

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2024

2.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Gloria Johnson Chairman
Councillor Paul Fellows Vice-Chairman

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 Helen Crawford
Councillor Steven Cunnington
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Patsy Ellis
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Ben Green
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Jane Kingman
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Zoe Lane
Councillor Robert Leadendam

Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Rob Shorrocks
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Elvis Stooke
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 Officer

Nicola McCoy-Brown, Director of Growth and Culture

Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

Chris Prime, Communications Manager

Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

Charles James, Policy Officer

77. Public Open Forum

No members of the public had registered to speak.

78. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew.

79. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

80. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Under Item 64 – Councillor Vanessa Smith’s motion (Climate and Ecology Bill), the following sentence to be amended to reflect that the motion fell:

*It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that the meeting be extended by half an hour. This motion fell.*

The word **AGREED** would be removed, so the sentence would now read:

It was proposed and seconded that the meeting be extended by half an hour. This motion fell.

81. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman’s engagements.

Councillor Richard Cleaver gave a short speech announcing his resignation as Leader of the Council, thanking local residents, relatives, friends, council member colleagues and council officers for their support during his time in office.

Councillors Graham Jeal, Lee Steptoe, Sarah Trotter, Tim Harrison, Charmaine Morgan, Penny Milnes, Mark Whittington, Jane Kingman, Ian Selby, Paul Wood and Anna Kelly each spoke regarding the Leader's news.

Councillor Mark Whittington apologised unreservedly to the whole Council Chamber for his behaviour at the Full Council meeting held on 23 November 2023, going onto say that his behaviour was unacceptable. He also thanked those individuals that had contacted him to enquire after his wellbeing.

82. Election of Leader of the Council

Members were invited to make nominations for the Leader of the Council.

A proposition was moved and seconded to suspend Council Procedure Rule 15.3 (voting by a show of hands) for this item and it be replaced with a secret ballot to vote in a new Leader of the Council.

Debate ensued on the merits and disadvantages of secret balloting. Following this short debate it was proposed that the 'question was now put'. A request was made that a recorded vote on the motion be taken, as in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.5 any ten or more Councillors present at the meeting of Full Council could request this.

For a Secret Ballot: Councillors Matt Bailey, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Richard Dixon-Warren, Ben Green, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Anna Kelly, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Nikki Manterfield, Paul Martin, Penny Milnes, Charmaine Morgan, Nick Robins, Penny Robins, Susan Sandall, Peter Stephens, Ian Stokes, Sarah Trotter, Mark Whittington, Jane Wood, Paul Wood, Sue Woolley (27).

Against Secret Ballot: Councillors Emma Baker, Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Steven Cunnington, James Denniston, Phil Dilks, Patsy Ellis, Paul Fellows, Phil Gadd, Tim Harrison, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Virginia Moran, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Rhea Rayside, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Rob Shorrocks, Vanessa Smith, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Murray Turner (27).

Abstain: Councillor Barry Dobson (1).

The motion therefore **FELL**; a motion to suspend Council Procedure Rules required a two-thirds majority in favour to succeed.

A proposition was moved and seconded that Councillor Ashley Baxter be elected as the Leader of South Kesteven District Council.

A proposition was moved and seconded that Councillor Graham Jeal be elected as Leader of South Kesteven District Council.

A request was made that a recorded vote on the motion be taken, as in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.5 any ten or more Councillors present at the meeting of Full Council could request this.

For Councillor Ashley Baxter: Councillors Emma Baker, Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Steven Cunnington, James Denniston, Phil Dilks, Patsy Ellis, Paul Fellows, Phil Gadd, Tim Harrison, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Rhea Rayside, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Rob Shorrocks, Vanessa Smith, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Murray Turner. (29)

For Councillor Graham Jeal: Councillors Matt Bailey, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Richard Dixon-Warren, Ben Green, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Nikki Manterfield, Paul Martin, Penny Milnes, Nick Robins, Penny Robins, Susan Sandall, Peter Stephens, Ian Stokes, Sarah Trotter, Mark Whittington, Jane Wood, Paul Wood, Sue Woolley (25).

Abstain: Councillor Barry Dobson (1).

Therefore, the motion was **AGREED**, and Councillor Ashley Baxter was appointed as Leader of the Council.

Councillor Baxter gave a short speech of thanks to the Council Chamber, and informed Council that the membership of Cabinet and the portfolios currently associated with the Cabinet Members in post would remain unchanged until May 2024 at the earliest, with the exception of Councillor Richard Cleaver moving to the position of Deputy Leader.

83. Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

Members considered the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025, which had been recommended to them by the Employment Committee meeting held on 17 January 2024.

It was a requirement of the Localism Act 2011 that the Council produced a Pay Policy Settlement every year and published it on the South Kesteven District Council website.

The Pay Policy Statement included information related to the salary of its chief officers, its lowest paid employees and others, including information on apprentices. It also included the policy on allowances and pension rates.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- The Council had a remarkable team of employees and officers at all levels, and its staff was its primary strength.
- The information on apprenticeships was useful but it there was no record within the document of the 18 current apprentices that the Council employed.
- The Gender Pay Gap Policy was being reported to the Employment Committee in March 2024.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That the Council approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025.

84. Corporate Plan 2024-27

Members considered the Corporate Plan for 2024-2027, as recommended by the Cabinet meeting held on 18 January 2024.

The mover of the report, with the consent of Council was allowed to speak for a further five minutes on this motion.

In moving the report, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing outlined that this was a Plan grounded in a comprehensive evidence base, informing the Council's strategic direction and priorities. It was designed to be ambitious, realistic, dynamic and adaptable, with a long-term focus of where the District needed to be in the medium term.

The development of the 'Plan' was guided by three fundamental principles:

- *Listening and being responsive to the needs of all our communities.*

- *Building public trust and confidence by promoting a culture of openness, transparency and accountability.*
- *Providing value-for-money for residents and businesses through responsible and prudent use of resources.*

The Corporate Plan was based on a golden thread. This was the thread that connected all work, at all levels of the organisation, directly to the overarching vision, priorities and ambitions. The vision was to be '*A thriving district in which to live, work and visit*'.

The Priorities were the core of the Plan. There were five, each representing a key sphere of activity for the Council:

Priority 1 - Connecting Communities: To enhance the strength, wellbeing, security and capacity of all our communities for a thriving and cohesive society that all our residents are proud to belong to.

Priority 2 - Sustainable South Kesteven: To meet the challenge of climate change and ensure a clean, green and healthy natural and built environment for present and future generations.

Priority 3 - Enabling Economic Opportunity: To enable and support a dynamic, resilient and growing local economy, which benefited all our communities.

Priority 4 - Housing: To ensure that all residents can access housing which is safe, good quality, sustainable and suitable for their needs and future generations.

Priority 5 - Effective Council: To deliver trusted, high quality and value-for-money services that fulfilled the needs and expectations of all our residents.

Each Priority contained a series of Ambitions. Each Ambition stimulated a range of programmes and projects. Below the Ambitions sat the Actions, detailing specific pieces of work the Council would be undertaking over this Corporate Plan cycle. The Actions would be monitored through the suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which would be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.

Each Priority contained a number of 2034 Outcomes. The Outcomes introduced an element of longer-term strategic planning. The Plan recognised that the Council could not solve these challenges or deliver the Vision for the District alone. The Outcomes were intended to provide long term focal points to bring together residents, businesses, skills providers, partners and community groups to develop and deliver action– united by the common goal of a thriving South Kesteven. This provided a positive strategic framework for the Council to face to the future, rather than being purely reactive to events.

The Plan was underpinned by three elements that were collectively called the Foundations. Each was integral to the success of the Plan. These were:

- Financial Sustainability – how the Plan would be funded. A commitment to and the practice of sound and prudent financial management was crucial.
- Performance Management – how delivery would be monitored, improvements driven, and open and transparent accountability upheld.
- Corporate Values and Equalities – the ethos in which the Plan would be delivered.

The Plan was developed through an evidence-based approach. On 11 September 2023, Cabinet approved the State of the District (SOTD) report 2023. This document, the first of its type for the Council, provided a comprehensive and data driven account of the society and economic performance of South Kesteven.

The developing Plan was refined through three workshops, which all Members were invited to attend in early October 2023. Feedback from the Members confirmed the Priorities and informed further development of the Ambitions.

An all-Member consultation was undertaken from 10-17 November 2023. The Priorities were supported by 84% of respondents (averaged across the five priorities) and the Ambitions by 90.67%. A four-week Public Consultation subsequently followed from 22 November to 19 December 2023. The consultation received 587 responses; the second highest response of any consultation undertaken in the last eighteen months. The Priorities were supported by 80.86% of respondents (averaged across the five priorities) and the Ambitions by 86.41%.

The motion was duly seconded.

