. The request was made for the findings of the research undertaken to be presented to the committee at a future date. ACTION	Physical Activity & Wellbeing Lead	Added to Work Programme with Chairman’s approval	
51	Customer Service Update - Quarter 3 (2025/26)	Some Members suggested that the website was difficult to navigate, the search engine was inaccurate, and the server of the Planning Portal was temperamental. The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community) noted that SKDC had not received many complaints	Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	COMPLETED	

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
		<p>about the website, however, encouraged feedback and pledged to act on feedback received. She also offered to hold a workshop for Members to discuss their experiences with the website. There was support for this amongst Members. ACTION</p>			

**WE ARE
UNDEFEATABLE**

FROM
**'WHERE DO
I START'**
TO

'I DID IT'

Discover ways to get moving
a health condition.

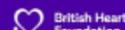
WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk

Scan to visit website



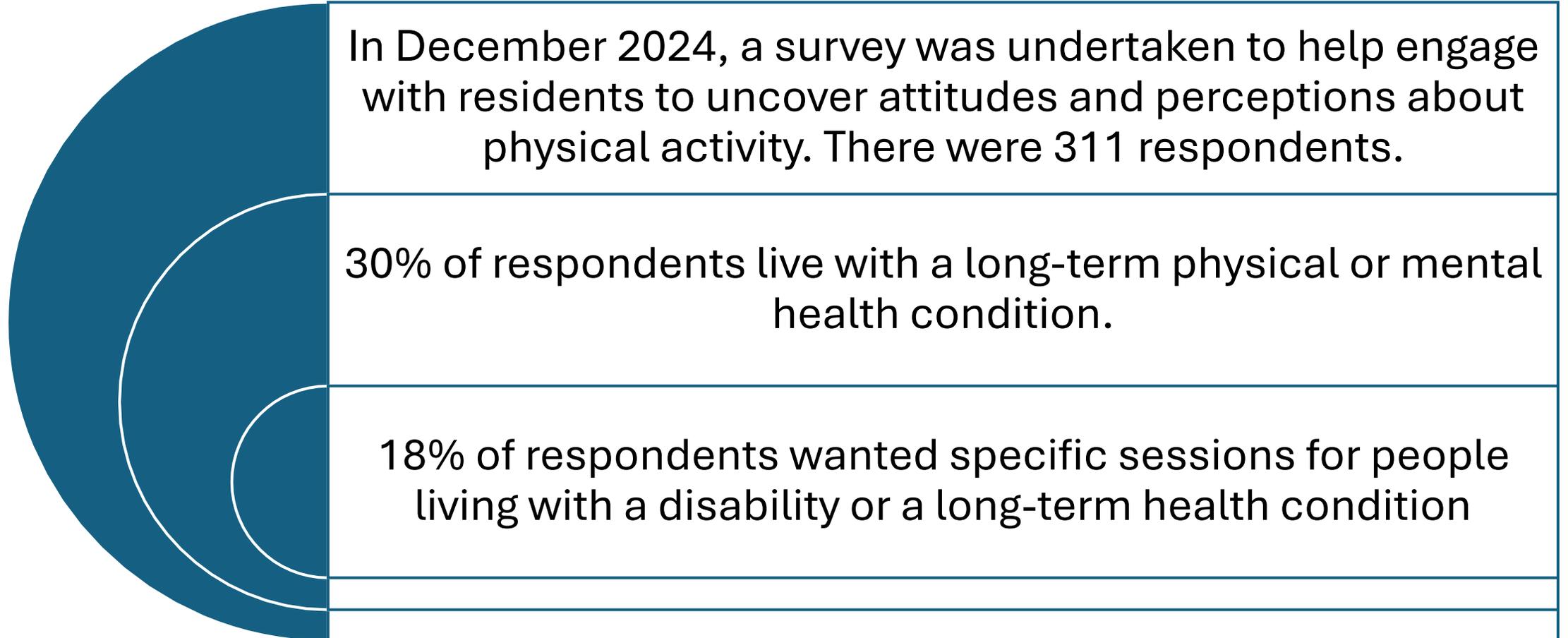
13

Agenda Item 7



SK Moving Communities Community Survey

14



What is 'We are Undefeatable'?

- A National Movement backed by Sport England and National Lottery Funding
- A coalition of 15 leading health and social care charities
- Encourages people to find ways to move and be physically active that work with their long-term health conditions



Long term health conditions

- Around 1 in 4 people in England live with a long-term health condition.
- People with health conditions are twice as likely to be inactive
- 69% of people with long term health conditions want to be more active
- Barriers to being physically active generally include pain, fatigue, fear of worsening the symptoms and a lack of confidence

How South Kesteven residents can access 'We are Undefeatable' resources

Visit the We are Undefeatable website for free guidance

Find inspiration through real-life stories

Access workout cards and resources

Use 'Move to Your Mood' activity suggestions

Access free on demand and live short exercise videos and routines

Completely free to download the App and use via [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#).

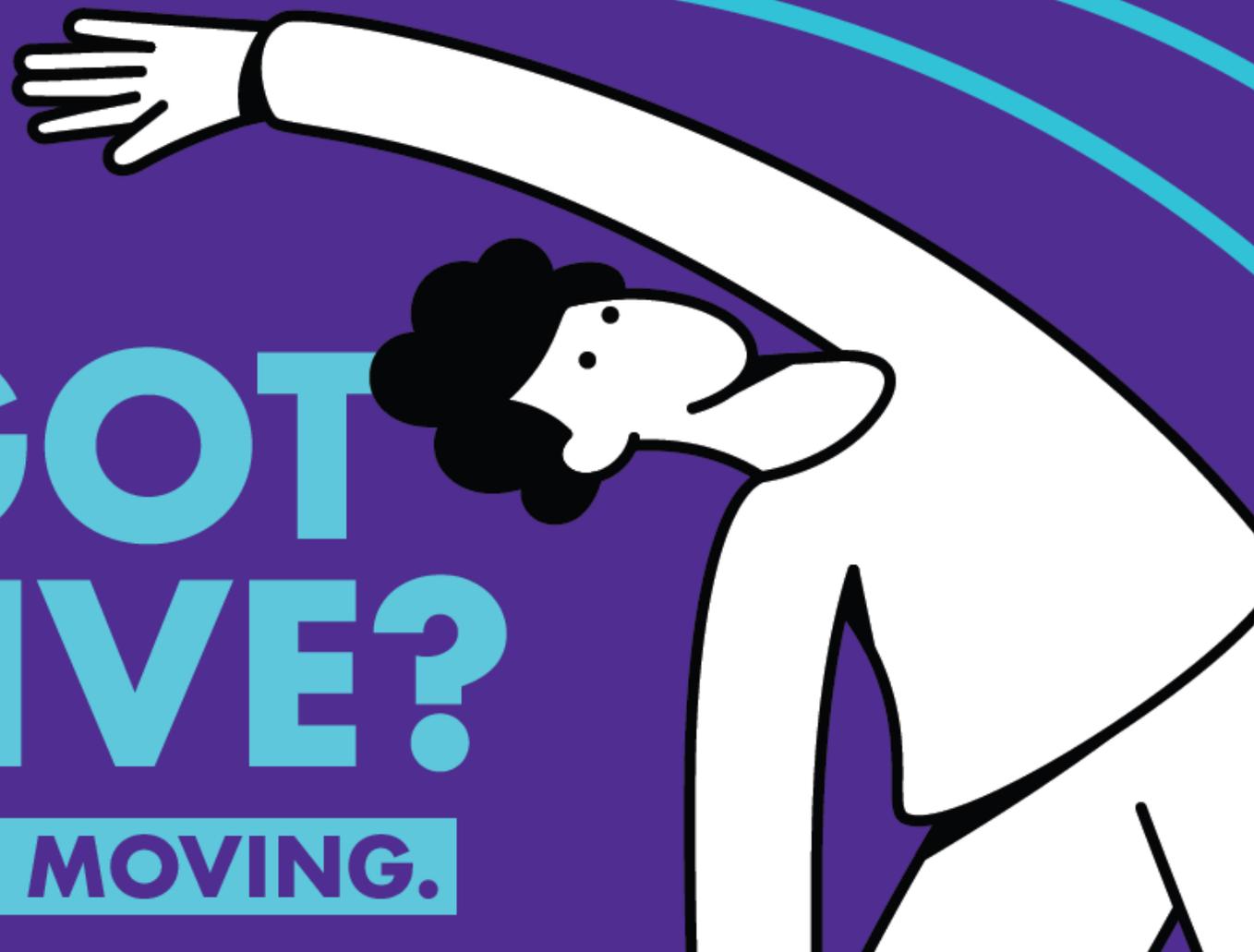
[Freedom To Move - Garden Routine with Bill Bailey](#)

**MOVING FOR
JUST FIVE MINUTES
CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.**

¹⁸ Add a 5-minute
movement routine into
your working day, to
support your mental
and physical wellbeing

Find your Five in Five at
[WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk](https://www.WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk)

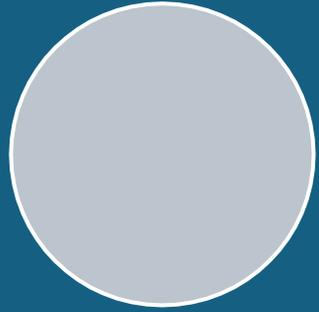
**WE ARE
UNDEFEATABLE**



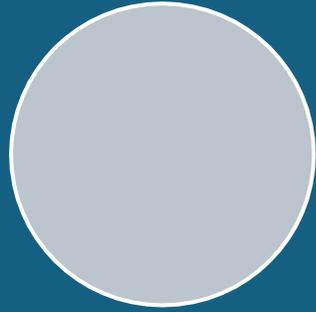
Benefits of being active

For residents	For the Council
Improves physical health and mobility	Supports the priorities within the Corporate Plan
Help manage symptoms of long-term health conditions	Helps to meet the objectives and outcomes within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan
Reduce social isolation	Encourages prevention and self-management of conditions
Improve mental wellbeing and confidence	Can help to reduce pressure on health and care services
Support independence and quality of life	Strengthens partnerships with health and community organisations

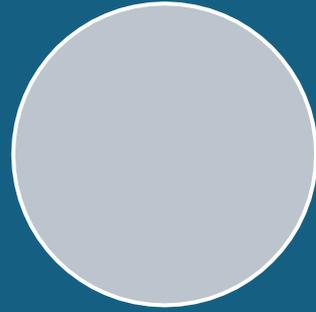
Next steps to support the campaign



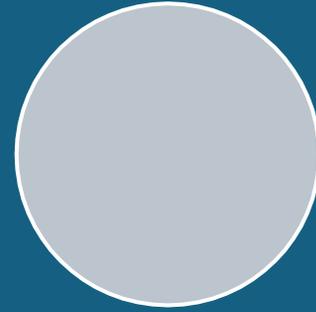
Promote the campaign through council communications



Work with local health partners and community groups/hubs



Share resources with GP practices and leisure facilities



Highlight local opportunities for residents to be active



Key takeaway messages

Small amounts of activity can make a big difference

The We are Undefeatable Campaign empowers residents with long-term health conditions

Encourage residents to find activity that they enjoy

Any questions?



**WE ARE
UNDEFEATABLE**



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – review of activities 1 October to 31 December 2025

Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services)

✉ claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with an update regarding the support issued as part of the Household Support Fund during the period 1 October - 31 December 2025 and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the report and is invited to ask questions regarding its content.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The report sets out the specific schemes that are being implemented to support residents with the cost of living – both statutory and national initiatives. The Household Support Fund scheme identified in the report is not directly funded by the Council. The Welfare and Financial Advice team was added to the permanent staffing structure from 1 April 2025, and the work priorities will reflect both local and national issues that are facing the community.

Completed by: Richard Wyles Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no specific governance implications connected with this report. Decision-making associated with financial support schemes should follow an agreed process and should demonstrate strong governance arrangements to support their implementation.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Human Resources

- 1.3 The increasing impact of low economic activity continues to affect mental health and emotional wellbeing of employees. The Welfare and Financial Advice Team workplan will therefore link closely with the internal Wellbeing Group to support colleagues.

Completed by: Fran Beckitt (Head of HR)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to ensuring healthy and strong communities and being a high performing council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Welfare and Financial Advice Team strives to deliver these priorities.

- 2.2. The third Welfare and Financial Advice report was presented to this committee on 10 December 2025, which can be found here at item 36: [Agenda for Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 10th December, 2025, 10.00 am | South Kesteven District Council](#)
- 2.3 Previous Cost of Living reports have been present prior to this date. These reports have provided background regarding the responsibilities of the team, the allocation of Household Support Fund (HSF) funding across the county and the development of the Household Support Fund.

Household Support Fund – 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025

- 2.4 The total amount of funding for SKDC (2025-26) is £458,452. The district funding could be subject to change as the year progresses if districts within Lincolnshire are unable to allocate their funding. This is monitored regularly and if this occurs, there will be a re-distribution to the remaining districts by Lincolnshire County Council. SKDC will not be redistributing any of their funding – it is anticipated all funding will be distributed (£441,100) with £17,352 required for administrative costs.

