

Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 31 March 2026, 2.00 pm



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Lee Steptoe (Chairman)
Councillor Zoe Lane (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Susan Sandall

Other Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Ian Selby

Cabinet Members

Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member Housing
Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member Corporate Governance and Licensing

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service, Housing
Mark Rogers, Head of Technical Services,
Phil Swinton, Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance)
Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager, Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing
Megan White, Corporate Projects Officer
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

64. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

65. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gloria Johnson. The Chairman stated that he and the Vice-Chairman had received an email from Councillor Kyle Abel giving his apologies for the meeting.

66. Disclosure of Interest

One Member raised an issue in respect of the garage sites report but it was confirmed that there was no interest to disclose.

67. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026 were proposed, seconded and agreed.

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

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed Members that there would be an all Member, in person, briefing at 5pm on Tuesday 14 April 2026 in relation to Asylum Seekers Dispersal.

69. New Build and Acquisitions Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing updated the Committee on the new build and acquisition pipeline. Developments at Larch Close, Grantham (21 Units) were progressing and work had started at Wellington Way (11 Units), Market Deeping.

Other schemes were progressing and were either in pre-construction or pre-application phases.

The Council continues to have a hybrid approach to purchasing and building its affordable housing to meet the needs of residents with an overall positive and active programme.

One Member asked if there were still tenants in properties at Bourne Road, Colsterworth and it was confirmed that one property was still tenanted. Another Member asked about accommodation for large families and how this was managed to which the Director of Housing and Projects responded.

The Committee noted the report.

70. Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the regular report which updated the Committee in respect of the recent status and activity in the South Kesteven District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Services.

There had been an increase in Homelessness case figures from January to February. Active homelessness cases were at 224 with 57 being in temporary accommodation.

Rough sleeping continued to be a challenge faced by all the District Councils and although seven rough sleepers were reported in January in South Kesteven this figure would have been higher if not for the provision of the night shelter in Grantham. Change 4 Lincs Outreach Teams conducted three weekly outreach sessions in the early hours to attempt to engage with all those who were rough sleeping in the SKDC area.

From April 2026 the Outreach service would be locally delivered by in house roles within South Kesteven. It was noted that 22 individuals had accessed the night shelter during the winter period with 14 being successfully supported into more permanent accommodation through collaborative partnership working by SKDC with Living Concepts. Had the night shelter not been utilised the Council would have incurred approximately £34,000 in costs for nightly paid accommodation over the same period.

SKDC's partner, Living Concepts was now operating as a supported housing provider, delivering accommodation in Grantham for individuals with identified support needs. This integrated provision enabled a flexible and inclusive response to a wide range of housing and support requirements. Although the service was newly launched, it was anticipated that the approach would help reduce gaps in service provision, strengthen engagement with service users and improve communication between partners.

One Member made reference to the "allowed" camp site at Kesteven Road, Stamford. It was stated that the Council did not "allow" people to camp there and the Officer indicated that they could give the Member more information outside the meeting.

Another Member made reference to alternative initiatives and referenced pods that had been supplied in coastal areas. The Head of Service, Housing stated that alternative initiatives were always being looked into and it was stated that pods had been looked at but these were not cost effective for this area. New and innovative ways of tackling rough sleeping were constantly being looked at. Reference was made to the success of the night shelter and ways to open the shelter all year round were being reviewed.

The Head of Service, Housing stated that the service was moving away from reactivity towards a more preventative modal approach to look holistically at the service.

Further discussion followed in respect of extending the time that the night shelter was open and work was on going with the Ark. It was stated that the months the night shelter was open would be extended but other more cost effective ways would also be continued to be looked into as there was a cost implication of keeping the night shelter open all year. More preventative measures in respect of homelessness were being considered.

More comments were made in respect of the homelessness figures and it was stated that “trends” were not easy to track, however, the Head of Service, Housing would look at what data could be included in the next report to the Committee.

Questions were raised about the use of HMO’s for temporary accommodation and also number of veterans who presented as homeless to which the Head of Service, Housing replied.

The report was noted and Officers thanked for the work that they undertook in respect of the homelessness function.

