

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 16 JULY 2026

2.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Anna Kelly Chairman
Councillor Pam Byrd Vice-Chairman

Councillor Kyle Abel
Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Rhys Baker
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor David Bellamy
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Patsy Ellis
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Ben Green
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Zoe Lane
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Richard Litchfield
Councillor Nikki Manterfield

Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Rob Shorrock
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Sue Woolley

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager
Emma Powley, Interim Democratic Services Manager

16. Public Open Forum

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

17. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:

Helen Crawford
Steven Cunnington
Graham Jeal
Jane Kingman
Bridget Ley
Paul Martin
Penny Robins
Ian Stokes

It was noted that due to the apology submitted by Councillor Paul Martin, the motion at item 9c of the agenda would be not debated in his absence in accordance with the constitution.

18. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Richard Litchfield declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 9b of the agenda having an active interest in a public house referred to in Dry Doddington, referenced in the motion.

Having declared the interest, Councillor Litchfield stated that he would leave the meeting for the duration of debate on the item and would rejoin once the item had concluded.

19. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2026 at 12 noon were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the AGM held on 21 May 2026 at 2pm were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments: Item 14 – Question 14 – Councillor Matt Bailey asked the question not Councillor Max Sawyer as printed. The amended version of the minutes had been published on the website.

20. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements.

The Chair congratulated Lucy Bonshor – Democratic Services, on her 40 years of service with South Kesteven District Council.

Karen Bradford as Head of Paid Service reported that Kirkby Underwood Parish Council had recently received resignations from 4 of its 5 members and was no longer quorate. A minimum of 3 members was needed for the Council to conduct business and hold meetings. Where a Parish Council is inquorate and unable to operate, the District Council can make temporary appointments to enable the Parish Council to progress urgent business.

Making temporary appointments to Town and Parish Councils is delegated to the Chief Executive and any appointments are required to be reported to the next meeting of Council for information.

The Head of Paid Service advised members that she had used those powers to make two temporary appointments to Kirkby Underwood Parish Council. Councillor Nick Robins and County Councillor Martin Hill had been appointed on a temporary basis until two new Parish Councillors have been elected or co-opted and taken up office.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture announced that three of Grantham's parks had been given the Green Flag award.

The Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement noted that a contract had been signed to allow a banking hub to operate within the Stamford Arts Centre which was anticipated to open in Autumn 2026.

The Leader of the Council spoke on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and thanked the officers for their hard work on the 'Best for Greater Lincolnshire' proposal that had been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was explained that this was one of four proposals put forward, the Lincoln City proposal having been accepted by Government. This 'horseshoe' arrangement was the least favourable option of the four proposals and had only the support of one of the seven districts and Cabinet would, as a collective, be looking to challenge the outcome whether through lobbying or through legal means and will be looking to the other Lincolnshire Leaders about a joint approach to challenge the decision.

The Chair of the Council informed the meeting that convention at the Authority does not to permit debate on communications. However, as Chairman of the Authority one of the roles under Article 5, Para. 5.2(b)(iii) was 'to ensure that the Full Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the Local Community in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.' It was evident to all that the Government announcement on LGR was an extraordinary event and a matter of genuine concern to the Local Community.

Whilst there was no Council Procedure Rule which expressly forbade debate on announcements, discretion was exercised by Chairman permitting Members to

debate the communication by the Leader on LGR in the normal manner subject to a 90 second time limit for each Member.

Councillor Ben Green stated that no one wanted the Lincoln 'doughnut' and was, he considered to be, gerrymandering. He requested everyone unite to ensure the identity of Kesteven was not erased.

Councillor Phil Dilks commented that he supported the comments of the leader and thanked the Chief Executive. LGR was supposed to bring decision making closer to the people represented in the area, but this would not be the outcome of the selected proposal.

Councillor Sarah Trotter echoed her thanks to Officers, specifically the Chief Executive and her team. The model was pushed by a Labour MP rather than listening to needs of residents in Lincolnshire with concerns being raised about neglect of the rural areas expressing a need to stand up for local residents.