District area	% of District allocation	Approx Allocation (£)
East Lindsey	24%	£785,917
Boston	10%	£327,465
South Holland	12%	£392,958
Lincoln	16%	£204,379
North Kesteven	11%	£360,212
South Kesteven	14%	£458,452
West Lindsey	13%	£425,705
Total	100%	£9,631,345

Delivery plan and funding distribution for SKDC Residents

- 2.5 The delivery plan and funding distribution as of 31 December 2025 is detailed below:

Method	Amount	% of fund	Distributing organisation	Purpose	Q3 Update	Q3 value awarded (£)
1	£9,000	2%	Lincolnshire Community	Contribution towards Warm Packs for 2025 –	Winter pack scheme started	£9,000 On track

Method	Amount	% of fund	Distributing organisation	Purpose	Q3 Update	Q3 value awarded (£)
			Foundation (LCF)	as part of county-wide 'Warm welcome' working group This will be removed at source with LCC making payment direct to LCF	in November 2025. Charis account was set up with £8,000 to enable purchase of winter packs by 3 rd party Organisations within the district. £1000 was put towards the upkeep of the warm space hub.	
2	£22,922	5%	SKDC Administration + Preventative Measures	Various administration costs of the scheme – such as printing and posting of vouchers + costs towards Preventative measures workshops.	This is ongoing with various spend throughout the administration of HSF April 2025 to March 2026	£5,731 On track
3	£45,845	10%	3 rd party Referrers	This will be set aside for referrals that have come from 3 rd party organisations distributed throughout the year.	Vouchers available during period Household Support Fund referrals are closed October to December 2025 This is included in the total award in paragraph 2.7 and 2.8	
4	£59,598	13%	Outreach Work/ Pensioners	Vouchers will be distributed as an outcome of outreach visits depending on the needs. Priority will be given to pensioners.	Vouchers available during period Household Support Fund referrals are closed October to December 2025 This is included in the total award in paragraph 2.7 and 2.8	

Method	Amount	% of fund	Distributing organisation	Purpose	Q3 Update	Q3 value awarded (£)
5	£91,690	20%	HSF7 Vouchers – Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Support for residents not in receipt of an income related Benefit that are struggling financially. The payment will be made in two instalments in July and December.	Round 1 funding has been issued to LCF (£45,845) Referrals opened 4 August and will close on 26 September Second round funding (£45,845) has been issued for spend between January to March 2026 referrals	£45,845 issued in Round 1 £45,845 Issued in Round 2
6	£229,236	50%	SKDC HSF7 Vouchers – Welfare & Financial Advice Team	Support for those specifically in receipt of an income related benefit that are struggling. This will be split over 2 intensive periods.	Target for distribution from 4 August to 26 September 2025 (Round 1) is £114,618 Target for distribution from January to March 2026 (Round 2) is £114,618	£118,369 issued in Round 1 £75,560 issued in round 2 (13 January to 28 February 2026)

2.6 The distribution for **method 1 (warm packs)** has changed for 2025. The packs will be produced by Charis Grants Ltd. who will send the pack directly to the resident. The pack will be requested by an approved referral partner within the district, there are currently 33 from various organisations, including SKDC. Referrals are limited to a £100 spend limit to ensure the fund is managed effectively. Items available for purchase are heated throws, rechargeable hot water bottles, heated underblanket, self-heated mattress topper, 15 tog duvet, heated bodywarmers, heat the home pack (light bulbs, insulation tape , radiator heat reflector panels, winter warmth bundles (fleece blanket (non-electric), water

bottle, hat, scarf and gloves) and complete warmth pack (energy efficient light bulbs, Insulation tape, radiator heat reflector panels, thermos flask and heated throw).

- 2.7 For HSF round 1, a total of **961 vouchers** has been issued during the 7 week period from 4 August 2025 to 22 September 2025, to the **value of £170,364**.
- 2.8 Whilst it is appreciated this is an update for Q3 2025/26, HSF round 2 opened on 13 January 2026 and closed 28 February 2026. It is important to update the committee regarding the support provided during round 2. A total of **740 vouchers** have been issued, to the value of **£99,160** so far.
- 2.9 Open applications closed on the 28 February 2026 to enable processing of the 220 outstanding applications before 31 March 2026. The expected amount to be awarded will be £37,000. Applications awaiting vouchers to be issued are **80 with an expected value of £12,000**.
- 2.10 Applications will continue to be received from third party trusted partners and teams within the council up to 31 March 2026. The details for distribution are as follow in methods 3, 5 and 6.
- 2.11 **Method 3:** Third Party Organisations have requested the following vouchers which have been administered by SKDC's Welfare and Financial Advice Team.

Category	Number	Value
Food	102	£11,800
Energy	0	£0
Wider Household Essentials	0	£0
Total	102	£11,800
Total funding available		£45,845
Remaining funding to 31 March 2026		£34,045

- 2.12 **Method 5:** Lincolnshire Community Foundation have issued the following vouchers.

Category	Number	Value
Food	420	£69,445
Energy	0	£0
Wider Household Essentials	0	£0
Total	420	£69,445
Total funding available		£91,690
Remaining funding to 31 March 2026		£22,245

2.13 **Method 6:** SKDCs Welfare and Financial Advice Team has issued the following vouchers.

Category	Number	Value
Food	1,184	£189,300
Energy	6	£353
Wider Household Essentials	37	£4,276
Total issued	585	£193,929
Total funding available		£229,236
Remaining funding to 31 March 2026		£35,307

Timeline for voucher distribution

2.14 The timeline for voucher distribution has been:

- October 2025 to December 2025 - open for third party referrals from support agencies and low-income pensioners.
- 13 January 2026 to 28 February 2026 - open to public applications.
- March 2026 – applications will continue to be received from trusted organisations until 31 March 2026. Assistance will be predominantly by supermarket vouchers and Energy Vouchers.

Welfare and Financial Advice Team – additional wrap around support (up to end Q3 2025/26) - £101,075

2.15 The team received and processed **418** referrals, with **£26,750** of financial support provided.

2.16 From 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025, the team received and processed **1,608 referrals**. The total value of financial support identified and awarded was **£101,075**.

2.17 Each referral requires an initial 30 to 60 minute appointment with the resident to discuss their personal and household financial circumstances, to determine whether they are receiving all support available to them.

2.18 Following this, the officer will undertake further appointments and identify the wrap around support which is available – this can take the form of:

- Charity grants
- Council Tax Support
- Discretionary Council Tax and Housing Payments
- Foodbank vouchers
- White Goods

- 2.19 The team will also liaise with tenancy support (if they are an SKDC tenant, they will be referred into the Tenancy Support Team) and other wider support such as referrals into Citizens Advice. The support provided is in-depth and is always tailored to the individual's needs.
- 2.20 Once the referral has been completed and the triage discussion has been undertaken with the resident, details are then passed to the HSF Officer (within the Welfare and Financial Advice Team) who will process the HSF voucher. The vouchers are processed in bulk and issued on a weekly basis (unless urgent need has been established).

Action plan – 2025/26

- 2.21 The action plan for additional activities to be undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26 is detailed in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.22 The plan continues to be monitored throughout 2025/26. An updated plan will be developed for 2026/27 and will be presented to this committee at the next meeting in May 2026.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Member of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.
- 3.2. It is recommended to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Welfare and Financial Advice Team continue to review the financial impacts of cost of living and implement activities within the action plan to support residents of South Kesteven.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendation will ensure Members are aware of the advice and financial support available to all residents of South Kesteven.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Welfare and Financial Advice Team action plan (2025/26)

Welfare and Financial Advice Team (W&FA Team) – Action Plan

This action plan shows the activities to be undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26. It is made up of key areas of activity

Action 1	Administration
Action 2	Awareness
Action 3	Proactive – internal & external
Action 4	Proactive Support
Action 5	Preventative

Activity 1: Administration		
1a) Case Management	Purpose: Ensure Case management is up to date and provides clear outcomes – such as number of residents supported, value of support	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed case management to be available on all financial support provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wrap-around support ○ Household Support Fund (HSF) – administered by SKDC ○ Household Support Fund (HSF) – administered by Lincolnshire Community Foundation February 2026 position: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A total of 1,701 HSF vouchers have been issued to the value of £269,524 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administered by SKDC = £193,929 ▪ Administered by Lincolnshire Community Foundation = £69,445 ▪ Administered by 3rd party organisations = £11,800 ○ Wrap-around support = £101,075 	Updated February 2026

Activity 2: Awareness		
2a) Website update	Purpose: Ensure the website is up to date, referencing the Welfare and Financial Advice Team	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Update all "Cost of Living pages" Existing pages can be found here: Cost of Living help and support South Kesteven District Council	Complete 30 June 2025
	Remove reference to old schemes	Complete 30 June 2025
	Include Food Support leaflets: Help and Support South Kesteven District Council	30 June 2025
2b) Co-Ordinate responses to government support initiatives	Purpose: Ensure awareness of announcements and initiatives, understanding the impact for the Council and residents	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Continue to attend Lincolnshire Working Group to collaborate with County and District colleagues February 2026 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings are taking place – recent discussions regarding Criss Resilience Fun where one attendee is part of the national working group. Further updates are expected between now and March 2026 	Updated February 2026

Activity 2: Awareness		
	Promotion and launch of Household Support Fund (HSF) from April 2025 to March 2026	Complete 30 May 2025
	Use of Emergency Fund - £71k September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been fully utilised, awarding to those referrals received between 1 April and 3 August 2025 (prior to the start of Household Support Fund on 4 August 2025) 	Complete 3 August 2025
	Overview: Winter Fuel Payment: Overview - GOV.UK For winter 2025 to 2026, a Winter Fuel Payment is available to people born on or before September 21, 1959, who lived in England or Wales during the qualifying week of September 15-21, 2025. Value of payments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not get Pension Credit or another qualifying benefit, the payment is £100. If a person does get Pension Credit, the payment is £200 or £300 depending on their age (and if they live with others). Payments are made to households, but if a person's income is above £35,000, the payment will be clawed back by HMRC through their tax. When and how payment will be made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most eligible people will receive an automatic payment in their usual bank account in November or December 2025. They should receive a letter in October or November 2025 confirming the amount they will get and how it will be paid. 	Complete Immediate (deadline 31 March 2026) Awareness for all staff supporting residents of qualifying age

Activity 2: Awareness		
	<p>Those who need to claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a person does not get the State Pension or another DWP benefit, or if they have deferred their State Pension. • The deadline for claiming the 2025-26 payment is March 31, 2026. • The claim form is available at GOV.UK. 	
	<p>Awareness: Paying back the Winter Fuel Payment - GOV.UK</p> <p>To ensure staff are aware of the requirement to paying back the Winter Fuel Payment – directing residents to GOV website</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>12 November 2025</p>
	<p>Crisis and Resilience Fund - replacing HSF and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Announcement during the Spending Review 2025 on 11 June 2025 ○ Para 3.21: Cost of living: the government is providing direct assistance to families most at risk of poverty through the Healthy Start scheme, and establishing a new Crisis and Resilience Fund supported by £1 billion a year (including Barnett impact) through the SR period to replace the Household Support Fund <p>February 2026 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance was released by the Department for Work and Pensions on 15 January 2026 • A separate report will be issued to the Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2026. 	<p>Updated</p> <p>February 2026</p>

Activity 2: Awareness		
2c) Liaison with internal teams	Purpose: Ensure awareness of support and related	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Provide updates regarding changes to the team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arrange attendance at team meetings ○ Updating on HSF stages – launch, referral period, award period ○ Referral process for HSF and general support ○ Presentation of Food Support leaflets ○ Overview of outreach activities and areas within the district these are taking place February 2026 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attendance at team meetings have taken place with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council Tax ○ Income Recovery (SKDC Rent Team) ○ Repairs ○ Housing 	Updated February 2026
	Spotlight session to be organised February 2026 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The team will undertake a 'Team Spotlight' introducing themselves to all members of TeamSK, advising of their role and support available to residents. The update will also include details of the new Crisis and Resilience Fund 	To be planned for Q2 2026

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
3a) Single Point of Contact	Purpose: Be the Single Point of Contact for Welfare and Financial Advice enquiries via the Welfare and Financial Advice email address	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Welfare email box to be set up: welfare@southkesteven.gov.uk	Complete
	Online referral form for Household Support Fund (for internal referrals from SKDC Officers and Members)	Complete
	Inclusion of W&FA Team in SKToday (Autumn edition) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An article was included in the Summer edition of SKToday 	Summer 2025
	All SKDC staff are aware of W&FA Team and how to contact	Ongoing (See action 2c)
	External support organisations are aware of W&FA Team and how to contact	Ongoing
3b) Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Group	Purpose: Actively contribute to the Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Group	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend and contribute to the quarterly meetings. Share any information to appropriate SKDC teams. 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the organisers with the arrangements for the upcoming Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Conference. 	
3c) Foodbanks	Purpose: Develop and maintain a positive relationship with all foodbanks across SKDC	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Visits to Foodbank Coordinators within the district to share ideas on how best to help clients. February 2026 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals are being made and received from the foodbanks. The service is much in demand and the team have noticed the impact of DWP no longer issuing vouchers for parcels. Various SKDC staff have been trained on the use of the voucher system so they are able to support the W&FA Team 	Updated February 2026
	Actively seek referrals for clients that have used foodbanks that may benefit from additional financial advice.	Ongoing
3d) Warm Spaces	Purpose: Actively contribute to the Welcome Warm Spaces Working Group	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Attend and contribute to the meetings for actions relating to the warm spaces for 2025/26 February 2026 update: The packs are being produced by Charis Grants Ltd who send the pack directly to the resident. The pack can be requested by an approved referral partner within the District, there are currently 33 from various organisations,	Updated February 2026

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	including SKDC. Referrals are limited to a £100 spend limit to ensure the fund is managed effectively. Items available for purchase are heated throws, rechargeable hot water bottles, heated underblanket, self-heated mattress topper, 15 tog duvet, heated bodywarmers, heat the home pack (light bulbs, insulation tape, radiator heat reflector panels, winter warmth bundles (fleece blanket (non-electric), water bottle, hat scarf and gloves) and complete warmth pack (energy efficient light bulbs, insulation tape, radiator heat reflector panels and thermos Flask	
	Visit warm spaces to offer Welfare and Financial Advice as part of outreach	Winter 2025
	Actively share ideas with the warm spaces working group to improve the offer for 2026/27 warm spaces	Ongoing
	Promote and ensure full communications are issued in relation to warm packs	Complete
	February 2026 update: Communications have been issued to ensure all staff and Members are aware of the referral process	
3e) Information sharing	Purpose: Develop and manage information sharing protocol between SKDC and Support Organisations / advice agencies	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Develop and maintain relationships with support organisations by attending events, seminars and providing Welfare and Financial Advice updates / talks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team have undertaken visits to the following locations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Annes Church ○ Stamford Foodbank 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bourne Foodbank ○ Grantham Foodbank (not face to face) ○ St Georges – Stamford – SHEP Project & Cristians Against Poverty ○ National Grief Charity ○ Bhive Grantham ○ Don't Lose Hope Café ○ Bourne Library and customer service area ○ Grantham JobCentre 	
	Sharing information and ideas to improve delivery of service to our residents within the legal guidelines	Ongoing
	<p>Attend community engagement events in the form of Welfare and Financial Advice Clinics in Library's, Jobcentres, children's centres.</p> <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The team have attended the following community engagement events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grantham Partnership meeting (monthly) ○ Volunteering Everywhere (Dysart Park) <p>November 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The team have attended the following community engagement events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grow Your Skills Event, Jubilee Conference Centre, Grantham – Wednesday October 15th, 2025 - This was hosted by DWP and was well attended by Job centre Attendees with approx. 50 people coming through the door. Individual conversations were had with 8 people. ○ Budget Cookery Class, Bourne United Charities 14th October 2025. This was hosted by Bourne United Charities .A total of 12 applicants attended this event, a group discussion was done before the cookery 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	course discussing budgeting , priority bills etc Individual calls were then completed in the following days to discuss the participants individual needs.	
	Promote Talk Money Week – 3 to 7 November November 2025 update: Over the week the team ensure communication regarding the support available and the positive message of speaking about money. SKDC communications team issued messages on social media to support the Money and Pension Service. The services of the Welfare and Financial advice Team have also been advertised in the Customer service Centre with use of the banner screen advertising our services. Emails were sent out to all staff through the Wellbeing Team with key links put together by the welfare Team to check their financial wellbeing	Complete
3f) Liaison	Purpose: Liaison with partners and external support organisations	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Maintain relationship with those already established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Neighbourhood and Wellbeing Teams • Grantham Mental Health Partnership • NACRO officers • Foodbanks • Bourne United Charities • Bread & Butter Thing • Grantham College • Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Services • Lincolnshire District Councils – Warm Packs 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	<p>Meet with partners during 2025/26 to understand future support and explore opportunities to work together</p> <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is underway for the Winter Warm Packs, which will include a ‘Homeless Pack’ this year • The team will be planning visits to the Warm Welcome Spaces across the district, promoting the advice and support which is available • The location of the Welcome Warm Spaces can be found here, clicking on “Find a space”: Warm Welcome Campaign <p>November 2025 update: Communications will be issued to ensure all staff and Members are aware of the referral process</p> <p>February 2026 update: Communications have been issued to ensure all staff and Members are aware of the referral process</p>	Complete
	<p>Meet regularly with local Job Centre and Department for Work and Pension (DWP) colleagues to discuss emerging issues and agree a joint up approach for support and potential resolution</p> <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with DWP taking place in September 2025 <p>November 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting in September took place with DWP sharing information regarding events in the District • Liaison between the DWP and Welfare & Financial Advice Team is ongoing with specific discussions talking place as and when needed 	Updated February 2026

