

Minutes

Cabinet
Tuesday, 9 June 2026



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Paul Stokes (Vice Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning

Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Councillor Bridget Ley, Cabinet Member for Finance

Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing

Councillor Lee Steptoe

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

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

David Scott, Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)

Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)

Chris Prime, Communications Manager

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

Charles James, Policy Officer

Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

13. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rhys Baker and Richard Cleaver.

14. Disclosure of Interests

Dual-hatted district and county Councillors had a general dispensation granted by a previous Monitoring Officer that allowed them to take part in and vote on issues related to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

This applied to Councillors Ashley Baxter and Phil Dilks. Councillor Richard Cleaver was not present.

15. Public Open Forum

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

16. Invitation for representations regarding the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire: Response

Decision

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the proposed responses to the MHCLG invitation for representations on the contents of the Structural Changes Order, as set out at Appendix B of this report, and instruct the Chief Executive to submit the responses on behalf of the Council prior to the deadline of 16 June 2026.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor inconsequential amendments to the content of the response between now and 16 June 2026.**

Other options considered

The Council was under no explicit legal obligation to submit a response. However, the Council understood that representations would inform the Secretary of State's considerations on the detailed contents of the Structural Change Order. Therefore, if the Council does not submit a response, it would lose an opportunity to potentially influence the government on key elements of the future transitional and electoral arrangements.

Reasons for the decision

The Leader of the Council introduced the report.

The Government had invited the Council to make representations on the detailed contents of the Structural Change Order (SCO). These representations would inform the considerations of the Secretary of State and thus represented an opportunity for the Council to attempt to ensure that the SCO was properly tailored to the particular circumstances of Greater Lincolnshire.

On 19 May 2026, MHCLG wrote to all councils in Greater Lincolnshire to seek views on matters that would be necessary for the Secretary of State to consider in any Structural Changes Order (SCO) (Appendix A). A SCO was a statutory instrument (secondary legislation) that would establish a new unitary authority, make provision to abolish predecessor councils, and set out transitional and electoral arrangements.

The matters/questions on which the Council had been invited to make representations were:

1. Whether you prefer a preparing council and implementation executive model (where geographies align) or a new council model with a joint committee?
2. How many members from each relevant council would you prefer to sit on each Joint Committee or on the Implementation Executive, including the balance of members from different councils?
3. Would you prefer for any individuals to be specified for the Chair/Deputy Chair roles, and if so, who?
4. What are your views on any requirement for political balance in the joint committee(s)/ implementation executive?
5. Who should be the returning officer for the first election to each of the new unitary councils, that proposals would see established.
6. What are your preferences for the membership of the Implementation Team and whether roles should be specified?
7. Would you prefer for any parish council elections to be aligned with elections to the new councils?
8. What are the current legal names of the councils and what are your preferred names for new councils?
9. If different to proposals, has there been any further modelling of your preferred councillors for each new councils that you would like the Secretary of State to consider, alongside any information on the rationale for the numbers?
10. What are your suggested wards, that reflect the proposal and councillor numbers decided, and that best meet the LGBCE guidance, for inclusion in the SCO?

Representations for questions one to nine were to be made by no later than 16 June 2026, which gave South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) less than a month to finalise their response to the consultation. Representations on the tenth question regarding ward boundaries were to be made by 17 August 2026.

Political endorsement was requested as part of the Cabinet's representations. One of the questions was the potential name of the new authority; Cabinet suggested the name 'South Lincolnshire Council' for the SKDC Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposal.

Most of the planned responses to the consultation were related to the SKDC LGR proposal, which included the district council areas of South Kesteven, North Kesteven and South Holland. These planned responses were included as Appendix B to the report.

Question two related to Joint Committees; for Unitary One (the bid from SKDC and North Kesteven District Council (NKDC)) a 12-seat committee was proposed, with six seats for Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), and two for each of the districts (SKDC, NKDC and South Holland District Council (SHDC)).

For Question three, it was recommended that the Joint Committee Chairman be appointed from a district council.

Political balance would be required for Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) members on both Joint Committees (and on an Implementation Executive in the scenario where the LCC proposal was selected).

The Implementation Team must include directly employed officers from each of the existing Lincolnshire district councils and from the County Council. The proposed Implementation Team Lead was Katherine Marriott, NKDC's Chief Executive.

Karen Bradford, as SKDC's Chief Executive, was proposed as the Returning Officer (RO) for the South Lincolnshire proposal. For Central Lincolnshire, it was suggested that those areas impacted should reach their own decision. If there were to be elections in 2026, the inclusion of parish elections was desired.

Both NKDC and SKDC proposed to retain the existing seventy divisions within the Lincolnshire County Council area, increasing all to dual rather than single member wards in both new unitary councils. This would see thirty-four dual member wards in the new South Lincolnshire Council and thirty-six dual member wards in the new Central Lincolnshire Council.

For Central Lincolnshire, SKDC's proposal was a Joint Committee of sixteen, with eight seats to LCC and two seats each for the other four district councils.

Concerns have been raised about the timelines put forward by MHCLG. The calling of an election in March 2027, even though the new structure would be known, was extremely demanding as the SCO would only just have come into effect.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- Questions needed to be asked in relation to political balance as Independent Councillors were not recognised in the political balance calculations for joint committees, even if they were in political groups.
- The SKDC proposal (Unitary One) was the best option available, but it still had a democratic deficit attached with the number of councillors reduced by roughly one half. This deficit would be widened if the continuous model (LCC continuation model) was selected.
- The two Joint Committee representatives taken from SKDC would likely be the Leader and Deputy Leader. Lincolnshire County Council would have to consider their political proportionality as they had a greater number of representatives.
- July will bring greater clarity from government on the LGR proposal. However, the Chief Executive would have no legal bearing to enact anything until March 2027, when the Structural Change Order was due to come into force.
- The response from NKDC to the questions outlined within the report looked very similar to the SKDC response. SHDC would be focussing on their proposal (the SELC partnership).
- SKDC was proposing two councillors to be selected per county division in their unitary area. The voting system planned was first past the post (FPTP), however this could be a good opportunity to lobby government for a change of system.

- The SCO would give the legal framework for calling a shadow election. It would also give the framework for the postponement of elections (if applicable). District and parish elections were due to be called in March 2027; however, if the district elections were postponed, the term of office for councillors could be increased accordingly. Hypothetically, there could be a shadow election in July 2027 or beyond, however, this scenario created an extra financial burden on district councils.

17. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 2:39 pm.