Councillor Peter Stephens commented that he agreed with the Leaders' comments and explained that the reorganisation had been ordained by the Labour Government.

Councillor Paul Wood reported that he believed the selected proposal was the worst of the proposals put forward. He suggested that the concerns of the residents had been ignored and the proposal would not save money as suggested by the government minister.

Councillor Richard Cleaver commented that it was unacceptable proposal, and the County had been neglected for too long by Whitehall; the decision was wrong and should be reversed.

Councillor Rhys Baker explained that the proposal would not fulfil the obligations of the English Devolution Bill; the creation of a new Unitary, the second largest in the Country, would further exacerbate the concept of the 'Whitehall knows best' approach and ignoring the wishes of the local people.

Councillor Elvis Stooke considered that the proposal and Lincolnshire as a rural council had been let down by the Government and the unique needs of the County were being ignored.

Councillor Mark Whittington echoed the comments said across the chamber and that this was a decision was favourable to cities and not addressing issues faced in rural areas. It was suggested that rather than save money, this would increase costs across the County with the integration of services due in part to reorganisation.

Councillor Philip Knowles expressed his disappointment with the anti-democratic nature of the proposal that would take local politics further away from residents.

Councillor Tim Harrison reported that residents were originally informed that Local Government Reorganisation would simplify Councils, strengthen local identity and

improve services. South Kesteven would be swallowed up by an Authority stretching 100 miles north with fewer accountable representatives. He requested that the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer be tasked with immediately obtaining independent legal advice demanding the Governments full reasoning and evidence and to challenge the decision.

Councillor Charmaine Morgan stated that the proposal was an autocratic, direct attack on local democracy by the Government and the elected representation would be significantly reduced across the regions. She stated that Lincolnshire did not have the infrastructure or the funding to mitigate against the change and the effects it would have on residents.

Councillor Lee Steptoe commented that he did not oppose the abolition of two-tier local government and the move to unitary authorities in principle. However, he had concerns about the time scales and as a result he was opposed to LGR and suggested that Councillors lobby the new Prime Minister and the new Secretary of State.

Councillor Ian Selby stated that the consultation had been meaningless and noted that there had been no public vote on this. He seconded the motion of Councillor Tim Harrison to obtain legal advice on the decision- making process.

Councillor Rhea Rayside reported that she agreed with the sentiments of her colleagues across the Chamber and was very disappointed with the proposal. She expressed her concerns for the staff and residents affected by the decision and questioned why, having been asked repeatedly to avoid boundary changes, the Government had approved a proposal that would require multiple boundary changes.

Councillor Matt Bailey commented that he was not prepared to accept the decision as final and would support a Judicial Review of the Government's decision and asked for the leadership to discuss with other district councils and the county council whether a joint challenge should be mounted.

Councillor Rob Shorrock suggested that the information that had been received from Government should be considered and digested prior to seeking a Judicial Review. Firstly, he suggested that Officers of the Council explore the realities of implementation of the proposal and secondly discuss any relevant findings from Officers at a future meeting of the Council.

Councillor David Bellamy observed that the decision was convenient to the Labour Government, as local protest groups would be under a Labour-controlled authority.

Councillor Paul Stokes commented that there was a need to have a sensible and measured reaction to the proposal and suggested that residents had not been listened to and the decision process had been put together by someone with little understanding of Lincolnshire as a whole.

Councillor Pam Byrd commented that from a practical point of view, she had some concerns about the budgets specifically about the east side of Lincolnshire with regards to who would be responsible for managing repairs to the road networks and the flood defences.

The Chair of the Council thanked everyone for their contributions and stated that she was assured that matter, being of such importance, would be discussed at a future meeting of the Council.

21. Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Grant

The Cabinet Member for Housing proposed the report to consider the acceptance of the additional Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (WH-SHF) grant of £999k which the Council has been awarded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), with the associated Council match funding requirement plus the necessary budget increase to the HRA Capital Programme.