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external

February 2026 update:

- The next meeting will take place in March 2026

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
4a) Warm Spaces	Purpose: Increase the number of warm welcome spaces across the district	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaison with Members, Parish Clerks and potential warm welcome spaces venues November 2025 update: Communications will be issued to ensure all staff and Members are aware of the referral process	Complete
4b) Digital Inclusion	Purpose: To increase digital support and inclusion for vulnerable and elderly residents	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Assisting residents with digital forms such as pension credit checks and discretionary housing payments September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be promoted as part of National Customer Service Week (6-10 October 2025) 	Ongoing
4c) Community Outreach	Purpose: To ensure support can be provided across all towns within the district and where possible, rural areas	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Arrange events within the community at libraries, warm spaces, Children centres, jobcentres to offer budgeting skills, benefit checks and basic financial education i.e. pension credit checks: Bourne:	Complete

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

June 2025
– April
2026

Bourne Foodbank	2 North Road, Bourne, PE10 9AP	One to one
Don't Lose Hope	4 North Street, Bourne, Lincs. PE10 9EB.	One to one / preventative workshop
Bourne United Charity (AI Houses)	The Red Hall South Bourne	One to one
Len pick	5 Granby Court, Hereward Street, Bourne PE10 9AD	One to one
Salvation Army	5a Manning Road Bourne, PE01 9ET.	One to one / preventative workshop
Bread and Butter Thing	5a Manning Road Bourne, PE01 9ET.	One to one

Deepings:

Foodbank	63 Hereward Way, Deeping St James	One to one
The Green School Community Café	24 Church Street, Market Deeping, Lincolnshire, PE6 8DA,	One to one / preventative workshop

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

Bread and Butter Thing	Markt Deeping Scout and Guide Hall, Wellington Way, Deeping PE6 8LF.	One to one
Open Door Baptist Church	5 Spalding Rd, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8NJ	One to one / preventative workshop
Community Centre	2 Douglas Rd, Peterborough PE6 8PA	One to one / preventative workshop
Deeping United Charity	38 Church Street, Deeping St. James, PE6 8HD	One to one
Age Concern	21 Tyghes Cl, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8NS	One to one
Odd Fellows	57 Church St, Market Deeping, Peterborough PE6 8AN	One to one
British Legion	The Goat Inn, Frognall, PE6 8SA	One to one
Grantham:		
Jubilee Church	5 London Rd, Grantham NG31 6EY	One to one / preventative workshop
Alive Church	Castlegate, Grantham, NG31 6SQ	One to one / preventative workshop

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

	Church Of Ascension	Harrowby Lane , Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop	
	The Passage	Grantham Passage Resource Centre	One to one / preventative workshop	
	Bread and Butter	Harrowby United Football Club, 13 Dickens Road, Grantham, NG31 9QY	One to one	
	Bread and Butter	West Grantham Community Centre, Grantham	One to one	
	St Johns Church	Station Road East, Grantham	One to one	
	Job 22	High St Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop	
	Bhive	11a Finkin St, Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop	
	Grief Charity	The Malting , Warf Rd , Grantham	One to one	
	Stamford:			
	2nd Helping	Orion House, 11 Barn Hill, Stamford, PE9 2AE.	One to one / preventative workshop	
Georges Hub -	St Augustine's School, Kesteven Road PE9 1SR	One to one / preventative workshop		

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support					
		Georges Hub -	Free church, Kesteven Road, Stamford, PE9 1SU	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Georges Hub -	Malcolm Sergeants School, Empingham Road, PE9 2SR	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Georges Hub -	St Georges School, Kesteven Road, Stamford, PE9 1SX	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Bread and Butter Thing	Christ Church, Green Lane, Stamford, PE9 1HE	One to one	
		SHEP	27-29 St George's Street, Stamford	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Stamford Market	Broad St, Stamford	One to one	
	Support the Housing Roadshow which will be taking place across the District			Complete	
	September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27/08/25: Earlsfield Community Centre roadshow will be 10:00- 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 people attended ○ None of them spoke to WFAT team ○ One of the attendees Emma is following up with and will be advising about our team and the HSF 			August & September 2025	

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04/09/25: Manor Court Community Centre Bourne roadshow will be 10:00- 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 people attended ○ The team spoke to one person – completed HB, CTS and HSF form • 10/09/25: Edmonds Close Community Centre Stamford roadshow will be 10:00 -2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10 people attended ○ The team spoke to one person – completed HSF form and benefits calculator (with various actions arising from this) • 25/09/25: Deepings Community Centre Market Deeping roadshow will be 10:00 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Event has not taken place at the time of writing this report • 30/09/25: Greyfriars Community Centre Grantham roadshow will be 1:00-6:00 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Event has not taken place at the time of writing this report 	
4d) Furniture Aid	Purpose: Review ways to source assistance from other organisations to help residents in need of furniture	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Maintain relationships with charities and 3 rd Party Organisations to continue to source grants to be able to assist help for residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percy Bilton • BBC Children in Need • Bourne United • Len Pick • Family Fund (advise only) September 2025 update:	Ongoing

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circa 30 grants of various levels of support have been 	
4e) New tenants	Purpose: To produce a new tenant Welfare and Financial Advice pack	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaise with Housing colleagues to ensure this complements the new tenant pack already given at sign up September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations have started to take place with Housing colleagues • The team are working on the Welfare & Financial Advice pack • This action will be extended to March 2026 	March 2026 (was September 2025)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting Advice / referrals to external organisations for new tenants (appropriate additional support to that being provided by SKDC Tenancy Services Team) • Tick list of key actions for new tenant / budgeting 	March 2026
4f) New residents	Purpose: To produce a new resident information pack (to include Welfare and Financial Advice)	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Include the same information as in the tenant pack	March 2026
	Welcome to SKDC information:	March 2026

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
4g) Leaflet of the support available	Purpose: Production of leaflets for each Town within the District to provide key food support information	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Issue to Cabinet Member, Members and Parish Clerks for distribution	Complete
	Inclusion within Council Tax reminders	Complete
	September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the volume of reminders issued (between 600 and 1000 per month, it was felt the team may be overwhelmed with contact. • The decision was taken to review the information issued and reconsider either a targeted approach or issue general advice • This action has been amended to December 2025 February 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information has been issued to all teams for awareness of support available and links to website • Welfare & Financial Advice Team information has been included in the 26/27 council tax booklet: Welfare and Financial Advice South Kesteven District Council 	Complete
Inclusion within Council Tax summonses	Complete	
September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the volume of summonses issued (between 400 and 800 per month, it was felt the team may be overwhelmed with contact. • The decision was taken to review the information issued and reconsider either a targeted approach or issue general advice • This action has been amended to December 2025 	Complete	

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	February 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information has been issued to all teams for awareness of support available and links to website Welfare & Financial Advice Team information has been included in the 26/27 council tax booklet: Welfare and Financial Advice South Kesteven District Council 	
	Inclusion within rent statements February 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information has been issued to all teams for awareness of support available and links to website Welfare & Financial Advice Team information has been included in the annual rent increase letters: Welfare and Financial Advice South Kesteven District Council 	Complete
	Inclusion on intranet and staff notice board	Ongoing
4h) Credits on rent accounts	Purpose: To be reviewed to maximise tenant income	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaise with Income Recovery Team Leader to ascertain those accounts with credit and contact the tenant to arrange refund or transfer	March 2026
4i) Credits on council tax accounts	Purpose: To be reviewed to maximise resident income	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

	Liaise with Business Rates and Council Tax Enforcement Team Leader to ascertain those accounts with credit and contact the resident to arrange refund or transfer	March 2026
--	---	---------------

Activity 5: Preventative		
5a) Consider the formation of a Welfare and Financial Advice Strategic Working Group	Purpose: To provide a collaborate cross-team approach to the welfare and financial issues facing our residents	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Invitations to be issued to relevant officers: W&FA Team, Communications, Community Engagement, Community Safety, Housing, Revenues & Benefits February 2026 update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been superseded by the introduction of the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) – details are included in a separate report to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking place on 24 March 2026. • This action will be transferred to the CRF action plan 	Complete
	To revisit the original key themes which were introduced by the original Cost of Living Strategic Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication ○ Food insecurity and poverty ○ Fuel & Energy Poverty ○ Financial – Benefits, Debt Support and Funding ○ Health & Wellbeing (inc Welcome Warm Spaces) ○ Prevention of homelessness ○ Skills, Employment & Businesses February 2026 update	Complete

Activity 5: Preventative		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been superseded by the introduction of the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) – details are included in a separate report to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking place on 24 March 2026. This action will be transferred to the CRF action plan 	
	Produce a holistic action plan, with the inclusion of all relevant SKDC Teams February 2026 update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been superseded by the introduction of the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) – details are included in a separate report to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking place on 24 March 2026. This action will be transferred to the CRF action plan 	Complete
5b) Consider budgeting workshops for residents	Purpose: Identify the specific financial challenges faced by attendees, such as debt, low income, or lack of financial literacy	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Every day conversations with regards to general wrap around support, HSF application	Ongoing
	Liaison with relevant external organisations to discuss support in facilitating a budgeting workshop	March 2026
	Increase access to debt advice: Expand the reach of debt advice services to individuals facing financial difficulties, ensuring timely access to help and support	March 2026

Activity 5: Preventative

	Emergency Assistance programmes: Provide financial assistance to those facing immediate financial hardship, such as food or housing support.	March 2026
	Welfare Benefit Support: Assist individuals in maximizing their welfare benefits and accessing other available support	March 2026



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Crisis and Resilience Fund

Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service)

 claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

Following the publication of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Scheme guidance on 15 January 2026, this report sets out the details of the CRF guidance and work in progress to develop the required delivery plan to utilise the three-year funding.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the outline approach to the delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund as detailed in the report and is invited to ask questions regarding its content.**
- 2. Note the timeline for the introduction of a formal scheme to be approved by 1 July 2026.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 Funding distribution for this fund is not yet confirmed however it is anticipated that the existing methodology used for the Household Support Fund will continue to apply. Under this approach, funding is allocated by Lincolnshire County Council to South Kesteven District Council based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, weighted by population size. Once the funding allocation is announced, a final scheme will be developed and presented for approval in June 2026.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 Legal and governance implications are currently under review by Lincolnshire County Council and the District Councils as part of the preparatory work being undertaken, utilising the framework and guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 1.3 Proportionate due diligence and eligibility checks, together with appropriate verification processes, audit trails, and data-sharing arrangements, should be implemented to safeguard public funds and ensure compliance with grant conditions.
- 1.4 The Council has the power to administer externally funded support schemes under its general power of competence (section 1, Localism Act 2011).
- 1.5 The Committee is exercising its scrutiny function under the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.6 Implementation of the final CRF scheme must comply with the Council's financial regulations, grant conditions and relevant legal requirements, including equality and data protection obligations where applicable.

Completed by: Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Procurement

- 1.7 Where services are specified and delivered in return for payment (including any commissioned districtwide resilience service), the arrangement is likely to constitute a public services contract and must comply with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 1.8 Financial assistance provided to third sector organisations or other external providers, as proposed, will almost certainly constitute a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SCA 22). To ensure compliance with the Act, each funding stream should be properly assessed and documented to determine whether it falls outside the subsidy control regime or complies with an applicable route, such as Minimal Financial Assistance or the subsidy control principles

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9 The funding directly supports a range of people experiencing financial crisis and includes a resilience component as a key mechanism to prevent future hardship. It is anticipated that the scheme will have a positive impact on a range of protected characteristic groups. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as the scheme is developed and will be reviewed and updated as the delivery plan is also developed.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 In June 2025, the Government announced a new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) which replaces the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). The new scheme covers the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 and represents a shift from short term emergency help towards a more preventative, needs based approach. The aim is to build financial resilience, enabling individuals to better manage any future financial crisis, while still providing a safety net to support low-income households who encounter an unexpected financial shock.
- 2.2 On 15 January 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published the framework and guidance that authorities need to work within. The guidance sets out the objectives, framework and required collaboration between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire District Councils.

Funding and grant conditions

- 2.3 The CRF is a consolidated revenue grant that will be delivered through the Local Government Finance Settlement from the financial year ending (FYE) March 2027. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is providing funding to Authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to administer the fund.
- 2.4 Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the guidance and the Grant Determination Letter (“the Grant Determination”)
- 2.5 The grant conditions require Lincolnshire County Council to submit a delivery plan which outlines the planned activity across Lincolnshire for each strand to the DWP by 1 July 2026.
- 2.6 The guidance states that Authorities should seek to implement all elements of the CRF as far as possible by 1 April 2026. Where this has not been possible, the revised timeline and any interim mitigations must be stated in the delivery plan.
- 2.7 The three-year funding for Lincolnshire is provisionally **£9.9 million**, per year in Years 1 and 2 and **£11m** in year 3 (including Housing Payments). The Housing Payments funding has been confirmed at **£155,861**, ring-fenced outside Finance Settlement baseline funding for Years 1 and 2. Funding will be distributed via the Local Government Finance Settlement to Lincolnshire County Council with Districts’ allocation subject to the final scheme delivery.