71. Garage Site Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report which updated the Committee on the Council’s district wide garage site stock condition survey which was currently being undertaken. There were a variety of garage buildings which presented several challenges and opportunities to the Council in terms of repair, maintenance and management to possible redevelopment. Currently there were 830 individual garage units. The survey was progressing with several sites currently being reviewed internally as they had been identified for further feasibility work. The Council had been successful in securing Homes England funding to contribute toward the cost of the stock condition survey and the feasibility work. A further report would come to the Committee once the survey work was complete.

A question was asked about the number of garages still in use. It was stated that the survey would find out this information. The garages were originally built when cars were smaller and under utilised garage sites represented potential opportunities for new housing development.

One Member made reference to the maintenance of some of the garages which had been disappointing. It was stated that routine maintenance was still being carried out.

Another Member made reference to the cost of renting a council garage which could be considered small compared to renting a private garage. It was felt that the garages represented an under used resource which was under appreciated.

Members noted the update.

72. Housing Performance Data February 2026

The Committee received the Housing Performance data up to the end of February 2026; each area was presented by the relevant Housing Officer.

Repairs Call Handling

The Head of Technical Services stated that the performance in this area was on target.

Reactive Repairs – All Repairs

The overdue number of repairs had significantly reduced from 2276 in March 2025 to 1264 in February 2026. Emergency Repairs were a key priority and were always prioritised and completed. There had been a strong performance in emergency repairs, however non-emergency repairs were below target.

The target to complete repairs was reducing from 40 days to 31 days which matched feedback from tenants that the Council was delivering a faster repairs service.

Reactive Repairs In-house

Members were informed that two thirds of repairs were delivered by in-house Teams. Emergency repairs performance was healthy with action plans in place behind each area. Non-emergency repairs needed to improve performance and work was being done to maximise productivity with jobs being booked at the right time with better diary management.

Reactive Repairs - Sureserve

It was stated that emergency repairs were key, especially in respect of heating and Sureserve performed well in respect of emergency repairs. In respect of non-emergency repairs the Council was working closely with all reactive repairs contractors to make sure appointments were being received and that the data was being inputted into the Council's systems so assurances could be given in respect of jobs completed and there was tighter contract management control.

Reactive Repairs - Other contractors

More focus was being taken in respect of the contract management for the Council's three main contractors and that systems were updated with appointments and work completed to improve performance in areas which were currently shown as red.

Damp and Mould

Inspections were ahead of target and overdue repairs had reduced down to 53. Managing appointments better would help bring the non-emergency repairs figures down and this area was currently being focused on. The average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs was reducing significantly down to 22 days.

Voids

Management of voids was a head of target with the average void time on all voids down to 55 days. The target that had been set for the year was 80 days, going forward the proposed target for next year was 60 days. Benchmarking against Housemark put the Council in the medium quartile.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction in respect of repairs was green although the figures had dropped slightly. The target for next year would be raised as the service needed to keep improving.

Planned Works

Planned works fed in to how satisfied a tenant was with the condition of their home. At the end of February 72% of planned works had been completed. Validation surveys had been completed which had slowed work down. Work was now being balanced against the budgets available to maximum the work that could be delivered against the budget available. It was hoped that the numbers would increase from 72% by the end of the financial year.

The Head of Technical Services gave assurances that all non-decent properties would be completed.

Asset Management

Work was being undertaken to make sure all properties were decent by the end of the financial year. Currently there were 12 outstanding properties where there was no data and stock condition surveys were being carried out.

Decarbonisation work in respect of decent homes was continuing to improve the EPC rating to C or above.

Stock Condition Survey

The percentage of properties with a stock condition survey completed within five years stood at 95% which was over the target of 90%. Three attempts to access properties were made before support from Housing to gain access was requested. Of the number of properties with a survey over five years old 155 of the total figure were down to access issues with the property. Although the percentage of the programmed annual stock surveys were shown as red these were increasing towards the target. Any properties that were unable to have a survey completed this year would be programmed for the following year. There were no category 1 health and safety surveys outstanding.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for the great work being undertaken especially in respect of voids.

One Member questioned why non-emergency repairs were below target and the reason for this to which the Head of Technical Services, stated it was a combination of budget constraints, new contractors being appointed and contract management of diaries. Reference was made to the recent Repairs and Management Policy that had been introduced which created a delay especially with backlogged repairs. The Head of Technical Services assured the Committee that the average time for repairs was reducing.

