

# Minutes

**Cabinet**  
**Tuesday, 10 March 2026**



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

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**The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter** (Chairman)  
**The Deputy Leader: Councillor Paul Stokes** (Vice Chairman)

## **Cabinet Members present**

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste  
Councillor Richard Cleaver, Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement  
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning  
Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

## **Non-Cabinet Members present**

Councillor Tim Harrison  
Councillor Ian Selby, Chairman of the Council  
Councillor Elvis Stooke

## **Officers**

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive  
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer  
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)  
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)  
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection  
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing Options)  
Chris Prime, Communications Manager  
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager  
Gary Andrew, IT Services Manager  
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer  
Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager  
Charles James, Policy Officer  
Jessica Morris, Interim Planning Policy Manager  
Richard Shaw, Principal Design Officer

## **111. Public Open Forum**

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

## **112. Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Philip Knowles.

Councillor Ashley Baxter explained and apologised that he would need to leave midway through the meeting.

### **113. Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interests.

### **114. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

### **115. Contract Award for Microsoft Subscription Agreement**

#### Purpose of report

To consider approving the contract award for the Microsoft Subscription Agreement.

#### Decision

**That Cabinet approves the award of the contract for the Microsoft Subscription Agreement at an amount of £540,000 for a period of 3 years commencing on 1 April 2026.**

#### Other options considered

Option 1 - moving to an alternative environment. This option was discounted for a variety of reasons; these reasons included:

- all laptops, servers, and applications would have required full rebuilds or replacement. Many third-party software solutions used by the Council were not compatible with or tested on alternative provider platforms. Migration to a new environment would have required significant external support, meaning periods of significant service downtime. The introduction of such a change would have led to significant operational and security risks.
- Option 2 - Not renewing the contract. This option was also not deemed to be viable as these licences provided critical business systems, including email, teams and file access, meaning officers and councillors would be unable to perform core duties. This option would also introduce a significant security risk as devices would lose security protection, creating unacceptable cyber security threat.

#### Reasons for the decision

A Microsoft Subscription Agreement was required to ensure the Council can continue to use Microsoft applications, which include Windows Server software, Email, Word and Teams applications. Microsoft Intune and Defender applications provide device management and cyber security on all corporate laptops, tablets and mobile devices.

Changing to another provider would have been a massive undertaking meaning all devices would have needed to be rebuilt, including servers and laptops. Servers would also need rebuilding, and most software suppliers do not test on non-Microsoft environments. Days of downtime and much external support would have been needed to attempt this scale of change.

**Note:** The order of the agenda was varied in order that the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account reports could be considered earlier in proceedings.

## **116. General Fund Finance Update Report: Quarter 3 (April to December) 2025**

### Purpose of report

To present the Council's forecast 2025/26 financial position as at end of December 2025 with specific regard to the General Fund Revenue Budget and the General Fund Capital Programme.

### Decision

**That Cabinet noted the forecast 2025/26 outturn position for the General Fund Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of December 2025.**

### Other options considered

Cabinet should have oversight of Council budgets, therefore, the option of not producing a monitoring report was discounted.

### Reasons for the decision

Members should be kept updated on the financial position of the Authority, because effective budget management was critical to ensuring financial resources are targeted towards the Council's priorities. Monitoring enables early identification of variations against the plan and timely corrective action.

The General Fund Revenue Forecast Outturn Position Quarter 3 showed the General Fund in a strong financial position, with an underspend of £361,000. A number of variances could be seen in Table 2 of the report.

Savings were being made on fuel and utilities, and through increases in income for green waste subscriptions, planning fees, and Stamford Cattlemarket car park, amongst others. It was noted that savings on fuel and utilities not guaranteed into the future. Cost challenges in the report could be accommodated in the overall underspend.

The General Fund Capital Forecast Outturn Position showed a £1.261 million underspend. Budget carry forward would be considered by the Council at a later date.

Collection performance for Council Tax was at a good rate.