Objectives and key principles

- 2.8 DWP advise *“The primary objective of The Fund is to both provide a safety net for those on low incomes who encounter a financial shock and to invest in building local financial resilience to enable individuals and communities to better deal with crises in the long-term, reducing crisis need”*
- 2.9 This signals a clear shift in national policy, away from short term crisis firefighting and towards building long term financial resilience in low-income households. The CRF is a tool for councils to stabilise people’s lives, reduce repeat crises and build stronger local safety nets if implemented strategically.
- 2.10 Councils are encouraged to invest in resilience services, not just emergency payments. That means using CRF funding to reduce repeat applications, help people maximise income, stabilise housing and connect residents to the right local support at the right time.

Outcomes Councils are expected to achieve

2.11 The fund will focus on three main outcomes

- **Outcome 1:** Councils must provide **effective crisis support**, including help with essential living costs and shortfalls in housing costs when people cannot meet their basic needs.
- **Outcome 2:** Councils should invest in **improving financial resilience**. This includes funding services that prevent crises from occurring, recurring or escalating, and that help people stabilise their income, reduce debt and improve financial security.
- **Outcome 3:** The CRF should be used to build a strong, **joined up local support system**. Councils are encouraged to create visible local safety nets with clear referral pathways between local authorities and their partners. The fund should act as the front door into wider support, not sit in isolation.

Principles that must shape delivery

2.12 The following principles should be adopted to delivery CRF schemes

- **Person-centred** to ensure that people's preferences, needs and values stay central to professional decisions, providing support that is respectful to them.
- **Needs-based** to recognise the varied circumstances that individuals may experience, seeking to meet the underlying needs, not just the crisis symptoms.
- **Holistic** to provide integrated support that helps the individual and their households, with Authorities considering the wide range of services and actions they have access to.
- **Encompass a no wrong door approach** to connect individuals to the right service and support through warm referrals, regardless of their initial point of contact.
- **Trauma informed:** Authorities should adopt a Trauma Informed Approach when working with people and families in crisis.

2.13 In practice, this means people should not be turned away because they came through the wrong route, struggled with digital access or were unable to explain their situation clearly.

Crisis Payments

- 2.14 The CRF is deliberately flexible, with the crisis payment covering a wide range of essentials, including food, water, energy, hygiene products, housing costs, clothing, furniture and appliances, transport and digital connectivity.
- 2.15 This allows councils to respond to real world need rather than narrow benefit categories. The scheme is to be open for applications throughout the year. Payments are to be person centred and based on individual needs-based circumstances.
- 2.16 Support is not limited to those on benefits, however, consideration is to be given to the resources available to the applicant and their household, such as savings or other assets that could be readily accessed

Housing Payments

- 2.17 Providing financial support towards housing needs to those who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. This replaces the DHP administered by District Councils but closely replicates existing DHP guidelines.
- 2.18 In Years 1 and 2, District Councils will continue to receive a separate allocation, from Year 3 onwards, Unitary Authorities (and County Councils that continue to operate in the FYE March 2029) will receive allocations for Housing Payments.
- 2.19 The application-based payment can provide financial support towards housing costs for people receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (with a rental element) facing shortfalls in meeting housing costs. This can include deposits and moving costs. However, the fund cannot be used for rent arrears, benefit sanctions or overpayment recovery.
- 2.20 Where households are placed out of the district, for example families with children in temporary accommodation, discussions should take place between the relevant authorities, so support is not blocked by boundaries.

Resilience Services

- 2.21 Funding for services delivered by Authorities or external providers to improve financial resilience. This will be a programmes and activities that support building financial resilience.

- 2.22 Expected to be used as a gateway to wider support for Crisis and Housing Payment recipients where there is an underlying need, but this is not a condition of access and pathways should work in both directions.
- 2.23 Funding can be used to provide new services, supplement or expand existing provision, but cannot be used to deliver or maintain existing government funded activity. Given the emphasis on building financial resilience, Authorities are expected to use a significant amount of their total allocation on this strand. Activity is expected to positively impact on one or more of the following:
- Increased savings
 - Reduced priority debt
 - Reduced need for emergency food parcels
 - Reduced material deprivation (inability to afford essentials)
 - Maximised income
 - Fewer repeat Crisis Payment applications
 - Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services

Community Coordination

- 2.24 Investment in activities that connect and enhance the local support landscape. These can include:
- Connecting services to better work together, filling gaps by setting up new services or making current ones stronger to meet demand.
 - Strengthening referral pathways and local partnerships can help people find the right support quickly and prevent them from having to repeat their story to multiple services.
- 2.25 The CRF is designed to support people facing financial shocks such as disasters, health crises or accidents, domestic abuse, theft, essential household items breaking, and short-term income gaps.
- 2.26 DWP guidance also confirms that councils can use CRF to cover reasonable administration costs, including those delivered by partner organisations, provided these are reported separately through management information returns. This can include staff time, communications and accessibility costs, data and analytics to support targeting, digital and IT systems for referrals and monitoring, and the production of Management Information (MI) reports. Administration costs for the Housing Payment strand are set out in Table 1 for years 1 and 2. In year 3 these will be at the discretion of the authority as part of the CRF allocation

The delivery plan

- 2.27 This is a new scheme requiring a major shift from the established delivery mechanisms for the Household Support Fund.
- 2.28 This requires significant input across partners to interpret guidance, design and develop the strands, attend ongoing DWP development sessions, commission services (where necessary) and complete governance processes. The delegated authority allows for this work to be undertaken and supports accelerated delivery.
- 2.29 The delivery plan for Lincolnshire is currently under development with partners, with Lincolnshire County Council taking the lead as recipient of the funding and having overall responsibilities for the planned activity.
- 2.30 The guidance recognises that year 1 of the delivery plan may be different to subsequent years as needs change and services are developed, with plans to be reviewed annually. Current outline proposals are:
- **Crisis Payment** – Funding will be made available to District Councils to provide the required application-based support under local arrangements, utilising consistent eligibility criteria to support a range of people and families experiencing unexpected financial shocks. The level of funding to be distributed to Districts Councils has not yet been confirmed, however, it is likely the total amount will be split based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, weighted by population. If areas are unable to fully utilise allocations, it is intended that any remainder may be redistributed within this strand to maximise the funding. This builds on the successful delivery model for payments made through the HSF.
 - **Housing Payment** – as set out in the conditions, District Councils will deliver this strand in years 1 and 2, utilising a separate government allocation outside of the main CRF allocation. Total funding for each year for South Kesteven is £155,861 with administration funding of £22,853.
 - **Resilience Services** – Funding to be used for new services or to increase capacity/fill gaps in existing services, programmes and activities that support building financial resilience. The level of funding to be distributed to Districts Councils has not yet been confirmed, however, it is likely the total amount will be split based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, weighted by population. If areas are unable to fully utilise allocations, it is intended that any remainder may be redistributed within this strand to maximise the funding. Current proposals to deliver this strand include:
 - A single countywide service (commissioned by LCC), with a focus on reducing priority debt and serious debt issues, which require Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) accredited support. This will include targeted

outreach, for example through Family Hubs and Food Banks and other services which target the most vulnerable.

- Enhancements to existing services, to extend provision of nonregulated financial support, such as household budgeting and income maximisation, alongside assistance to develop and implement plans, utilising the most appropriate support available.
- Match funding of £90,000 over the three years for a test a learn project to support care experienced young people to develop and enhance life skills, transition to independent living and increase employability skills and confidence.
- An allocation to be made available to Lincolnshire District Councils to fund local activity which may include support delivered via third sector partners to help people withstand and recover from financial shocks.
- **Community Co-ordination** – In line with the guidance, an assessment of the robustness of the current support landscape and local services is underway. Work will be undertaken which will help guide decisions on which activities to prioritise and the level of funding required for this strand to enhance or sustain effective co-ordination, referral pathways and local partnerships. An ongoing review of resilience services and reasons for accessing crisis payments will help inform the understanding of longer-term gaps, which could be effectively met through this strand to further help people to move smoothly through the support system and support a legacy beyond the funding period

Current position and next steps

- 2.31 Lincolnshire County Council and District Councils are meeting regularly to discuss the guidance and consideration as to the best way to deliver each of the fund strands. These meetings are ongoing to develop core eligibility and delivery of a scheme across the County. South Kesteven District Council are represented by the Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service).
- 2.32 The Head of Service has led several meetings with South Kesteven's Welfare & Financial Advice Team and Technical Support Team who currently administer existing HSF and DHP applications.
- 2.33 An internal CRF working group will be established, which will include officers from a number of key service areas. The Head of Service will be supported by the Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer (Crisis Payments and Housing Payments) and Assistant Director, Leisure, Culture and Place (Resilience Services and Community-Co-ordination).

2.34 Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Executive took place on 3 March 2026 (details are included in Section 6 of this report). One recommendation was amended and approved, with the proposal for an LCC Members workshop to take place on 17 March 2026.

3. Key Considerations

3.1 LCC and Districts will be required to agree a three-year delivery plan. LCC will be responsible for providing the delivery plan to DWP.

3.2 The proposed key dates for delivery are:

- 1 April 2026 – Housing Payments
- 1 April 2026 (or as soon after) – Resilience Services
- 1 July 2026 – Crisis Payments
- During 26/27 – Community co-ordination gap analysis activity will be throughout Year 1 and will shape any changes to delivery in years 2 and 3

3.3 The South Kesteven Crisis and Resilience Fund scheme will be presented to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 May 2026, for recommendation to Cabinet on 2 June 2026 for formal approval of the full scheme from 1 July 2026.

3.4 To ensure compliance with the introduction of Housing Payments from 1 April 2026, delegation for approval of the changes to the existing Discretionary Housing Payment policy will be given to the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.

4. Other Options Considered

2.1 Option 1: Do nothing – however funding has been provided, and the requirement of the funding is to provide residents with support during times of crisis.

2.2 Option 2: To continue to work with Lincolnshire County Council, Districts and support organisations to progress with the delivery of a scheme from 1 April 2026 and contribute to the submission of a delivery plan no later than 1 July 2026.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 The DWP expect authorities to commence delivery of the scheme from 1 April 2026 and submit a delivery plan by 1 July 2026. Joint working has been in place between Lincolnshire County Council, District Councils and Support organisations during all stages of Household Support Fund. It is recognised a joint approach to

this level of support will achieve the desired outcomes as set out in the framework and guidance.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Crisis and Resilience Fund: Guidance for Local Authorities in England 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2029: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crisis-and-resilience-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england-1-april-2026-to-31-march-2029>
- 6.2 Lincolnshire County Council Executive meeting – 3 March 2026 (item 6): [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 3rd March, 2026, 10.30 am](#)

This page is intentionally left blank



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes
Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet
Member for Leisure and Culture

Community Engagement Update 2024-2025

Report Author

Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

✉ carol.drury@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of community engagement for the calendar years 2024/25. It highlights actions taken to deliver against the aims of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy - Our People, Our Place and provides detail on achievements and includes plans for the coming year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the draft Community Engagement Update report and offer comment on the content.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting Communities
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

2.1 This report provides an update on the work of the Community Engagement Team during the calendar years of 2024-2025. Civil Society plays a vital role across the communities of South Kesteven, and it is the role of the Community Engagement Team to support those groups to achieve their goals. In Community Engagement or Development, the Team's involvement with groups is transient – but remains whilst ever the group needs support.

2.2 The work of the Team provides a 'bridge' between where a group is and where it wants to be. The Team's role is not to tell these groups what to do, it is to support them to do what they want to do. Once they have those skills the Team can withdraw – but with a clear understanding that, should they need support again, we will always be there it will remain available.

2.3 Attached to this report at Appendix A is the 2024-2025 update on achievements against actions agreed under the Council's Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place 2024-27.

2.4 The draft report provides information on the four key focus areas of the Council's Strategy:

- Building Capacity
- Addressing Needs
- Mutual Support
- Strengthening Cohesion

- 2.5 Although the report sets out detail of achievements and aspirations across each of these areas, it should be borne in mind that these titles represent the sum parts of a whole picture and so therefore should not necessarily be viewed in isolation of each other.
- 2.6 The draft report further outlines actions and responsibilities relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Prevent and Safeguarding.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Appendix A provides an overview of actions taken across a two-year period and outlines forthcoming projects, activities and engagement opportunities. Members are asked to consider the content of this document and provide comment.
- 3.2 The Council's Community Engagement and Development Strategy is complemented by an Action Plan which covers the period 2024-2027. This is included at Appendix B.
- 3.3 The Action Plan, which sets out what will be delivered to meet the objectives of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy, contains 31 actions covering all aspects of the Council's community engagement and development work.
- 3.4 Many actions within the Plan are listed as "active" whilst four are listed as completed. Actions listed as active remain ongoing simply because these projects or activities are delivered in order to provide continuing support to the voluntary and community sector.
- 3.5 A review of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy will take place during 2026, and its accompanying Action Plan will be refreshed to reflect new avenues of support for Civil Society groups and organisations going forward.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 This report is for information only and therefore no other options were considered.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 To ensure Members are updated on the achievements and aspirations related to the aims of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place 2024-27.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 [Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place 2024-2027.](#)

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Draft Community Engagement Update 2024-2025

7.2 Appendix B – Community Engagement and Development Action Plan 2024-2027

Community Engagement Update 2024-2025

A review of activity carried out in the delivery of the Community Engagement and Development Action Plan.

Introduction

This review provides an overview of work undertaken by the Community Engagement Team in support of the Council's priority of Connecting Communities.

The Council's Community Engagement and Development Strategy 2024-2027 – Our People, Our Place, outlines its commitment to supporting communities within South Kesteven. The accompanying Action Plan provides information on how we deliver against the aims and objectives of the strategy.

The primary focus for the Team is working with the civil society groups and organisations that operate within South Kesteven. The Council's role in community engagement and community development is not to tell communities what they must do, rather to support and advise in the delivery of what *they* want and where *they* want it. It was vital therefore, while we were in the process of developing the strategy, that the communities of South Kesteven were given the opportunity to input via public and direct consultation.

The Community Engagement and Development Strategy outlines that two of the main challenges faced by voluntary and community groups centre around the need for appropriate governance and access to funding. Engaging with groups to determine where they are in their journey and what their support needs are is key to beginning a dialogue. This ultimately leads to a passage of development that not only delivers a local project but sustains the group to continue its work within its community.