A further question was asked in respect of repeat visits regarding the same repairs, how were these managed and monitored and budget implications. It was stated that any financial risk was worked through in collaboration with the Finance Team and these would be reported to the Finance and Economic OSC.

The Head of Technical Services stated that quality assessments were carried out and also feedback from the tenant satisfaction surveys were taken into account in respect of repair work.

Further questions were asked about identified issues, had damp and mould issues increased, were apprentices being trained in house to help with any deficit in skills to which both the Director of Housing and Projects and the Head of Technical Services, replied. A further question was asked in respect of emergency repairs and the lead in time to which the Head of Technical Services, responded that emergency repairs were prioritised within 24 hours and dealt with to make safe.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Technical Services, and their team for the work undertaken in respect of repairs.

Allocations and Lettings Call Handling

The Head of Housing stated that the percentage of call handling was consistently over the 80% target.

Housing Options

There had been an increase in the number of people in temporary accommodation which was inline with the number of new homelessness approaches. A piece of work was being undertaken to look at the numbers of rough sleepers and how to better engage with them as often they had a number of complex needs.

The Change4Lincs funding would be ending at the end of March 2026. Two new Outreach Support Workers would be appointed to support the homelessness and rough sleeper function specifically within the South Kesteven area.

Allocations

There had been a rise in the number of complete housing register applications waiting for assessment, the oldest application waiting assessment was dated

January 2026. Although the number shown was 304 it was stated that this would include applications that had missing information that had been requested.

Offers made during the month had increased in February with properties being advertised increasing since December 2025. Overall it was a positive picture.

Bedroom need by Band as at 16 March 2026

Demand remained for one bedroom accommodation and the Council worked with partners, the private sector and HMO's to help to accommodate this demand.

Tenancy Management

Reference was made to the Anti-Social Behaviour figures (ASB) and the results received from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey in which ASB had scored low. Tackling ASB was a complex area and the Action Plan looked at how this areas was being addressed.

Bench marking was carried out against other authorities in respect of performance in this area with the number of cases stable. Due to the change in Right to Buy (RTB) legislation in respect of discounts, the number of applications remained low to non-existent.

Tenancy checks at six weeks and nine months remained over target and there had been no evictions in January and February. The number of MESNE accounts were down to seven.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and her team for the work undertaken in this area.

One Member asked about the location for where properties were most requested and the Head of Service, Housing stated that this was something that could be looked at and brought before the Committee.

➤ **Action**

To include the location of where accommodation was requested the most.

A further question was asked about the process when applying on line to which the Head of Housing replied. The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that temporary support was available to help with capacity in respect of the number of outstanding applications.

The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that unfortunately tenants did not regularly check the portal to see if further information was required for them to submit which held up Officers progressing applications.

Further discussion followed about support in place to help support completion of an application on the portal.

One Member asked where the most amount of rough sleepers tended to be located. The Head of Housing indicated that this varied between Grantham, Stamford and Bourne and a piece of work was being undertaken in respect of rough sleeper location.

Further discussion followed about communication and contact with rough sleepers to which the Head of Service, Housing responded.

The Chairman asked whether the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) had been instrumental in the changes to Change4Lincs. It was stated that the decision regarding the changes in the Change4Lincs set up had been made prior to LGR. It was noted that there had been a lot of changes since the Change4Lincs service was first implemented seven years ago and demands and the service delivery was shaped more now by local needs than the previous model.

Housing Compliance

Legionella, Asbestos, FRA and Smoke/Co remained at 100%. There had been a gradual increase in compliance in respect of EICR. Currently gas now stood at 27 non-compliant properties with 13 of these properties having appointments scheduled within the next eight days.

Compliance – FRA Remedial Actions

Since the report had been written there were now 69 medium outstanding items and 242 low outstanding items. The number of gas remedial actions stood at 43, these were low level remedials not category 1 or 2 levels.

There was a huge amount of work that went on in the background to bring the remedial actions to a close.

A question was asked about the safety aspect of the work to which the Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance) replied.

Members noted the report.

(An adjournment took place between 3:45 – 4:01)

73. Corporate Enforcement Policy Update - Private Sector Housing

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing presented the report which amended the Corporate Enforcement Policy specifically in respect of

Appendix C - Private Sector Housing Approach to Investigation and Enforcement (Appendix 2 of the report) due to changes in legislation.