## **117. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Update Report: Quarter 3 (April to December) 2025**

### Purpose of report

To present the Council's forecast 2025/26 financial position as at the end of December 2025. The report covers the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme.

### Decision

**That Cabinet noted the forecast 2025/2026 outturn position for the HRA Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of December 2025.**

### Other options considered

Cabinet should have oversight of Council budgets, therefore, the option of not producing a monitoring report was discounted.

### Reasons for the decision

Members should be kept up to date regarding the financial position of the Authority. Effective budget management was critical to ensuring financial resources were targeted towards the Council's priorities. Monitoring enabled early identification of variations against the plan and timely corrective action.

## **118. MHCLG Statutory Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire: Response by South Kesteven District Council**

### Purpose of report

To consider South Kesteven DC's response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Statutory Consultation on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire.

### Decision

**That Cabinet:**

- 1. Delegates authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to determine the form and content of, and to submit, South Kesteven District Council's response to the Government's statutory consultation on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire.**
- 2. Approves publication of the Council's response to the statutory consultation following the conclusion of the consultation period.**

### Other options considered

The Council was under no obligation to submit a consultation response. However, the statutory consultation would be used to inform the final government decision on LGR. Therefore, if the Council did not submit a response, it would lose an opportunity to influence the government on LGR.

The Chairman of Council was content that call-in need not apply to this decision – the call-in waiver notice is available at <https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s50103/LGR%20Consultation%20Urgency%20Notice.pdf>

### Reasons for the decision

The Government had invited the Council to participate in the statutory consultation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Lincolnshire. The statutory consultation would be used to inform the final government decision.

SKDC was a consultee and had been invited to participate in the consultation. Cabinet's favoured way forward was the same as the proposal put forward in November 2025 at both Full Council and Cabinet (The Kesteven and South Holland proposal).

MHCLG have reminded authorities to take care through the recommended code of practice for publicity. Local authorities cannot campaign for a preferred proposal.

Consultation responses would be submitted by Executives/Cabinets. SKDC's Constitution contained a delegation to individual Cabinet Members to respond to government consultations. The final wording would be aligned with North Kesteven District Council's response.

The proposal endorsed by Full Council in November 2025 included a full options appraisal, which would be included in the consultation response.

## **119. Local Plan Grant**

### Purpose of report

To endorse the acceptance of a Local Plan Grant from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and to approve the creation of the appropriate revenue budget to enable the grant to be allocated and spent.

### Decision

#### **That Cabinet:**

- 1. Endorses the acceptance of the Local Plan grant funding of £227,962.50 Local Plan Grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.**

- 2. Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer to establish the appropriate revenue budgets to enable the Local Plan funding to be allocated in accordance with the grant conditions.**

#### Other options considered

Whilst the Council could return the funds to government, the additional work still needed to be carried out, and this would have placed additional pressures on the Council's budgets; this option had therefore been discounted.

#### Reasons for the decision

Work needs to be carried out regardless of whether or not the Council uses the funding. By using the funding and not returning it to government, this would lessen the burden on the Council's own budgets.

A Local Plan review was due by the end of 2026. There have been many changes in recent years to the planning system including a significant increase in the amount of housing growth the Council was expected to plan for. The government, in December 2024, increased housing requirements for Local Authorities across the country. The housing requirements for South Kesteven increased from approximately 650 dwellings per annum to 895 dwellings per annum. As a result, the Council has had to review its local plan housing allocations to ensure that this increased housing need can be properly planned for.

The government had recognised this pressure on local authorities by making additional funding available to support the additional work incurred. This funding would go towards the overall cost of £600,000 needed to deliver the Local Plan.

## **120. Climate Action Plan for South Kesteven**

#### Purpose of report

To present to Cabinet the finalised Climate Action Plan for South Kesteven.