The Council's Community Engagement Team supports civil society groups and organisations to ensure effective governance is put in place. Officers also work with groups to source and attract funding to meet the needs of their projects. Support includes:

- advice on the relevance of status (constituted group, charity, social enterprise etc.)
- undertaking funding searches to identify the most appropriate funder for their project -including with the bid writing process and ultimate submission.
- funding and project surgeries to explore the ideas of voluntary and community groups, share knowledge and advocate partnership or collaborative working where appropriate
- acting as a sounding board for new projects and challenges to help find the solution that brings the project to fruition.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is like building a bridge that links organisations to communities through open and honest dialogue and based on mutual respect. Community engagement is active participation with local residents and community groups in the decisions that affect their lives. By getting to know our communities we build trust. Community engagement is not about questionnaires and surveys, it's about talking, listening and learning from one another. What do we want for the local area and how can we work collaboratively to achieve our goals? Successful engagement at community level helps to make development opportunities possible.

What is Community Development?

Community development is the process that builds on Community Engagement. Some communities are self-mobilising and will seek out the support available from third-sector, public sector and business to achieve their goals. Some communities are self-sufficient and do not require support from these agencies and some don't yet know or appreciate that they can evoke change. Community development is about enabling individuals and groups to bring about change within their neighbourhood.

Community Development is not an activity: it is a process or set of principles used to enable communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities.

The objectives of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy are therefore based on four key focus areas:

- building capacity
- addressing needs
- mutual support
- strengthening cohesion

Alongside, and complementing the delivery of these themes, the Team also looks after the SK Community Fund; the Coronation Community Orchards Fund; the Food Support Agency Fund and LotterySK. During 2025, the Team also collaborated on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund supporting applications relating to Parish and Community Assets and Decarbonisation.

The remit of the Team is, however, broader than its key function of working in support of civil society. Other areas of responsibility and collaboration include:

- Armed Forces
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Prevent and Protect
- Safeguarding

An annual update on the Council's compliance with the Armed Forces Covenant and its work in support of its Gold Award status under the Employer Recognition Scheme is provided as a separate document and will, therefore, not be included within this report. The latest update relating to Armed Forces was presented to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2025.

The Community Engagement Team holds and maintains a database of in excess of 500 civil society groups and organisations located within South Kesteven. Data held often includes personal contact details as many groups do not hold generic, organisation-named email addresses. Given the sensitivity of the information held, these details are never shared. The Team will, however, pass information to its contacts on behalf of partners and other service areas within the Authority for purposes of consultation, funding alerts etc. It is always made clear that information is being shared on behalf of someone else and details are provided for groups to get in direct contact with the originator should they wish to participate.

The effectiveness of Community Engagement and Development relies on building relationships and trust. This takes time, often years, in the making. Interventions, support and projects are ongoing. The value of taking the time to get to know a group or individual should never be underestimated. Some groups, particularly those at the start of their existence, require a lot of support and can result in multiple visits. These groups seek guidance on what type of governance structure they should have; how to set up a community bank account; what policies they may need and how to get volunteers DBS checked etc. Other, more established groups, may need less help but may ask for extended support in developing a funding bid for example. Our role is to work with them at whatever stage they are at, until they no longer need our support. The Team does, however, remain in contact and is always ready to step in again should further help or advice be needed.

The key focus areas of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy are provided in this document.

Objectives were set in each of these focus areas. These are not intended to be viewed in isolation of each other, particularly as in some instances, the objectives overlap or fit within more than one area. These objectives provide high-level activities and the framework for a more detailed action plan, which was developed utilising the outcomes of community consultation. Below is information on the objectives and over-arching actions of each of the key focus areas and a summary of outputs against identified activity outlined in the Strategy's Action Plan during 2024/2025. For the purpose of this report 2024/2025 refers to calendar years.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Objective: To work with the voluntary and community groups within the District to enable them to participate in and deliver community-based projects and activities.

Action: Provide support for groups to develop governance structures, create project plans, identify and source funding and build in resilience and sustainability.

The role of the Community Engagement Team is to work with groups and organisations within civil society, supporting them to achieve their goals within the communities they serve.

Building the capacity of such groups starts from their set-up and throughout their journey. This includes helping to ensure they have the most appropriate governance structure and policy in place through to setting up dedicated bank accounts and enabling them to become 'fit for funding'. The Team also works with established groups when their ambition is to deliver larger scale projects or expand their offer and provide funding searches and direct support during the process.

We work collaboratively with other agencies such as CVS Lincolnshire who provide health checks for groups, training and 'funding ready' workshops.

The Community Engagement Team delivers funding workshops which provide information on available funding and advice on writing a successful funding bid. Whilst the Team does not write funding bids for other groups, agencies or organisations, it does offer a service whereby the funding bids of others will be reviewed prior to an application being made.

2025 marked the 10th anniversary of the SK Community Fund. Across those ten years the Fund has awarded £875,682 to groups in the voluntary, community, faith and sports sectors and to charities.

Significantly, the funding provided by the SK Community Fund has supported projects with a value of £7,680,416.

This means, the funding provided to the voluntary and community sector across our District has helped to lever in almost **£7million** of additional funding to the District in support of civil society groups and organisations. Larger grants offered by external (often national) funders would not have been released without groups getting the required match funding. This is when our support is invaluable to the groups we support and provides significant contribution to the capacity building of local groups and also has an impact on the local economy.

It should also be recognised that some of the grants awarded during the 10 years of SK Community Fund have not required match funding, particularly for grants given to smaller and new groups and for celebratory events such as the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, the Coronation of King Charles III and 80th Anniversaries of VE and VJ Day.

Outputs for 2024-2025:

- **8 Funding Workshops** held in Bourne, Deepings, Grantham and Stamford which attracted **219** participants representing **189** voluntary and community groups.
- **1 Funding Fair** held in Bourne which hosted funders representing the National Lottery, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Lincolnshire Community Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Lincolnshire Co-op, The Key Fund, Sport England, SK Community Fund and UKSPF. This event attracted **115** participants representing **70** different voluntary and community groups
- **funding searches** and **direct support** for group set-up and funding bids provided to **85** voluntary and community groups across South Kesteven as a direct output from holding funding workshops and the funding fair
- the **value** of funding bids successfully supported to external funders on behalf of the voluntary and community sector: **£173,000**.

Actions going forward include:

- introduction of funding surgeries to enable the Team to work with groups on writing successful funding bids
- continued delivery of funding workshops
- exploring the potential for joint working with CVS Lincolnshire to deliver a funding fair
- continued 1:1 support for groups across South Kesteven.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

Objective: To work with communities within locations challenged by health, economic and social mobility to enable people within those communities to feel enabled to improve place and personal outcomes.

Action: Signposting communities to seek the support of relevant agencies to address issues faced within disadvantaged areas.

Disadvantage comes in many forms and its impact is felt across communities. Key ways in which we can help communities include our commitment to providing funding to support those in need through our Food Support Agency funding stream and through both the SK Community Fund and the Coronation Community Orchards Fund which offer opportunities for people to come together to tackle isolation, loneliness and mental health.

The Team is an active participant in networks which support people in food poverty and those who support people living with mental health issues. Through these networks we are able to work collaboratively with others in support of our own communities. Networks also provide us with key contacts through which to signpost people in need to the right agency for the support they need.

Funding through the Food Support Agency scheme is offered to all Foodbanks operating in South Kesteven and to a wide variety of community pantries and larders which offer food either free or for a small donation. Larders and pantries typically source close to shelf-life foods which are donated rather than having to go to landfill.

The SK Community Fund has provided funding for community benches and picnic tables in rural settings which the applicants intend to help bring people out of isolation and join together. Some of these projects have also been at locations of funded Coronation Community Orchards.

The Community Engagement Team also takes opportunities to support communities through its presence at events. These activities are known as Council in the Community. The Team attends public events and activities which are organised by other agencies to engage with members of the public. Depending on the event, interactions are rarely specific to the remit of the Community Engagement but the team is always happy to signpost to the appropriate service or work with colleagues to provide answers for our customers.

Responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion also sits within the remit of the Team which produces the Annual Position Statement for EDI and agrees the Council's Equality Objectives in consultation with other service areas to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Annual position statement is published to the Council's website. Training is provided through the Community Engagement Team to Equality Allies who support the development of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure the Council provides services that are equitable and inclusive.

Outputs for 2024-2025:

- funding support for the development of **16 community orchards** across South Kesteven
- **£32,000** support provided to Foodbanks in Bourne, Deepings and Grantham, Second Helpings (Stamford), The Butterfield Centre (Bourne), Georges Food Hub (Stamford); St John's Larder (Grantham)
- projects alleviating **poverty, loneliness, social isolation and mental illness** made possible through the provision of **£42,833** grant funding which have included:
 - a Good Neighbours scheme
 - the implementation of sports activities for older people
 - the provision of winter coats for children living in poverty
 - equipment to assist with the delivery of counselling for children living with grief (project based in Grantham but delivering service across the District)
 - community arts projects and events to alleviate social isolation, provide support to people living with autism and to raise awareness of the impact of suicide
 - building renovations for a new mental health hub operated by Mindspace, Stamford
 - equipment for a centre supporting Mental Health through woodworking
- attendance at **6 events** under the umbrella of Council in the Community
- preparation and publication of the Annual Position Statement for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Actions going forward include:

- collaborations with other agencies to provide support for those with health needs
- increasing the reach of available assistance through Food Support Agency funding
- increasing the opportunities for support through the SK Community Fund for those working to alleviate loneliness, social isolation and poverty
- development of an EDI Strategy and action plan which will encompass the actions of all service areas to show the Council's commitment to the delivery of equitable services
- updates to training provided relating to Equality Impact Assessments.

MUTUAL SUPPORT

Objective: To assist communities to develop, support and communicate with groups and agencies delivering projects and services in their local area

Action: Develop and facilitate network opportunities for people to come together to discuss local needs with an aim of creating collaborative projects

Mutual support, across the voluntary and community sector and across services within the Council works to ensure the best of opportunities and a minimisation of duplication of effort. Many groups want to work alone. They have their own purpose, drive and identity and they don't want to dilute or lose that. Providing opportunities to network however builds stronger communities. It provides the opportunity to share experience, learn from mistakes and identify gaps in provision. This learning helps groups to grow and develop.

The Community Engagement Team holds a database of groups, organisations and agencies that operate across South Kesteven. This eco-system (it is ever growing and changing) is made up of over 700 groups representing communities, sport, faith, places of interest, charities, support groups, infrastructure organisations and schools.

Funding workshops and participation in training and development opportunities made available to civil society provide a platform for networking. Add to this the work the Team does on a 1:1 basis with groups to support them in their development and linking them with other groups to promote collaboration engenders peer learning.

The Team also collaborates with other service areas offering mutual support to deliver such programmes as Coronation Community Orchards with the Climate Change Team and UKSPF alongside colleagues from Finance and Economic Development.

The Community Engagement Manager is the Deputy Safeguarding Lead, working alongside the Safeguarding Lead to ensure the Council's policy on Safeguarding remains fit for purpose and developing a training programme for staff and Elected Members which meets national competency requirements. The Team also supports in the preparation for requirements under the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 and in emergency planning situations with the Community Engagement Manager being one of three people trained within the Authority to open and operate an emergency rest centre should one be required.

Further support for groups comes via LotterySK. Constituted community groups and charities operating within the District can become a 'good cause' supported by the Council's community lottery. Each good cause earning 50p of every £1 ticket bought in support of the group. Established in 2018 there are now **131** groups signed up to LotterySK. It has raised **£448,354** during this time and has paid **£178,450** in prizes.

The Team also works in mutual support for groups through CVS Lincolnshire signposting for issues such as volunteering, group health checks and community forums.

The Team also supports on elections, member training and collaborates with colleagues to deliver against the Council's commitment to being an age friendly District.

Outputs for 2024-2025:

- interaction with **481** voluntary and community groups across 24/25
- **21** groups supported to apply for UKSPF funding for parish and community assets and decarbonisation resulting in grants totalling **£302,038**
- **£102,000** of funding to good causes across the District through LotterySK
- development and delivery of **10** in person Safeguarding Training sessions to Elected Members
- in person Safeguarding Training delivered to Repairs Operatives
- completion by staff (across the Council) of **835** modules of Safeguarding Training

Actions going forward include:

- introduction of community network 'join the dots' workshops for peer learning relating to project development and delivery to help groups to become sustainable
- introduction of a community newsletter to provide information on volunteering opportunities, funding flashes and community events
- safeguarding policy update to account for legislative changes to Council's responsibilities
- review of safeguarding training programme to ensure it remains within the requirements of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- continued development and delivery of in person safeguarding training

STRENGTHENING COHESION

Objective: To foster good relations between communities to improve understanding and cooperation among people from diverse backgrounds

Action: Collaborate with existing providers of support and celebratory events to enhance opportunities to bring people together to explore their differences and similarities.

There are many ways to promote and strengthen community cohesion but it would be short-sighted to think that this issue can be tackled without working collaboratively with others. Active promotion and participatory programmes which are long lasting and consistent are key to supporting cohesion and this is where the Council's long and established relationship with the voluntary and community sector really comes into play.

As a Council we have legal duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Team also works in support of voluntary, faith and community groups who deliver participatory activity, support and signposting to ethnically diverse communities across the district, helping them to source and secure funding to continue their work.

The Community Engagement Manager is the lead officer for Prevent which places a duty on the council to help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent sits alongside the Council's safeguarding duties to protect people from a range of other harms, such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. The duty helps to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are supported as they would be under safeguarding processes.

The Council is represented on the County Prevent Steering Group which carries out a range of actions including the development of the Counter Terrorism Local Profile

Key to the success of initiatives like Prevent is the awareness and involvement of communities. To this end the Community Engagement Team has worked with professionals in the field to deliver training to volunteers.

The Team also collaborates with Neighbourhoods colleagues on issues such as exploitation, Hate Crime and trafficking under its safeguarding responsibilities.