The following points were raised during debate:

- Concerns were raised over a potential reduction in ambition due to the change in wording between the old and new Plans from the 'best' District in which to work live and visit, to a 'thriving' District. However, it was important for any ambitions to be deliverable.
- The previous Plan had 15 ambitions whereas there were 28 ambitions in the latest draft.
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies had looked at the impact on funding for local Councils and public expenditure, and the forecasts for growth for local authorities were not currently positive.
- It was important to develop KPIs coherently and with realistic targets, and the mechanism for doing this was key. There was a commitment to open and independent Scrutiny through the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- A clear year on year target for the number of properties to be built or acquired for social leasing should have been within the Plan.
- Trees and woodland played a key part in alleviating flooding across the District and they should not be removed unless appropriate. A tree workshop had been run to fine tune the approach to the natural environment.
- Whilst it was important to have goals within the Plan related to climate change it could sometimes work against the local authority to have rigid policies in relation to solar farms. An example was given of Basildon Council where the Planning Committee refused a solar farm application; it went to appeal, and the Planning Inspectorate overturned the decision of the Planning authority and granted permission. The reason given was the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan. Any policy documents the Council produced should allow for some flexibility, with the aim of allowing the local Council a greater say in what was constructed in its own area.

- The mechanism within Priority 4 (Housing) should have included improvements to the time taken to complete works in relation to voids. However, there had recently been a Voids Workshop which had been attended by a number of members which had delivered some useful information.
- The communities of South Kesteven needed to be put first; however there were large inequalities within communities even within individual wards. Every voice needed to be heard.
- The Plan was a substantial document highlighting the District's proud military and aviation heritage. However, there were no references to an ambition or an undertaking to continue or improve support for the armed forces community.
- The Council had set up a Youth Council which had been doing good work. However, it was unclear whether schools, especially 6th Forms and colleges had been consulted on the Plan.
- Three member workshops were held on the Plan; 23 members took part across all three sessions, which were held in both the daytime and the evening.

Note: Councillor Ian Stokes left the meeting.

- The Local Plan was set separately and the Corporate Plan could not contradict it.
- The content around 'Connecting Communities' was most welcomed, but if this was to include public transport the further work was required to link up the District. Lincolnshire County Council had seen budget cuts and there was now only £1 million to provide bus services across Lincolnshire.

Note: With the consent of Council, speech time was cut to three minutes per Councillor.

- Over 140,000 people live in South Kesteven, and 587 people responded to the consultation.

In summing up, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing thanked members for their contributions, and also addressed the issue of online survey responses by explaining that South Kesteven District Council's public consultations were carried out using Survey Monkey, a market-leading survey software that was also used by some of the world's biggest companies.

The consultation officer collected IP addresses from survey responses and entered them on a separate tab on an Excel spreadsheet so they were not associated with any other personal data, in line with GDPR. These were then checked in order to establish if there were multiple responses from the same IP address using the duplicate search function on Excel. If there were two responses from the same IP address it was reasonable to assume that they were from members of the same household who had completed the survey using the same device.

There were no anomalies identified in the Corporate Plan responses.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That the Council:

- 1. Approves the Corporate Plan 2024-27.**
- 2. Requests the Overview and Scrutiny Committees develop and monitor the new Key Performance Indicators (KPI).**

Note: The meeting adjourned at 4:16pm and reconvened at 4:36 pm.

85. Appointments to Outside Bodies and Committees

Note: Councillor Barry Dobson left the Council Chamber and did not return.

Members considered a report that provided the Council with an opportunity to appoint Members to a vacancy on an outside body (Grantham Transport Strategy Group). Members were also requested to fill vacancies for the South Kesteven Coalition Group on the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Finance & Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Standards Committee and Planning Committee.

There was a Chairman vacancy on Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report provided Group Leaders with an opportunity to make any further amendments to their representation on Committees.

In moving nominations from the South Kesteven Coalition Group the Leader of the Opposition requested a delegation to himself to fill the vacancies on Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee at a later date following this meeting. It was confirmed that although vacancies on committees could not be carried indefinitely, Council could approve this delegation should they wish to.

There were two nominations to the vacant role of Chairman of the Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee that were proposed and seconded – Councillor Bridget Ley and Councillor Nick Robins. There were also subsequently two nominations to the role of Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Nick Robins and Councillor Lee Steptoe.