In response to questions asked, the following was noted:

- The deadline for which the grant to be spent is March 2027
- People living in private-rented accommodation could apply for assistance through the private sector grant scheme

Having been proposed and seconded and following a vote it was AGREED:

DECISION:

That Council

- a) Recommend that Cabinet accept the additional £999k Warm Homes Social Housing Fund grant which has been awarded to the Council by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.**
- b) Note there is a match funding requirement attached to the grant.**
- c) Upon acceptance of the grant approve a budget increase to the HRA Capital Programme of £1.598m and approve the transfer of £599k from the HRA Priorities Reserve in order to comply with the match funding condition.**

22. Annual Review of Overview and Scrutiny 2025/2026

Councillor Gareth Knight proposed the report that provided a summary of the work undertaken by all Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2025/2026. Councillor Gareth Knight thanked Councillor Bridget Ley for her work on the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC).

The Leader thanked all members appointed to the various scrutiny committees and expressed his appreciation of the work undertaken.

Thanks were also given to Officers of the Council for their contributions and the Democratic Services Officer for assisting in drafting the report.

In response to a question raised, it was noted that there was some cross over between the Scrutiny Committees noting that a review of the Constitution was underway to address the structure of the Committees.

Having been proposed and seconded, and following a vote it was AGREED:

DECISION:

That Full Council:

Notes the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.

Note: The meeting adjourned for a short break before reconvening. Councillors Emma Baker and Mark Whittington left the Council Chamber and did not return

23. Members' Open Questions

Question 1

In response to a question from Councillor Murray Turner, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste explained that in June 2026, SKDC emptied around 670,000 receptacles for waste, including bins and caddies. Missed bins were up but there were 70,000 more bins being collected this year. Missed bins accounted for 0.00132% of collections.

Question 2

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Selby to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ashley Baxter congratulated Harrowby United having won the South Kesteven Charity Cup.

Question 3

In response to a question from Councillor Gareth Knight to the Leader of the Council, asking if LGA membership was 'good value' for money, Councillor Ashley Baxter commented that the LGA provided training and advice to members and officers, noting that there was room for improvement with regards to spend and value for money within the organisation.

Question 4

In response to a question from Councillor Sue Woolley to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, Councillor Rhys Baker reported that he had not been contacted by any member of the Reform-led Lincolnshire County Council to discuss if there was any more SKDC can do in supporting the reduction of fly-tipping since the introduction of a refuse booking-system.

Question 5

In response to a question from Councillor Matt Bailey to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Stokes congratulated the Lincolnshire Tamil Community and other groups whose cultures are celebrated across South Kesteven and thanked Councillor Bailey for his continued support of the Lincolnshire Tamils.

Question 6

In response to a question from Councillor Sarah Trotter to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Virginia Moran stated that she was unaware why SKDC were endorsing the businesses of 'Fraser and Fraser' and 'Auction House' when other genealogists and auction companies were available. However, she would endeavour to get an explanation as to how the decision was made and would relay the information to Councillor Trotter in due course.

Question 7

In response to a question from Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Virginia Moran reported that regarding the concerns about Circles' Houses in Multiple Occupancies (HMOs) in the region, all the properties had been visited and inspected. The Chief Executive explained that a further report would be presented in due course. The report would explain that all properties have been re-inspected with regards to those with category 1 and 2 concerns, with all having passed the re-inspection.

Question 8

In response to a question from Councillor Ben Green to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ashley Baxter explained that the term 'Kesteven' had been in existence for more than 1000 years and that any successor authority should be given a name that is easily understandable but the term 'Kesteven' would continue to be used regardless whether it is part of the title of a new local authority or not.

Question 9

In response to a question from Councillor Max Sawyer to the Leader of the Council, with regards to SKDC taking on the Stamford's St Martin's Park, Councillor Ashley Baxter stated that the development was not straightforward and there were some frustrations that St Martin's Park was not completed and not fully operational.