Outputs for 2024-2025:

- provided financial support for **28** projects which bring people together to celebrate the differences and similarities
- provided training to **24** community volunteers on identifying and reporting concerns related to Prevent

Actions going forward include:

- continue to explore opportunities to deliver Prevent training to the voluntary and community sector
- continue to work with groups and agencies that support projects that bring people together from diverse backgrounds

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank

Community Engagement and Development: Action Plan 2024 - 2027

Objectives:

- 1 Building Capacity
- 2 Addressing Needs
- 3 Mutual Support
- 4 Strengthening Cohesion

Status:

- Not yet started
- Active
- Active yet paused
- Complete

	S P	Objective	Action	Responsibility	Partner/s	Target	Timeline	Success Means	Status	
OS	1	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 3 	Deliver a series of funding workshops and an annual funding fair across the district, in support of voluntary and community sector groups and organisations	Community Grants and Funding Officer	LCVS Economic Development The National Lottery	5 funding workshops per year 1 funding fair in partnership with LCVS per year	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible, well attended events that provide useful information to attendees. Follow-up assistance sought by groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STATUS: Active
	2	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2 	Provide support for groups to develop governance structures, create project plans, identify and source funding and build in resilience and sustainability	Community Grants and Funding Officer	LCVS	Support our community and voluntary groups	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resilient groups that have the capacity and capability to sustain themselves into the future	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STATUS: Active
	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 4 	Develop and submit funding bids to SKSPF and to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the purpose of developing an Airborne heritage trail	Armed Forces Officer		Build on the findings of the Arnhem/Airborne Trail Feasibility Study to develop funding bids to UKSPG and Heritage Lottery Fund	Oct 2023 January 2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Funding sourced to deliver the trail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STATUS: Complete

4	2	<p>3</p> <p>4</p>	Establish a visitor and military heritage trail to highlight the District's role in both D Day and Operation Market Garden (Arnhem).	Armed Forces Officer	Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire 1944 Arnhem Fellowship	Establish trail to include information points, website, arts projects, guided walks etc and develop network of local businesses in support of the trail through direct connection to boost tourism offer	July 2024 onward	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Launch of the Trail with partner buy in from local business, tourism, military, and former military sites reflecting heritage	 STATUS: Active
5		<p>3</p> <p>4</p>	Work in collaboration with other service areas to support works of art and culture in public spaces across the district	Community Engagement Manager Armed Forces Officer	Grantham Arts Economic Development PWOG	1 Poppy Cascade 4 Silhouettes to depict AF and civilian personnel 1 Poppy and Pebble installation Community Orchards/Woods	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivery, in collaboration with other service areas of artwork and installations in public spaces	 STATUS: Active
6		<p>2</p> <p>3</p>	Continue to ensure the Council's compliance with the Armed Forces Act and its associated duties	Armed Forces Officer	Housing	Monitor latest guidance and best practice and share information with relevant service areas	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Well-informed officers and elected Members who understand what is necessary to comply with the Act	 STATUS: Active
7	14	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>	Signpost to organisations such as Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service (LCVS) to engage groups in workshops provided to get groups 'fit for funding'	Community Engagement Team	LCVS	Sign local groups up to Fit for Funding workshops run by LCVS	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A network of groups across the district that have the knowledge and tools required to ensure their eligibility for funding from local, regional and national funders	 STATUS: Active

8	14	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p>	Develop and deliver a series of networking forums to bring together voluntary and community groups. To encourage groups to work together, sharing ideas and volunteering opportunities	Community Engagement Team	Community groups across the district	Run two online forums during the year to bring groups together to share ideas and explore joint opportunities	Spring 2025 onwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased opportunities for collaboration on projects to support the communities of South Kesteven	 STATUS: Active
9		<p>2</p> <p>3</p>	Develop an effective working relationship with the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer to explore opportunities for collaboration	Armed Forces Officer	Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer	Work in collaboration to spread good practice and information across the Armed Forces Networks of Lincolnshire	April 2024 onward	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased support for the Armed Forces community – serving, veteran and their families	 STATUS: Active
10		<p>2</p> <p>3</p>	Develop an effective working relationship with the Lincolnshire County Council Armed Forces Champion	Armed Forces Champion	Lincolnshire County Council	Build an effective partnership arrangement across the County	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased support for the Armed Forces community – serving, veteran and their families	 STATUS: Active
11	6	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>	Explore opportunities to promote the employment of former military personnel through promotion of a new employers guide from the Office of Veteran Affairs	Armed Forces Officer	Economic Development HR	Promote the advantages of employing veterans internally and externally through business networks	January 2025	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employers better aware of ex-military skills and how to recruit	 STATUS: Complete
12	14	<p>1</p>	Work closely with Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service to promote volunteering opportunities within SKDC and with voluntary and community groups through our various communications	Community Engagement Team	Comms	Advertise volunteer opportunities every quarter through a newsletter to groups and via the SKDC website	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased numbers of volunteers and volunteering opportunities within the district	 STATUS: Active

13	1	4	Promote and celebrate Armed Forces Week	Armed Forces Officer	Comms	Develop a week-long programme of defence-related PR and events to contribute to advocacy requirements to publicly support the defence community	Annually from June 2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greater awareness of the contribution of Armed Forces	 STATUS: Complete
14	21	4	Work with other agencies to develop and deliver a series of workshops to raise awareness of Prevent	Community Engagement Manager	EveryOne	Deliver a series of 4 workshops across the district	From Sept 2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improved awareness within communities of Prevent and an understanding of how to report issues	 STATUS: Active
15		2	Continue to deliver the Council in the Community Initiative to engage with residents face-to-face	Community Engagement Team	Appropriate service areas across SKDC	Deliver events throughout the year that are responsive to identified local need	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct engagement with residents to address identified concerns and resolve issues	 STATUS: Active
16	14	1 3	Initiate a series of workshops with Parish clusters to improve engagement starting with a Parish and Town Council Conference which will become an annual event	Community Engagement Team	Appropriate service areas across SKDC Lincolnshire Resilience Forum Parish/Town Councils	Deliver 4 events in Parish Cluster areas and one conference themed through learning at cluster event	Spring 2025 onwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased engagement with Parish and Town Councils	 STATUS: Active
17	10	2 4	Work with colleagues in other service areas to promote opportunities for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).	Community Engagement Manager	SKDC Service Areas EDI Working Group	Develop a cross-service action plan to deliver against the Council's equality objectives	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased opportunities to embed EDI across the Council	 STATUS: Active

18		①	Encourage staff within food businesses to sign up as Army catering Reserves for training/upskilling	Armed Forces Officer	Prince William of Gloucester (PWoG) barracks 167 Catering Support Regiment and Army Reserve Catering School Environmental Health	Take advantage of the central Army catering school based at PWoG to offer training opportunities	January 2025 onwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase in reservist sign-up with a focus on catering	 STATUS: Active
19		②	Explore opportunities to become an age-friendly district.	Community Grants and Funding Officer Communities Officer	Centre for Aging Better Leisure Services Local groups Businesses Older residents	Identify and help make changes in outdoor spaces, volunteering and employment, leisure and community services to support inclusivity of older people	October 2024 onwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A district where people can stay living in their homes, participate in the activities they value, and contribute to their communities, for as long as possible	 STATUS: Active
20	14 17	① ②	Participate in community networks across the county and district to improve reach and understanding of provisions in place and support needed	Community Engagement Team	Voluntary, faith and community groups Charities Health partners	Inclusion in existing networks and creation of further opportunities if need is identified	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective interaction with community and voluntary sector	 STATUS: Active
21	17	②	Support community initiatives that seek to overcome social isolation	Community Engagement Team	Voluntary, faith and community groups Health partners	Attend, support and fund groups delivering against this type of initiative	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groups that are sustainable and can offer support for the future	 STATUS: Active

22	14	4	Continue to enable those of other cultures and languages to participate in the community through connections with existing groups and support the development of new groups	Community Engagement Team	Voluntary, faith and community groups	Promote existing groups and help build capacity to develop further and instigate new opportunities for improved participation	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improved awareness of opportunities to participate in community initiatives through existing networks of groups	 STATUS: Active
23	17	2 3	Continue to actively participate in Mental Health Wellbeing groups across the district	Community Engagement Manager	Charities Groups Health partners	Attend and participate in meetings and initiatives promoted and delivered by the community sector whilst seeking to collaborate as appropriate	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meaningful engagement with mental health and wellbeing professionals and volunteers	 STATUS: Active
24	20	1 2 3 4	Assess impact on people and communities of the events and projects funded via support from SKDC	Community Grants and Funding Officer		Develop and implement an assessment method to gain feedback on SKDC funded projects	September 2024 onwards Activity will become ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A funding system that offers value for money and provides groups with the means to make significant impact within their own communities	 STATUS: Active
25	20	2 3	Continue to support the voluntary and community sector providing food/essentials in times of financial hardship to those in need through ring-fenced funding	Community Engagement Team	Foodbanks and other food support agencies and groups	Offer financial support annually to groups supporting residents with food and essential supplies at times of personal financial crisis	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food agencies able to continue to support people in need	 STATUS: Active

26	14	① ③	Signpost groups to LCVS to provide 'health checks' and assurance relating to the voluntary and community sector	Community Engagement Team	LCVS	Work with newly-formed groups to ensure effective governance is in place by referring them to LCVS for a 'health check'	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groups that have appropriate structures, policies and terms of reference to ensure sustainability and eligibility for funding	 STATUS: Active
27	19	①	Continue to build the database of voluntary and community sector groups operational within the district	Community Engagement Team		Creation of an eco-system of the groups and the types of support available within the community	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An effective overview of the VCS operating within South Kesteven and a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision	 STATUS: Active
28		② ③	Work in collaboration with Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) and SK Emergency Planning to ensure community engagement during emergency situations within the district	Community Engagement Manager	LRF SK Emergency Planning	Build on the success of the SK Community Hub to ensure groups can be 'stood up' if and when required. Responsive to need	As required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ability to respond effectively in an emergency situation where support from communities is required	 STATUS: Active
29		① ③	Continue to support other service areas across the Council with funding bids to enable project development and delivery	Community Engagement Manager Community Grants and Funding Officer	Other service areas	Responsive to need	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Successful bids to external funders	 STATUS: Active

30	14	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p>	Continue to promote funding and fund-raising opportunities offered by the Council to the voluntary, community and charity sectors	Communities Officer	Comms	Proactively publicise the funding offer available through the SK Community Fund and the fund-raising offer provided by LotterySK	Ongoing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased eligible applications to the SK Community Fund and LotterySK	 STATUS: Active
31	1	<p>3</p> <p>4</p>	Commemorate Remembrance	Armed Forces Officer	<p>International military associations</p> <p>Education establishments</p>	Engage international partners in commemoration activities to mark the 80th anniversaries of D Day and Arnhem	Annually	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Series of events and educational workshops delivered to raise awareness of shared heritage	 STATUS: Complete

“In most instances, the demographics of each community are [also] different. It follows that those living in each local community are in the best position to address local challenges. It also follows that the District Council’s Elected Members are key to providing insight into local challenges and aspirations. Their front-line knowledge and involvement are vital to the development of community”.

Source: Place-Based Community Development - Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes
Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet
Member for Leisure and Culture

SK Community Fund

Report Author

Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

✉ carol.drury@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To consider the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund which include amendments to grant levels and eligibility criteria. The proposed changes will allow for the Fund to re-launch for the 2026/27 financial year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Review the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund and provide comment.
2. Recommend to Cabinet that the delegation for decision making by the Chairs and, where necessary, Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be provided and that the proposed changes to the Fund's criteria are approved to allow for re-launch of the Fund for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting Communities
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 For 2026/27 the total for the SK Community fund is £200k which includes a growth bid of £100k which was approved as part of the 2026/27 budget report by Council at their meeting on 26th February 2026.
- 1.2 Eligibility and funding criteria for the 2026/27 scheme is outlined in this report and associated appendices

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report. The SK Community Fund is a discretionary scheme and the Council is able to determine appropriate eligibility criteria for both the Small Grants Fund and the Large Grants Fund.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.4 The SK Community Fund has been developed to support the communities of South Kesteven by means of making funding available to civil society groups and organisations within the district. The Fund is accessible to all within the eligibility criteria. It offers opportunity for groups within the community to advance opportunities and foster good relations between people who share a protected

characteristic and those who don't by supporting buildings, events and activities that bring people together.

- 1.5 The SK Community Fund is further supported by LotterySK and it is acknowledged that for some groups, particularly within faith communities, this creates a barrier to application. In such circumstances the Community Engagement Team will work with the group to determine alternative sources of funding and provide any necessary support.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The SK Community Fund has been in place since 2015. It is distributed, via application, to voluntary and community sector groups across four funding rounds each financial year.
- 2.2. The fund is currently allocated across two schemes:
 - **Small Grants Scheme: £100 - £2,000**
This is available to smaller groups with a maximum financial resource of £10,000. Groups can apply for 100% of project costs to the maximum £2,000
 - **Projects and Events Fund: £500 - £5,000**
Groups can apply for up to 80% of project/event costs to a maximum of £5,000. A minimum of 10% match funding is required, and the remaining 10% contribution can be in-kind contribution and volunteer time if relevant to the project or event.
- 2.3. Presently, the SK Community Fund supports capital expenditure only.
- 2.4. To date £855,651 of grants have been provided to Parish and Town Councils, voluntary, community, faith and sports-related groups across South Kesteven. The SK Community Fund is often used by groups to secure match funding for larger projects.
- 2.5. Decisions to fund applications are recorded and kept in a Decision Note, and details of awarded grants are published annually on the Council's website. This includes detail on the members of the panel present, any conflicts of interest and the reasons that applications are supported or not.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. A growth bid of £100k was agreed by Full Council on 26 February 2026 increasing the SK Community Fund to a total of £200,000. As it will be important for the Council

to ensure this amount of money is used to good effect and expended within the financial year, a review has taken place. It is also timely to refresh the governance arrangements around the SK Community Fund given that these have been in place since 2015.

3.2. It is therefore proposed that the Small Grants Fund remains in place, continuing to operate in the same manner save for two changes:

- To be eligible for support the maximum financial resource held by a voluntary or community group should be reduced to £5,000. This would ensure that funding is targeted to those community groups that have a genuine need and that newly established groups can be supported.
- The eligibility criteria be amended to include items requiring revenue funding. Small, newly formed groups often require financial assistance with basic running costs until they are established, e.g. utility bills, venue hire, office supplies, insurance premiums, volunteer training costs etc. Funding provided would be for one-off support and groups would be required to become self-sufficient as they become established.

3.3. Further information relating to the eligibility criteria, funding categories and making an application to the Small Grants Fund can be found at Appendix A and Appendix B.

3.4. It is proposed that a Large Grants Fund is introduced to replace the existing Projects and Events Fund with the maximum grant value being increased. It is further proposed that the groups and organisations eligible to apply should have financial resources of no more than £100,000. The minimum grant available would be £2,000 and the maximum £10,000 for community events and £20,000 for projects which support parish and community assets. Match funding of a minimum of 10% would be required against all large grants and applications could include in-kind contributions and/or volunteer time where appropriate and relevant.