#### Decision

#### **That Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the adoption of the Climate Action Plan for South Kesteven.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Director for Housing and Projects in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste to approve minor amendments to the South Kesteven Climate Action Plan.**

### Other options considered

The Council could have chosen not to publish a Climate Action Plan as there was no statutory expectation for public authorities to develop or publish carbon reduction strategies. However, this would not have been in line with the Council's stated ambition for carbon reduction ahead of the government target of 2050.

The Council could have chosen not to publish or report on the projects highlighted within the draft Climate Action Plan. However, publication and regular reporting on the Climate Action Plan would increase the visibility of various projects addressing carbon mitigation and adaptation from across the Council.

### Reasons for the decision

Publishing a Climate Action Plan helped to clarify the specific projects the Council intended to implement, whilst continuing towards its ambitions both to meet its own interim net-zero carbon target, but also to contribute to national carbon reduction targets and adaptation strategies.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- Progress across all political groupings was being made on a previously declared climate emergency. The South Kesteven Climate Action Strategy was already in place; the Climate Action Plan built on this work.
- Work already delivered included solar panels at leisure centres, the upgrade of street lighting to LED bulbs, swimming pool covers and a programme of biodiversity improvements.
- These projects had a tangible financial payback –for LED lighting this was over a period of four years.
- This Plan provided the framework to allow the Council to continue delivering achievements over an extended period.
- Until quotes were received for different projects, it was very difficult to identify costs, in particular, the material costs. The projects that ended up being funded would utilise available funding (for example the Climate Action Fund) and rely on grants made available by government.
- This was not a 'to do' list, but a list of useful projects. Cabinet approved a list of potential projects, rather than committing to a spending programme.
- The Plan had been considered by Environment OSC on two occasions.
- There was no legal requirement to have a Climate Action Plan.
- An update on projects would be provided twice yearly.
- Officers had created an accurate map of trees on SKDC properties and land. There was, however, no way of directing what happened to every tree in the district, landowners can make decisions related to trees that are on their land (subject to any Tree Preservation Orders).

## **121. Biodiversity Action Plan for South Kesteven**

### Purpose of report

The South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan had been developed in response to the Biodiversity Duty for all public authorities (excluding parish councils). The new Plan would report on the actions South Kesteven District Council would take to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district as well as deliver Biodiversity Net Gain as the Local Planning Authority.

### Decision

#### **That Cabinet:**

- 1. Notes the Biodiversity Duty for all public authorities and requirements to report on actions and progress.**
- 2. Approves the adoption of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan.**
- 3. Delegates to the Director of Housing and Projects, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, the approval of minor amendments to the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan as new Government guidance emerges.**

### Other options considered

It was a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 that all local authorities (excluding parish councils) and local planning authorities must publish a biodiversity report. Therefore, the option to 'do nothing' has been discounted.

### Reasons for the decision

The Environment Act 2021 has strengthened the Biodiversity Duty of local authorities and as a result, it has become the legal obligation of South Kesteven District Council as a both a public authority and local planning authority to develop and implement a Biodiversity Action Plan.

Big steps had been taken to improve South Kesteven's biodiversity, including (but not limited to), the Witham Sleas Blue Green Corridor, the Green Flag status of the three parks in Grantham, and the 'Make Space for Nature' project. The Council had partnered with the Woodland Trust for future projects.

The Action Plan had been considered by Environment OSC, who recommended it forward to Cabinet, with feedback (which had been included within the final report).

## 122. Tenancy Strategy

### Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031, which was recommended by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 February 2026.

### Decision

#### **That Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the adoption of the Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031 subject to the outcome of the consultation with tenants.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing and Projects to make minor alterations and amendments to the Policy post adoption as required by changes to regulations and expectations by the Regulator for Social Housing.**

### Other options considered

The option of not reviewing or updating the Tenancy Strategy was considered. This option was discounted as it would have risked non-compliance with statutory requirements and would not reflect current legislation, policy guidance, or local housing pressures.