The changes proposed to the Corporate Enforcement Policy would enable the Private Sector Housing Team to carry out their functions as set out in legislation. The updates within the document primarily related to the financial penalties matrix that was used to calculate penalties for breaches of the relevant legislation. It had been necessary to revise the statutory guidance due to changes within the law. The Renters Rights Act 2025 would come into force on 1 May 2026 and provided additional civil penalties that may be imposed by the local housing authority; in order to impose the penalties the Council was required to have a policy or matrix in place setting out how the penalties would be calculated. The Corporate Enforcement Policy therefore needed to be amended to take account of the new legislative requirements. It was noted that future updates would be likely due to secondary legislation which would require the Policy to be amended again. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing thanked the Environmental Health Manager – Environment and Private Sector Housing, Tom Amblin-Lightowler for all his hard work in amending this section of the Corporate Enforcement Policy.

The Vice-Chairman asked if the changes made to the Policy were in respect of the new Renters Rights Act that was coming into effect on 1 May 2026.

The Environmental Health Manager – Environment and Private Sector Housing stated that yes some of the new penalties and offences were due to the Renters Rights Act where civil penalties rather than prosecutions would be undertaken. Some of the new offences were not in the existing matrix and there were some existing offences under the previous legislation that had carried over to the new legislation which now had maximum penalties changed. Recently there had been draught legislation that had been put before Parliament in March that would come in to effect on 1 May 2026 which were existing penalties in breach of the Housing Act 2004 which have been aligned to £40,000 instead of £30,000. The Policy had been changed to address the new penalties brought in, together with new offences and corresponding penalties. New guidance in respect of statutory guidance that the Council must follow gave a starting point for each offence as indicated by Government. This was in conflict with the Council's previous policy which had no set starting point. The Policy had been updated with existing penalties in line with the new guidance, existing penalties to the new penalty amounts and to bring the Policy in line with those new penalties.

The Chairman stated that in simple terms the Enforcement Policy was being amended to bring the Council in line with what was contained within the Renters Rights Act 2025. The Environment Health Manager, Environment and Private Sector Housing stated it was a tidying up exercise to enable the Council to have the ability to carry out its legislative functions as contained within the Renters Rights Act 2025.

A comment was made by one Member in relation to the benefits but it was stated that this was in relation to private sector housing not social housing.

The proposed amendments would aid Officers in carrying out their roles in respect of private sector housing.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed to recommend the amended document to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation

That the Housing OSC recommends that Cabinet approves the amendments to Appendix C – Private Sector Housing Approach to Investigation and Enforcement as part of the Corporate Enforcement Policy.

74. Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

The Director of Housing and Projects presented the report which gave further details from the presentation made at the last Committee meeting. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Survey was a mandatory requirement placed on Social Landlords by the Regulator of Social Housing to comply with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard of the Social Housing Regulation Act (2023). The results of the survey were submitted to the Regulator who published them in an annual report which analysed the results for social landlords with 1,000 or more homes. The Survey had been undertaken in two waves and had been carried out by Acuity on behalf of the Council.

The results for Wave 1 had been presented to the Committee in October and the report before Members included Wave 2 figures and the overall annual results. A total of 550 responses had been received across both waves of the survey plus a further 32 partially completed responses which the Council were also required to submit as part of its TSM submission. There were 131 surveys completed online and 451 by telephone, giving a total of 582 which was enough to give a representative view from tenants across the Council's housing stock.

There were 12 mandatory questions which ensured that results were consistent across all landlords to allow the Regulator to undertake benchmarking.

The survey results were presented at Table 1 of the report and showed a comparison between each of the two waves. The table showed positive movement in 12 of the 15 areas surveyed. The most significant reduction in results was the percentage of people satisfied that the Council keeps communal areas clean and maintained. This had been referenced at the last Committee when it was noted that the Council had undertaken an exercise where tenants were required to remove personal items stored in the communal areas due to associated fire risks and it was felt that this may have impacted the score.

People who had completed the survey had indicated to Acuity that they were happy for their detailed results to be shared and this information had been sought from

Acuity to allow detailed analysis to be carried out to see if the exercise undertaken earlier in the year had influenced the results.

