

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.