Question 10

In response to a question from Councillor Tim Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ashley Baxter noted that an audit of the internal decision-making process at Lincolnshire County Council had been requested with regards to the ring-fenced £2 million for Grantham. It had been requested that a private internal audit report of

Lincolnshire County Council be published for openness and transparency purposes, but this had yet to be done.

Question 11

In response to a question from Councillor Robert Leadenham to the Chair of the Council, Councillor Anna Kelly agreed that the event given by the British Army Engagement Team was very helpful and inspiring and a very worthwhile event.

Councillor Rob Shorrock proposed a motion without notice referenced at Section 4.10.18 of the Constitution asking that the confidential internal audit report of Lincolnshire County Council be published and shared.

The Monitoring Officer stated that he did not believe this was a proper use of the provision within the Constitution; the motion had not been submitted and nor did it relate to an item on the agenda. It was explained by the Monitoring Officer that Councillor Rob Shorrock could seek to bring a motion to suspend the relevant procedural rules under the constitution and to bring a motion via that mechanism, but would need the support of the chamber to do so.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the motions that were already on the agenda would be heard in the order that they had been received. Once debate had concluded on those motions, Councillor Rob Shorrock was advised to move a motion without notice to suspend the relevant procedure rule (13.1 of the Council's Constitution procedure rules). Should this get a majority vote, the motion could then be debated and voted on.

Question 12

In response to a question from Councillor Charmaine Morgan to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ashley Baxter confirmed that he alongside Councillor Morgan) wished to thank Gareth David MP and all the three MPs that represent the area for their engagement with regards to the concerns that residents have relating to the impact of community population growth and the effect that it may have in on NHS services.

24. Notices of Motion

25. Councillor Ben Green

Councillor Ben Green proposed the following motion:

A. This Council notes that:

1. Local Government Reorganisation is being advanced by Central Government with the stated aim of replacing two-tier local government with larger unitary authorities.
2. If reorganisation proceeds, South Kesteven District Council is likely to become part of a much larger unitary authority.

3. Proposals under consideration include a successor authority comprising North Kesteven, South Kesteven and South Holland.
4. Lincolnshire is not merely a compass-point geography, but a county of deep historic identities, including the historic Parts of Kesteven, Holland and Lindsey.
5. Cabinet has already provided the Council's formal response to Government concerning the suggested name for a successor authority as part of its representations on the detailed contents of the Structural Changes Order. This motion does not seek to overturn that decision rather it provides an opportunity for the wider body of Members to express their view on this issue and have that view communicated to Government.

B. This Council believes that:

1. Local Government Reorganisation risks weakening local democracy by replacing councils rooted in recognisable communities with larger and more remote institutions.
2. The suggested financial savings from reorganisation remain uncertain and must be weighed against transition costs, disruption to hard-working council officers, and the potential loss of local knowledge.
3. South Kesteven, North Kesteven and South Holland are not administrative blank spaces to be tidied away by Whitehall. They are places with histories, loyalties, civic inheritance and names which matter.
4. Any successor authority should have a name that reflects the historic geography, identity and civic inheritance of the area it serves.
5. A generic compass-point name such as "South Lincolnshire Council" would not adequately reflect the historic identities of Kesteven and Holland.
6. Should this Council's 'Best4GreaterLincolnshire' LGR proposal be favoured by Government, the name of the successor authority comprising North Kesteven, South Kesteven and South Holland should be "Kesteven and Holland Council."
7. Should either of the 'Greater Lincolnshire Local Government Reorganisation - People, Place, Prosperity' or the 'Your Lincolnshire' LGR proposals be favoured by Government, the name of the successor authority of which South Kesteven will form part should be "Kesteven, Holland and Lindsey Council"

C. This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Place on record its regret at the direction of travel towards Local Government Reorganisation and the potential abolition of district councils such as South Kesteven.
2. Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to make them aware that further to the Council's formal representation on this issue (which remains unchanged), a majority of Members present at this meeting of Full Council have expressed the view that any successor authority should be named as set out in Paras. B(6)-B(7) of this motion.
3. Invite other relevant councils to consider making the same representations to Central Government.