### Reasons for the decision

The Tenancy Strategy provided an up-to-date, legally compliant framework that supported the Council's housing objectives and promoted sustainable, balanced communities. Adopting the Strategy would ensure compliance with the Localism Act 2011, which required all local housing authorities in England to publish a Tenancy Strategy to set the framework for which Registered Providers of social housing should follow when developing their own tenancy related policies.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- The Strategy balanced security and stability for tenants with the need to make better use of limited housing stock.
- It supported consistency and fairness across providers and reflected current legislation, local housing need and wider corporate priorities.
- Consultation was underway with Council tenants. If this consultation suggested any major changes to the Strategy, then this report would return to Cabinet. The report was being presented to this meeting of Cabinet as the results of the tenants' survey should now have been finalised, but there had been a poor response rate. Therefore, it was decided to circulate the survey to all tenants where an email address was known (which was just over half of Council tenants). No major changes were envisaged.
- The tenants' survey was promoted on the Council's website, as well as via emails and social media. Officers were about to commence a tenant census

with residents with the aim of increasing the number of email addresses held on record.

- Officers would not formally write to tenants inviting them to take part in a survey, but they would ensure it was promoted in Skyline, the magazine produced for tenants.
- A workshop was held with the Housing OSC on 7 January 2026, where this Strategy was presented for comments.

### **123. Revisions to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

#### Purpose of report

To recommend that Cabinet reviewed the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and agrees to carry out a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks.

#### Decision

##### **That Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the public consultation of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) available at Appendix 2 of the report.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning & Growth, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the SCI document, in the interests of clarify and accuracy prior to its publication for consultation.**

#### Other options considered

To not review and update the SCI and continue to use the existing document was an option. However, the existing SCI did not reflect current requirements set out in legislation or regulations. The Council was also required to review the SCI every five years. The do-nothing option had therefore been discounted.

#### Reasons for the decision

The Council was required to prepare a SCI and to subsequently review that document every five years. Whilst it was not mandatory to consult on the draft document, it was good practice to do so.

The SCI sets out the Council's commitment to business, residents and stakeholders and provided a framework on how it consulted with the community. The Council was legally required to consult on a range of planning matters.

The SCI sets out this legislative requirement along with additional steps the Council would take. The outgoing document was five years' old.

The SCI provided transparency in the Council's approach and ensured consultation was a two-way process between residents/stakeholders and the Council. The public

consultation would start on 13 March 2026 for a period of six weeks and would be published on the Council's website.

## **124. Sport and Physical Activity Strategy**

**Note:** *The agenda order was varied; the Design Code Statutory Consultation was to be the penultimate item.*

### Purpose of report

To provide a refreshed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for 2026 - 2031.

### Decision

**That Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves and adopts the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2026 – 2031.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture to make any minor changes required (such as grammar and layout) once the Policy is implemented.**

### Other options considered

The Strategy played a pivotal role in working towards the ambitions set out in the Council's Corporate Plan (2024-27). Therefore, the option to 'do nothing' had been discounted.

### Reasons for the decision

The current Strategy had been in place since 2021 and was due to expire in 2026.

The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy would provide a basis for the Council to deliver on its ambition to increase health and wellbeing outcomes across South Kesteven.

The Strategy had been considered by Culture and Leisure OSC on 3 February 2026; the feedback received had been considered and then included in the Strategy before Cabinet members.

Gratitude was expressed to Beth Goodman for her efforts in producing this Strategy.

## **125. Body Worn Video Policy**

### Purpose of report

To consider adopting the Body Worn Video Policy.

## Decision

**That Cabinet approves and adopts the Body Worn Video (BWV) Policy.**

## Other options considered

The Council could have decided not to adopt a Policy and continue the current use of BWV, via enforcement officers, mainly for car parking enforcement work only. However, it was decided to reject this option and adopt a bespoke Policy.

## Reasons for the decision

This Policy had been developed to ensure the appropriate use of BWV by officers within South Kesteven District Council. The use of BWV aimed to enhance personal safety, reduce incidents of abuse or aggression, provide an accurate record of events, and increase transparency and accountability.