3.5. The Large Grants Fund for projects which support parish and community assets would be open to applications from:

- Constituted voluntary or community groups or clubs
- Registered charities
- Charitable incorporated organisations (CIO)
- Community interest companies (CIC) and companies limited by guarantee
- Schools or PTFAs (but only for projects that benefit communities beyond the school and not for education costs or projects that only benefit the school itself)
- Scout, Guides, Cadet groups (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the group)

- Sports clubs (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the club)
 - Town and parish councils
- 3.6. Grants would be for projects with an expected lifespan of at least five years and would be available under the headings of:
- New buildings and repairs/refurbishment to existing buildings
 - Land, outdoor space, playgrounds, sports grounds, sports equipment
 - Indoor space
 - Community events and activities
- 3.7. Further information relating to the eligibility criteria, funding categories and making an application to the Small Grants Fund can be found at Appendix C and Appendix D.
- 3.8. It is further proposed that this element of the SK Community Fund also be opened to cover both revenue and capital costs. Whilst it is proposed that staffing costs remain excluded, allowing fees for sessional workers would enable the Fund to continue to support event costs.
- 3.9. Applications for recurring events would be required to have a significantly new or different aspect and applicants must also be able to evidence how such events will become self-sustaining.
- 3.10. As detailed within this report it is proposed that the Community Fund covers the provision of revenue and capital funding.
- 3.11. Revenue funding would be provided for activities where there is no lasting asset including events, performances and activities, or to cover the set-up costs of an organisation for example. Applicants would be expected to demonstrate the benefit that such activity supports the Council's priority of 'Connecting Communities'.
- 3.12. Costs would also be considered for activities such as fun days, coaching sessions, fetes, carnivals and festivals. Similarly, running costs for a group that puts on positive activities, e.g. venue hire, office/printing costs, volunteer expenses could be covered. Groups would however need to become self-supporting as the SK Community Fund does not support costs year after year.
- 3.13. Other activities could include the creation of social opportunities that help to prevent isolation and loneliness, therapeutic sessions such as community and dementia choirs, movement classes for older people, and the costs of training volunteers in topics such as safeguarding, data protection, first aid and food hygiene. All would help the voluntary and community sector to become self-sufficient.

- 3.14. The SK Community Fund currently has an Awarding Panel made up of the Chairs of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In the absence of a Scrutiny Chair, the relevant Vice-Chair is invited to attend Panel meetings.
- 3.15. No changes are proposed to the make-up of the Awarding Panel, but an appropriate delegation will need to be established and agreed by Cabinet.
- 3.16. In support of the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund, the Community Engagement Team will continue to host funding workshops and will also offer support through funding surgeries to take groups through the process of application.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Fund's criteria could remain unchanged. The proposed amendments, however, allow for increased opportunities which would greatly benefit civil society within South Kesteven.
- 4.2. UK Shared Prosperity funding has proven a need for grants which support larger projects hence the reasoning provided around the proposed introduction of the Large Grants Fund. Statistical information from the existing SK Community shows that, in the last two years, 69% of awards have been for grants of £2,000 and less, therefore providing evidence of need to continue the Small Grants Fund as proposed.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The recommended changes will improve opportunities offered by the SK Community Fund.
- 5.2. Establishing an appropriate delegation to allow for the decision-making authority of the Awarding Panel will ensure suitable governance.

6. Appendices

- 6.1. Appendix A – Small Grants Scheme – Eligibility Criteria (draft)
- 6.2. Appendix B – Small Grants Scheme – Making an Application (draft)
- 6.3. Appendix C – Large Grants Scheme – Eligibility Criteria (draft)
- 6.4. Appendix D – Large Grants Scheme – Making an Application (draft)

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

The SK Community Fund Small Grants fund is open to small or new groups that are involved in community projects and events that benefit the residents of communities in the district. Groups and organisations must demonstrate how their project or event will deliver wide benefit, contributing to the sustainability, vitality and well-being of the communities of South Kesteven and the Council's priority of Connecting Communities. Decisions on funding will take up to 12 weeks.

Who can we fund?

- constituted voluntary or community groups or clubs
- registered charities
- charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- community interest companies (CIC) and companies limited by guarantee
- schools or PTFAs (but only for projects that benefit communities beyond the school and not for education costs or projects that only benefit the school itself)
- Scout, Guides, Cadet groups (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the group)
- sports clubs (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the club).

To apply to the SK Community Fund your group or organisation must have:

- a written governing document or constitution
- a bank or building society account in the name of your group or organisation with at least two signatories who are unrelated and do not live at the same address
- relevant policies and procedures
- written endorsement from the [District Councillor](#) in whose Ward the project/event will take place.
- where possible, photographic evidence should be supplied with your application.

What we can fund

All projects must take place within South Kesteven and provide public benefit, which could be targeted at a specific demographic, or the community as a whole.

Grants are available to groups requiring funding of between £100 to £2,000 for community events and community projects through the Small Grants Fund. Groups and organisations eligible to apply should have financial resources which do not exceed £5,000.

Capital and Revenue funding is available through the Large Grants Fund.

Revenue funding is available for activities where there is no lasting asset including events, performances and activities or to cover the set-up costs of an organisation for example. Activities must be open to community participation. Revenue funding is provided as one-off support. Groups therefore need to evidence how they will become self-supporting as the SK Community Fund will not support costs year after year.

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

The programme will fund across four categories:

<p>New buildings and repairs/refurbishment to existing buildings.</p> <p>Building of new village halls, community halls, sports pavilions, Scout/Guide huts, etc and include the purchase of land (sports/Scout buildings must also be open to use by the wider community). Significant repairs to community buildings (must be owned or have a lease agreement with a minimum of 5 years remaining)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing, windows, doors, floors • Rewiring, insulation, solar panels, heat-pumps and associated professional, planning and installation costs especially where this improves the energy efficiency of the building • Re-tarmacking a community building car park or the development of new/additional car parking, that will benefit the building users • Refurbishment of toilets and changing rooms, especially to improve accessibility for all • New kitchen facilities to a venue, especially where this is to provide a community service such as lunch clubs, community cafes, etc.
<p>Land, outside space, playgrounds, sports grounds, sports equipment</p> <p>Projects must be for community spaces and community driven. Equipment cannot be funded for closed groups that have no access to facilities and equipment for communities wider than their own membership/setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens and orchards, storage sheds • Water systems, water butts, composters • Mowers and other gardening equipment (not consumables such as plants, seeds, sharpening, repairs, etc) – for community activity only • New/replacement play equipment - swings, roundabouts, skate ramps, climbing walls, slides, climbing frames • New or replacement safety surfacing e.g. under play equipment. • Outdoor gym, MUGA, etc. (but not simple repairs to existing equipment). • Acquisition of land and buildings for community use • Repairs to monuments and heritage assets • Access improvements to buildings and open spaces, riverbank enhancements • picnic tables, benches for community use.
<p>Indoor space</p> <p>Projects must be for the benefit of community spaces or for groups that provide community activity within such spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA and audio/visual systems, sound systems and their installation. • New hearing loop systems • New seating and/or tables for halls • Desks, chairs and physical items of office equipment (laptops, printers etc) that support set-up costs of new groups • Indoor leisure equipment such as bowls mats, new-age curling equipment etc.
<p>Community Events and Activities</p> <p>Recurring events and activities are required to have a significantly new or different aspect in order to be eligible beyond initial funding and applicants must also be able to evidence how such events will become self-sustaining.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community celebrations • Open-to-all sports events • Street festivals and community street markets • Arts and cultural events etc • Fun days • Fetes, carnivals and festivals

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants must have permission (where required) before applying to undertake any work on the buildings or on land not owned by them. If required, planning permission must be sought before applying.

We will require that, for funding sought for refurbishment projects applicants will need to:

- own the land or building, or
- have a lease on the building or land for a minimum of five years, or
- have an official letter from the land owner or landlord that states that you have their permission to carry out work on the building where the premises is secured on a long-term rental agreement (minimum 5 years).

Whilst match funding is not a specific requirement, South Kesteven District Council welcomes applications which include match funding, as this offers greater opportunity for the SK Community Fund to positively impact more of South Kesteven's residents and communities.

What cannot be funded

The SK Community Fund is not open to applications from parish and town councils, individuals, or to closed groups e.g. residents' associations, patient participation groups etc. (set up costs for new groups may be eligible). Applications from groups which require participants to pay a membership fee will only be considered if the project/event is open to the wider community.

Whilst the SK Community Fund can support some revenue costings – examples listed under What We Can Fund above - funding **cannot** be sought for staffing costs or project coordination costs. Fees for sessional workers brought in to support events (artists, writers, performers etc) will be considered under the Community Events and Activities category. Sessional worker fees do not include fees for existing or regular employees or owners of the commissioning agency.

Other projects, events and activities that will not be supported include:

- projects, events and activities that have already taken place or that are underway at the time of the application
- projects or events that are for private gain
- projects or events that are deemed to be within the 'business as usual' of groups and organisations.
- projects or events that have already received South Kesteven District Council funding (e.g. Coronation Community Orchard Fund, Food Support Fund, Section 106 etc).
- General appeals or sponsorship
- activities of a mainly political or religious nature, improvements to the fabric of church buildings, and their fixtures and fittings etc (**non-religious community activities**, held within a place of worship, may be eligible).
- carpeting and soft furnishings as part of building refurbishment.
- contingency funds, income deficits, bridging loans or security against a loan
- events primarily intended to pass on surplus income to other organisations, e.g. charity concerts, fund raising events and activities, costs of prizes/gifts etc
- mobile phones, tablets (e.g. iPads), defibrillators, public footpaths and roadways or projects related to highways (including village signs or speed signage/cameras etc) or any other County Council areas of responsibility.
- Event costs incurred for catering/refreshments/alcohol.

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

DRAFT

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Application Process

Please read this document prior to completing the application form.

Application is open on a rolling basis therefore groups and organisations are able to submit an application at any time. Application forms are available by contacting the Community Engagement Team on communityfund@southkesteven.gov.uk. When requesting an application form, please provide information relating to the project or event for which you are seeking funding.

The time period for decisions can be up to 12 weeks. Applicants should allow for this time frame when planning their project as grants will not be awarded retrospectively (i.e. for work or equipment already underway, purchased or completed or for events which have already taken place).

South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) has grant funding for community based and community led projects and events. This funding will be allocated by application to constituted community groups, charities and Community Interest Companies, within South Kesteven through the SK Community Fund.

Applications will be assessed based on how the project or event responds to a local need, the benefits for the community and on how the project or event contributes to SKDC's priority of Connecting Communities. Projects and events must demonstrate equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination and must evidence wide community support and participation.

It is important that all applicants note - **eligibility does not guarantee funding – the pot is finite and decisions of the Awarding Panel are final.**

We will not make more than one award in a financial year to the same organisation or group.

Previously funded projects must have been completed, all required completion documents received and closed off by SKDC prior to the submission of any subsequent application. If a project is not completed within the financial year the award is made (1st April - 31st March), no application for further funding can be made until the financial year after the project is completed and closed off.

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Application Process

Making an application

1. Applicants are required to provide all necessary documentation to support their application. This includes:
 - a completed application form
 - a copy of the governing document of the group (e.g. constitution, standing orders, community interest statement, memorandum and articles of association, operating rules etc)
 - copies of up-to-date bank statements for accounts held by the group (including accounts which hold reserves etc)
 - evidence of community need and support for the project/event (letters of support, surveys etc)
 - a copy of any lease or rental agreement held (minimum of 5 years remaining)
 - copies of two written quotes for each item of expenditure of £50 and above. The written quotes and estimates must display the relevant company names and addresses and be less than six months old. Your chosen quotation should be highlighted and should **exactly match the amount on your application form**. We will not accept invoices as a substitute for any required quotation
 - relevant policies and procedures
 - written endorsement of the [District Councillor](#) in whose Ward the project/event will take place
 - photographic evidence (where applicable)
2. Financial information provided along with any application is open to question by the Awarding Panel. The Panel reserves the right to question an applicant's non-commitment of funds if a bank statement shows sufficient funds are available to support a project without a grant being given. The Panel will also question a stated commitment of funds when there is insufficient evidence to show such funds are available to the applicant.
3. Applications for events at which performers or artists are commissioned must include evidence of performers/artists being at least provisionally booked along with costings of their participation in the event. This can be in the form of an email confirmation from the performer/artist. **No application will be considered without this evidence.**
4. It is unlikely that the Small Grants Fund will be able to provide grants for all potentially eligible applications. Therefore, we reserve the right to prioritise applications to achieve best value for money. We also reserve the right to decline applications that do not meet the stated criteria.

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Application Process

Once your application is received

5. On receipt of your application the Community Engagement Team will make an initial assessment to check its eligibility and that all the required information and documentation has been provided. A member of the Team may contact you to obtain missing information, documentation or to seek clarification regarding your application. The responsibility is on the applying organisation to ensure the application is complete and accurate.
6. The Community Engagement Team will aim to acknowledge receipt of your application within five working days of receiving it. This will be by email where you have provided an email address but will otherwise be by letter.
7. Eligible applications that are accompanied by the required supporting documentation will be put before the Awarding Panel for consideration. The Panel is a forum of elected members capable of decision making for community bids. Projects and events must provide wide community benefit and contribute to the sustainability, vitality and well-being of communities in the South Kesteven district.
8. The Awarding Panel will meet quarterly to review applications.
9. Failure to provide any of the required documentation and quotations will render the application ineligible.
10. Applications will not be considered without the endorsement of the relevant District Councillor(s).
11. We will not accept hand-written applications or applications made by a group on behalf of an individual or other, un-constituted group.
12. Applicants will be informed (usually by email) within five working days of the meeting taking place whether or not the Panel has recommended their project or event to receive a grant.
13. South Kesteven District Council's Awarding Panel's decision is final and cannot be changed (no appeals or discussions will be entered into).
14. Successful applicants will receive grant payments in two stages, with 75% of the grant being paid prior to commencement of the project or event and 25% following completion.

SK Community Fund

Small Grants Fund – Application Process

General conditions of funding

15. Grants awarded must be spent on the purpose stated in the application. If, for any reason, your circumstances change, there is any slippage in the stated timeline or you wish to vary the way in which you spend your grant, you are required to contact the Community Engagement Team to request written permission to do so.
16. Groups will only be able to draw down awards from the SK Community Fund when evidence of the success of any supporting grants from other funders has been provided.
17. Grants must be spent within a maximum of one year of an award being made (from the date on the grant offer letter).
18. In the event of a group or organisation ceasing to operate or failing to undertake or complete the project or event for which the grant was offered, South Kesteven District Council reserves the right to withhold payment or to seek its recovery.
19. Groups or organisations must ensure that the project or event operates within the requirements of all legislation and should ensure equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination in the delivery of the project or event.
20. Financial support provided by South Kesteven District Council should be acknowledged on all relevant printed publicity, on websites and in information given to the press. Relevant guidance will be provided to applicants at the time of a grant offer being made.