Members were then referred to Table 2 of the report which showed comparisons between 2024/25 and 2025/26 and showed significant improvements in the results with the overall satisfaction with the Housing Service increasing by 8%. Satisfaction with the Repairs Service had significantly increased which was a reflection of all the work that was being undertaken within the Service. An example was given that the time taken for repairs to be completed had increased satisfaction by 18% and satisfaction with the overall Repairs Service had increased by 15%.

Further increase in satisfaction by tenants had been seen in how the Council communicated and engaged with tenants which had increased between 7%-11% which could be due to the increased level of engagement that the Council had with tenants over the last few months with five housing roadshows being held across the District. Decarbonisation works had been undertaken with meetings being held between tenants and contractors so each was fully aware of the works to be completed and what this involved with tenants being able to contribute to these discussions. Positive engagement with tenants had also been carried out where improvements were being discussed at sheltered housing schemes.

Reference was made to the reduction in satisfaction with regard to Anti-Social Behaviour and complaints but it was noted that the number of complaints had significantly reduced and the quality and timeline of responses had improved. The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that this would be looked into with the detailed information given to Acuity and tenants would be contacted and sessions arranged to enable more information about issues to be understood.

The Director of Housing and Projects then referred to Appendix 1 of the report which included the information that would be provided to all tenants. Acuity who carried out the survey provided a tenant-friendly report which would be published on the website with residents being made aware that the results were now available to view.

Members attention was drawn to paragraph 2.13 of the report which summarised the recommendations proposed by Acuity to support the continued improvement to satisfaction levels. An action plan was provided at Appendix 2 which detailed the actions proposed by the Council and also any progress that had been made against any actions listed and the Director of Housing and Projects apologised for the late publication of Appendix 2.

Acuity also carried out benchmarking and a table was included in the report which compared the Council results for 2025/26 with those published by the Regulator for 2024/25. The blue line in the table charted the Council's performance against the upper quartile which was shown by the green line within the table. The Regulator medium line was orange and the lower quartile was shown by a purple line.

Table 3 of the report showed the significant improvement shown by the Council within the benchmarking table, although it was noted that this was against benchmarking of social landlords for 2024/25. The information for 2025/26 would be uploaded in June 2026 and the Regulator would publish reports for the whole sector and then benchmarking performance could be carried out for 2025/26 with other social landlords in the sector. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that the performance shows the positive work that was being undertaken by the Housing Team and the improvement plans in place and the results were reflective of the progress and improvements made in the Housing Service.

Members congratulated Officers on the work done with comments being made in relation to the following:

- Communal areas – concern wasn't in respect of cleanliness or tidiness but the use of the facilities by outside organisations who did not clean up after they had used the facilities – The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that she would follow this information up
- Reference to negative bias from those who have had to move personal belongings from communal areas
- Although movement in the service was going in the correct direction with repairs what was being done to further improve the service from good to stronger - the overall satisfaction for all landlords was 74.9% against the Council's which was 68.9%. The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that the recommendations proposed by Acuity would be implemented by the Council to improve tenants satisfaction. Work would continue with contractors to improve the service offered in respect of repairs with appointments being given in advance and reminders being timelier. The action plan would be put in place to help meet the expectations of tenants.

Members noted the report.

75. Work Programme 2025/26

The Chairman asked if Members had anything to add to the Work Programme for the next year.

The Vice-Chairman made reference to having a report on the relationship with Housing Associations which had been referred to at a previous meeting. The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that this could be part of a wider report in relation to Choice Based Lettings and how the Council worked with Housing Associations.

One Member referred to landscaping and tree planting and reference was made to the adoption of the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2024-2034 which had been discussed at the Environment OSC and approved by Cabinet in May 2024. A brief

discussion followed on estate walks that were being arranged and dates and times would be publicised widely including being published on the website.

The Director of Housing and Projects asked for the following items to be included on the work programme for the June Committee meeting:

- Update on progress in relation to the Voice of the Tenant Strategy
- Update on the review of Sheltered Housing Scheme Charges

A visiting Member to the Committee who had been involved with the recent event at Riverside in Grantham congratulated those Officers who had been involved stating it had been a brilliant engagement event.

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

There was no urgent business.

77. Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 4:39pm.