The Council had not had a BWV Policy in previous years. BWV was only used by SKDC Enforcement Officers when necessary, and in line with various legal considerations and requirements. Its aim was to safeguard residents and staff.

## **126. Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Cabinet Forward plan was noted.

## **127. South Kesteven Design Code Statutory Consultation**

**Note:** *Councillor Ashley Baxter left the Council Chamber and did not return. Councillor Paul Stokes took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.*

## Purpose of report

To seek agreement for a six-week consultation with minor amendments delegated to the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director.

## Decision

**That Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the draft South Kesteven Design Code for the purpose of public consultation, available at Appendix 4 of the report.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning & Growth, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the Design Code SPD, in the interests of clarify and accuracy prior to its publication for consultation.**

### Other options considered

To not produce a Code and continue to use the existing Guide. However, the existing Guide was not a Code and therefore does not reflect current requirements set out in legislation or regulations (the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) (15F in Schedule 7)).

### Reasons for the decision

The Council was part of a pilot Local Planning Authorities Design Code ('the Code') Pathfinder Fund. It is therefore vital to commence a consultation, which will contribute to enabling good quality, well designed developments being permitted within the District.

The following points were highlighted during the introduction of the report, and during debate:

- The Council had been chosen to take part in the Design Code Pathfinder Programme and had received funding which built on and strengthened the Council's design guide.
- The Code was a key tool in sharing future characteristics for new developments within South Kesteven. It outlined the design process and principles which would be encouraged across all sites.
- In compiling the document, there had been extensive engagement with members, developers, officers and parishes. This engagement had taken place in person, through the SK Youth Council, and market stalls.
- Key themes of the Code were nature, climate change, places for people, parking and character. These themes were prioritised throughout the document.
- One piece of feedback from officers and developers was to have fewer 'musts' within the document and make it more concise. A 'must' was something that the Code made mandatory, whereas other suggestions within the Code were desirable design elements.
- The Code highlighted the best examples of suburbs and neighbourhoods within South Kesteven, which helped to define the character of the district.
- It was expected that further amendments would be made following the public consultation. The government had set a deadline of 30 June 2026 for the final submission of the Code.

## **128. Open Questions from Councillors**

### Councillor Tim Harrison to members of the Cabinet

Councillor Harrison asked whether Cabinet members would meet with him to discuss and consider:

1. Assessing whether planning tools such as an Article 4 direction (under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2025) would be appropriate to Grantham to manage future concentrations of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs)

2. A mapping exercise so that the Council could properly understand the distribution of shared housing across Grantham.
3. Ensuring there was a clear multi agency process in place to enforce against properties that persistently committed anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Phil Dilks outlined that Cabinet members worked hard to address community cohesion issues, and recognised the concerns raised. Councillor Dilks drew attention to the issue of HMOs being discussed at various meetings of the Council, most recently at Full Council in February 2026.

Council had also agreed to recruit additional staff to ensure that HMOs met the requirements of their licences.

Article 4 directions could be used to remove certain permitted development rights for small HMOs between 3-6 people. Planning permission was not required for an HMO of that size. Authorities that had imposed Article 4 directions have done so for a variety of reasons; the common driver seemed to be where HMOs were concentrated. This was evident in cities such as Brighton and Nottingham, where there were high concentrations of students.

In South Kesteven there were currently 70 licensed HMOs. Councillor Dilks was not convinced that an Article 4 direction was the way forward; the Council would have to demonstrate planning harm.

Currently the Council's Planning team were engaged with preparing the Local Plan, meaning there were no resources in the budget for the considerable work needed to explore whether an Article 4 use was justified. The work may require external consultants, who would take time to collate evidence, which would recommend whether or not to go for an Article 4 direction.

It was worth bearing in mind that if the Secretary of State was not in agreement with an Article 4 direction, they could reject this request (or amend it).

Councillors Dilks and Stokes agreed to discuss this further with Councillor Harrison.

The meeting closed at 5:13pm.