On completion of your project

21. A Project Completion Form must be completed and submitted by the applicant **within three months** of the project/event completion date (as stated in the application) in order to draw down the final 25% payment.
22. You will also need to provide relevant invoices and bank statements showing payments made.
23. Groups or organisations that do not complete and return a satisfactory Project Completion Form and provide the required documentation within the agreed timetable will not be eligible to draw down the final 25% of any grant awarded and may be required to return the funding paid to them at the outset of the project. **Groups that do not fulfil this obligation will not be considered for future funding** (no appeals or discussions will be entered into).

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

The SK Community Fund Large Grants fund is open to rolling Expressions of Interest. Eligible submissions will be invited to make full application. Decisions on funding will take up to 12 weeks.

Who can we fund?

- constituted voluntary or community groups or clubs
- registered charities
- charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- community interest companies (CIC) and companies limited by guarantee
- schools or PTFAs (but only for projects that benefit communities beyond the school and not for education costs or projects that only benefit the school itself)
- Scout, Guides, Cadet groups (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the group)
- sports clubs (but only for projects that are open to the wider community and not solely for the benefit of the club)
- town and parish councils.

To apply to the SK Community Fund your group or organisation must have completed an eligible **Expression of Interest** form and have:

- a written governing document or constitution
- a bank or building society account in the name of your group or organisation with at least two signatories who are unrelated and do not live at the same address
- relevant policies and procedures
- written endorsement from the [District Councillor](#) in whose Ward the project/event will take place.
- where possible, photographic evidence should be supplied with your application.

What we can fund

To apply to the SK Community Fund – Large Grants Fund groups must have submitted an initial Expression of Interest Form and have been invited to apply. All projects must take place within South Kesteven and provide public benefit, which could be targeted at a specific demographic, or the community as a whole.

Grants are available to groups requiring funding of between £2,000 to £10,000 for community events and up to £20,000 for community projects through this Fund. Groups and organisations eligible to apply should have financial resources which do not exceed £100,000.

Capital and Revenue funding is available through the Large Grants Fund.

Revenue funding is available for activities where there is no lasting asset including events, performances and activities or to cover the set-up costs of an organisation for example. Activities must be open to community participation. Revenue funding is provided as one-off support. Groups therefore need to evidence how they will become self-supporting as the SK Community Fund will not support costs year after year.

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

The programme will fund across four categories:

<p>New buildings and repairs/refurbishment to existing buildings.</p> <p>Building of new village halls, community halls, sports pavilions, Scout/Guide huts, etc and include the purchase of land (sports/Scout buildings must also be open to use by the wider community). Significant repairs to community buildings (must be owned or have a lease agreement with a minimum of 5 years remaining)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing, windows, doors, floors • Rewiring, insulation, solar panels, heat-pumps and associated professional, planning and installation costs especially where this improves the energy efficiency of the building • Re-tarmacking a community building car park or the development of new/additional car parking, that will benefit the building users • Refurbishment of toilets and changing rooms, especially to improve accessibility for all • New kitchen facilities to a venue, especially where this is to provide a community service such as lunch clubs, community cafes, etc.
<p>Land, outside space, playgrounds, sports grounds, sports equipment</p> <p>Projects must be for community spaces and community driven. Equipment cannot be funded for closed groups that have no access to facilities and equipment for communities wider than their own membership/setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens and orchards, storage sheds • Water systems, water butts, composters • Mowers and other gardening equipment (not consumables such as plants, seeds, sharpening, repairs, etc) – for community activity only • New/replacement play equipment - swings, roundabouts, skate ramps, climbing walls, slides, climbing frames • New or replacement safety surfacing e.g. under play equipment. • Outdoor gym, MUGA, etc. (but not simple repairs to existing equipment). • Acquisition of land and buildings for community use • Repairs to monuments and heritage assets • Access improvements to buildings and open spaces, riverbank enhancements • picnic tables, benches for community use.
<p>Indoor space</p> <p>Projects must be for the benefit of community spaces or for groups that provide community activity within such spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA and audio/visual systems, sound systems and their installation. • New hearing loop systems • New seating and/or tables for halls • Desks, chairs and physical items of office equipment (laptops, printers etc) that support set-up costs of new groups • Indoor leisure equipment such as bowls mats, new-age curling equipment etc.
<p>Community Events and Activities</p> <p>Recurring events and activities are required to have a significantly new or different aspect in order to be eligible beyond initial funding and applicants must also be able to evidence how such events will become self-sustaining.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community celebrations • Open-to-all sports events • Street festivals and community street markets • Arts and cultural events etc • Fun days • Fetes, carnivals and festivals

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants must have permission (where required) before applying to undertake any work on the buildings or on land not owned by them. If required, planning permission must be sought before applying.

We will require that, for funding sought for refurbishment projects applicants will need to:

- own the land or building, or
- have a lease on the building or land for a minimum of five years, or
- have an official letter from the land owner or landlord that states that you have their permission to carry out work on the building where the premises is secured on a long-term rental agreement (minimum 5 years).

A minimum of 10% match funding must be provided for all applications made to this Fund.

What cannot be funded

The SK Community Fund is not open to applications from individuals, or to closed groups e.g. residents' associations, patient participation groups etc. (set up costs for new groups may be eligible). Applications from groups which require participants to pay a membership fee will only be considered if the project/event is open to the wider community.

Whilst the SK Community Fund can support some revenue costings – examples listed under What We Can Fund above - funding **cannot** be sought for staffing costs or project coordination costs. Fees for sessional workers brought in to support events (artists, writers, performers etc) will be considered under the Community Events and Activities category. Sessional worker fees do not include fees for existing or regular employees or owners of the commissioning agency.

Other projects, events and activities that will not be supported include:

- projects, events and activities that have already taken place or that are underway at the time of the application
- projects or events that are for private gain
- projects or events that are deemed to be within the 'business as usual' of groups and organisations.
- projects or events that have already received South Kesteven District Council funding (e.g. Coronation Community Orchard Fund, Food Support Fund, Section 106 etc).
- General appeals or sponsorship
- activities of a mainly political or religious nature, improvements to the fabric of church buildings, and their fixtures and fittings etc (**non-religious community activities**, held within a place of worship, may be eligible).
- carpeting and soft furnishings as part of building refurbishment.
- contingency funds, income deficits, bridging loans or security against a loan
- events primarily intended to pass on surplus income to other organisations, e.g. charity concerts, fund raising events and activities, costs of prizes/gifts etc
- mobile phones, tablets (e.g. iPads), defibrillators, public footpaths and roadways or projects related to highways (including village signs or speed signage/cameras etc) or any other County Council areas of responsibility.
- Event costs incurred for catering/refreshments/alcohol
- Parish and town councils must demonstrate that all other funding mechanisms have been fully explored and exhausted prior to consideration of an application for the Community Fund. The Fund will not consider projects or events from parish councils, parish meetings or town councils that are parish-specific and should be supported through the Precept process.

This page is intentionally left blank

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Application Process

APPLICATION TO THIS FUND IS BY INVITATION ONLY. Applicants must have submitted a successful expression of interest prior to making an application.

Application is open on a rolling basis. The time period for decisions can be up to 12 weeks. Applicants should allow for this time frame when planning their project as grants will not be awarded retrospectively (i.e. for work or equipment already underway, purchased or completed or for events which have already taken place).

If you have been invited to apply to this fund, please read this document prior to completing the application form.

South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) has grant funding for community based and community led projects and events. This funding will be allocated by application to constituted community groups, charities, Community Interest Companies, town and parish councils, parish meetings within South Kesteven through the SK Community Fund.

Applications will be assessed based on how the project or event responds to a local need, the benefits for the community and on how the project or event contributes to SKDC's priority of Connecting Communities. Projects and events must demonstrate equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination and must evidence wide community support and participation.

All applications to the Large Grants Fund must be supported by a minimum of 10% match funding.

Applications from groups or organisations that are either exempt from or registered for VAT will only be eligible to request the net cost of their project or event.

Re-claimable VAT will not be accepted as a means of match funding.

It is important that all applicants note - **eligibility does not guarantee funding – the pot is finite and decisions of the Awarding Panel are final.**

We will not make more than one award in a financial year to the same organisation or group.

Previously funded projects must have been completed, all required completion documents received and closed off by SKDC prior to the submission of any subsequent application. If a project is not completed within the financial year the award is made (1st April - 31st March), no application for further funding can be made until the financial year after the project is completed and closed off.

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Application Process

Making an application

1. Applicants are required to provide all necessary documentation to support their application. This includes:
 - a completed application form
 - a copy of the governing document of the group (e.g. constitution, standing orders, community interest statement, memorandum and articles of association, operating rules etc)
 - copies of up-to-date bank statements for accounts held by the group (including accounts which hold reserves etc)
 - annual accounts where applicable
 - evidence of community need and support for the project/event (letters of support, surveys etc)
 - a copy of any lease or rental agreement held (minimum of 5 years remaining)
 - copies of two written quotes for each item of expenditure of £2,000 and above. The written quotes and estimates must display the relevant company names and addresses and be less than six months old. Your chosen quotation should be highlighted and should **exactly match the amount on your application form**. We will not accept invoices as a substitute for any required quotation
 - relevant policies and procedures
 - written endorsement of the [District Councillor](#) in whose Ward the project/event will take place
 - photographic evidence (where applicable)
2. Financial information provided along with any application is open to question by the Awarding Panel. The Panel reserves the right to question an applicant's non-commitment of funds if a bank statement shows sufficient funds are available to support a project without a grant being given. The Panel will also question a stated commitment of funds when there is insufficient evidence to show such funds are available to the applicant.
3. Applications for events at which performers or artists are commissioned must include evidence of performers/artists being at least provisionally booked along with costings of their participation in the event. This can be in the form of an email confirmation from the performer/artist. **No application will be considered without this evidence.**
4. It is unlikely that the Large Grants Fund will be able to provide grants for all potentially eligible applications. Therefore, we reserve the right to prioritise applications to achieve best value for money. We also reserve the right to decline applications that do not meet the stated criteria.

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Application Process

Once your application is received

5. On receipt of your application the Community Engagement Team will make an initial assessment to check that all the required information and documentation has been provided. A member of the Team may contact you to obtain missing information, documentation or to seek clarification regarding your application. The responsibility is on the applying organisation to ensure the application is complete and accurate.
6. The Community Engagement Team will aim to acknowledge receipt of your application within five working days of receiving it. This will be by email where you have provided an email address but will otherwise be by letter.
7. Eligible applications that are accompanied by the required supporting documentation will be put before the Awarding Panel for consideration. The Panel is a forum of elected members capable of decision making for community bids. Projects and events must provide wide community benefit and contribute to the sustainability, vitality and well-being of communities in the South Kesteven district.
8. The Awarding Panel will meet quarterly to review applications.
9. Failure to provide any of the required documentation and quotations will render the application ineligible.
10. Applications will not be considered without the endorsement of the relevant District Councillor(s).
11. We will not accept hand-written applications or applications made by a group on behalf of an individual or other, un-constituted group.
12. Applicants will be informed (usually by email) within five working days of the meeting taking place whether or not the Panel has recommended their project or event to receive a grant.
13. South Kesteven District Council's Awarding Panel's decision is final and cannot be changed (no appeals or discussions will be entered into).
14. Successful applicants will receive grant payments in two stages, with 75% of the grant being paid prior to commencement of the project or event and 25% following completion.

SK Community Fund

Large Grants Fund – Application Process

General conditions of funding

15. Grants awarded must be spent on the purpose stated in the application. If, for any reason, your circumstances change, there is any slippage in the stated timeline or you wish to vary the way in which you spend your grant, you are required to contact the Community Engagement Team to request written permission to do so.
16. Groups will only be able to draw down awards from the SK Community Fund when evidence of the success of any supporting grants from other funders has been provided.
17. Grants must be spent within a maximum of one year of an award being made (from the date on the grant offer letter).
18. In the event of a group or organisation ceasing to operate or failing to undertake or complete the project or event for which the grant was offered, South Kesteven District Council reserves the right to withhold payment or to seek its recovery.
19. Groups or organisations must ensure that the project or event operates within the requirements of all legislation and should ensure equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination in the delivery of the project or event.
20. Financial support provided by South Kesteven District Council should be acknowledged on all relevant printed publicity, on websites and in information given to the press. Relevant guidance will be provided to applicants at the time of a grant offer being made.

On completion of your project

21. A Project Completion Form must be completed and submitted by the applicant **within three months** of the project/event completion date (as stated in the application) in order to draw down the final 25% payment.
22. You will also need to provide relevant invoices and bank statements showing payments made.
23. Groups or organisations that do not complete and return a satisfactory Project Completion Form and provide the required documentation within the agreed timetable will not be eligible to draw down the final 25% of any grant awarded and may be required to return the funding paid to them at the outset of the project. **Groups that do not fulfil this obligation will not be considered for future funding** (no appeals or discussions will be entered into).

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26

WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT TITLE	OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMIITEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE PRIORITY
6 May 2026				
Crisis and Resilience Fund Update	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	Following the publication of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Scheme guidance on 15 January 2026, this report sets out the details of the CRF guidance and work in progress to develop the required delivery plan to utilise the three-year funding.		Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Welfare & Financial Advice Team 25/26 outturn	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	To provide the Committee with an update regarding the Household Support Fund outturn for 2025/26, and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities		Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Customer Service 25/26 outturn	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	This report sets out the proposed South Kesteven District Council		Enabling economic opportunities

		Crisis Resilience Fund scheme for 2026/27 to 2028/29.		Effective council
--	--	---	--	-------------------

Unscheduled Items

Report title	Issue	Originated	Corporate Priority
Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue 'Firestoppers' Presentation	To update the Committee on the work of the Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue team	10/12/2025	Connecting Communities
Disabled Facilities Grant update	To update on the Disabled Facilities Grant		Connecting Communities Effective Council
Crime Disorder and Local Partnership Working update - Presentation	To receive a Crime Disorder and Local Partnership working update and presentation from Public Protection, Housing and Lincolnshire Police		Connecting Communities Effective council

116

The Committee's Remit

The remit of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be to work alongside Cabinet Members to assist with the development of policy and to scrutinise decisions in respect of, but not limited to:

- Allotments
- Anti-social behaviour, community safety and local policing
- Benefit claims
- Community engagement & cohesion
- Community funding and volunteering
- Community right to bid

- Community well-being
- Customer services
- Disabled facilities grant
- Equality and diversity
- Parish and town council liaison
- Public conveniences

- Safeguarding and individual wellbeing
- Shop front designs and funding
- Street furniture

This page is intentionally left blank