The motion was seconded.

Members debated the motion.

A procedural motion ‘that the question be now put’ was proposed and seconded. The Chairman rejected the motion on the grounds that there were a number of Councillors who were waiting to speak to the motion.

Members continued to debate the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion **FELL**.

Note: Councillors David Bellamy, Barry Dobson and Richard Litchfield left the meeting.

26. Councillor Sarah Trotter

Councillor Sarah Trotter proposed the following motion:

Council notes that:-

- Public houses are often among the last remaining community facilities in rural settlements, playing a vital role in reducing social isolation, supporting local employment, encouraging tourism and strengthening community cohesion.
- The loss of a public house can have a significant adverse impact on the social and economic wellbeing of towns and villages across South Kesteven.
- South Kesteven has experienced a number of pub closures in recent years, with some sites subsequently proposed for residential development.
- Once a pub is lost, it is often impossible to replace – particularly in villages, where it may be the last remaining meeting place.
- Recent losses and closures affecting our communities include the Houlton Arms, Oasby (within my Ward); the Cross Swords, Skillington; the Springfield Arms, Grantham (closed prior to 2024); and the Wheatsheaf Inn, Dry Doddington (closed February 2023).
- Since April 2017, public houses have lost their previous permitted development rights: a change of use away from a pub, or its demolition, now requires a full planning application, giving councils and communities a formal opportunity to object. National planning policy and the Localism Act 2011 (via Assets of Community Value) provide further mechanisms to help protect valued community pubs.

Council believes that:-

- Public houses which serve as valued community facilities should be retained wherever possible.

Council therefore resolves to:-

- Reaffirm its support for the retention and protection of valued public houses and other community facilities throughout South Kesteven.
- Request that the Executive considers commissioning Officers to develop and make available guidance for Parish and Town Councils on the options available to help safeguard valued public houses – including planning policy protections, nomination of Assets of Community Value, community ownership opportunities, and relevant grant funding – to support our communities in their fight to save our great British pubs.
- Request that the Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the matter as part of its work programme and receive a report on progress within three months.

Councillor Ben Green declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in the motion as a member of Skillington Parish Council working group who were seeking to get an Asset of Community Value notice for Cross Swords Public House in Skillington.

Councillor Ben Green submitted an amendment to insert the following bullet point after 'Council notes that':

- "Between 2010 and 2024, the pub industry experienced a steep and sustained decline under successive Conservative Governments, with thousands of pubs and bars lost across Britain; and this decline has accelerated since 2024 as increases in employers' National Insurance, statutory employment costs and business-rates burdens under the Labour Government have placed further pressure upon already vulnerable pubs."

An alteration to the amendment was proposed and seconded as follows:

- "Between 2010 and 2024, the pub industry experienced a steep and sustained decline with thousands of pubs and bars lost across Britain; and this decline has accelerated since 2024 as increases in employers' National Insurance, statutory employment costs and business-rates burdens have placed further pressure upon already vulnerable pubs."

Upon a vote on the amended motion, the motion **FELL**. Members debated the substantive motion.

Councillor Rob Shorrocks submitted an amendment to insert the following bullet to add to 'this Council resolves to':

"To explore working with, amongst others, Pub is The Hub to promote co-operative based pubs in local communities".

Having been agreed by the proposer of the motion, the additional wording above was **AGREED** and became part of the substantive motion.

Having been proposed by the Chairman and seconded, the following procedural motion was **CARRIED**:

That the meeting continues beyond three hours in duration for a further 10 additional minutes.

Members debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was **CARRIED**.

27. Councillor Paul Martin

In the absence of Councillor Paul Martin, the motion was not heard.

28. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 5.34pm