The Leader of the Council was content that candidates for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman roles were suitable but did question whether in the future the Leader needed to confirm the suitability of Councillors for Chairman roles.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That Full Council:

- 1. Approved the appointment of Councillor Tim Harrison to sit on the Grantham Transport Strategy Group outside body.**
- 2. Approved the following appointments:**
 - Councillor Nick Robins to fill the vacant seat on Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**
 - Councillor Helen Crawford to sit on Planning Committee, replacing Councillor Gloria Johnson.**
 - Councillor Sarah Trotter to fill the vacant seat on Planning Committee.**
 - A delegation to the Leader of the South Kesteven Coalition Group to fill the vacancies on Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee before the next meeting of Full Council on 29 February 2024.**
- 3. Approved the appointment of Councillor Bridget Ley as Chairman of the Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**
- 4. Approved the appointment of Councillor Lee Steptoe as Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**

86. Fees and Charges Proposals 2024/25

Members considered a report setting out the proposed fees and charges to be introduced for the financial year 2024/2025.

The item had been debated at Cabinet on 18 January 2024 as well as being considered by the Budget Joint Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 15 January 2024.

An additional recommendation to Council was added at Cabinet on 18 January 2024, which as related to the discharge of Planning obligations, approval of details pursuant to a planning obligation (Section 106 agreement) per clause £162 plus VAT.

As reported at Cabinet, there would be no increase in bus departure increases, as was originally proposed.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- There was a proposal to freeze green bin charges at £49, with the income to be found within savings on catering costs, conference expenses and consultation fees. It was felt by some that the £15 increase on a second and subsequent green bins was a large rise. The proposal was seconded, but following a vote this proposal was not successful and therefore **FELL**.**

- The average increase over previous administrations on green bins was 8%.

Note: Following a vote the meeting was extended to 6pm at the latest as it was about to exceed 3 hours in length. Councillors Nikki Manterfield, Susan Sandall, Emma Baker, Mark Whittington and Sarah Trotter left the Chamber and did not return.

- The fees to non-profit making organisations at Bourne Corn Exchange were set to rise by 46%.
- There were local variances in the fees for market stalls. The market in Stamford was thriving and well used, which justified an increase in charges. There was a freeze at current levels for Grantham market stalls for 2024/2025.
- Another local variance was the leisure fees at Grantham being slightly higher than the fees in Stamford.
- The increased fees were based on recovering the costs of delivering services.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That Full Council:

- 1. Approve the following fees and charges proposals for the financial year 2024/25:**
 - a) Green waste bin annual collection charges:**
 - increase of £2 on the first bin to £51
 - increase of £15 on all subsequent bins to £42
 - b) Increase of discretionary fees and charges as set out in Table 2 of the report.**
- 2. Approves a Discharge of Planning obligation, approval of details pursuant to a planning obligation (Section 106 agreement) per clause £162 plus VAT**

Note: Councillors Paul Wood, Jane Wood, Penny Robins, Nick Robins and Robert Leadenham left the Council Chamber and did not return.

87. Budget Framework Amendments 2023/2024

Members considered a report seeking approval for in-year amendments to the Budget Framework for the financial year 2023/2024.

This report was also considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 18 January 2024.

Note: Councillors Matt Bailey, Vanessa Smith, Helen Crawford and Penny Milnes left the Chamber and did not return.

The situation around LeisureSK Ltd. was discussed, as £150,000 was agreed by Cabinet on 18 January 2024, and a further £123,000 was being requested. Whilst members were in support of this funding to aid the running of the District's leisure centres, it was highlighted that the current situation around LeisureSK Ltd. was less than ideal and needed monitoring, which was something Cabinet had committed to do.

In addition to the three recommendations within the report, an additional recommendation was proposed and seconded.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That the Council:

Approves the following budget amendments to the 2023/2024 Budget Framework:

- 1. Subject to a successful outcome of the Phase 3c Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, increase the Capital General Fund Decarbonisation Scheme contribution to £492,500.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member with the responsibility for Finance to accept the Phase 3c Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding if the grant application is successful.**
- 3. Provide an additional management fee of £123,000 to LeisureSK Limited for the current financial year 2023/24 only.**
- 4. Agrees the formation of a Leisure Reserve of £850,000 in order to fund the contribution towards the refurbishment of the Deepings Leisure Centre.**

88. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/2025

Members considered the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/2025, which reviewed the responses to the public consultation of the aforementioned Scheme.

This report was recommended to Full Council by the Cabinet meeting held on 5 December 2023, and had also been considered by Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2023.

Members directly involved with discussions around the aspirations for the future Armed Forces discount were invited to meet together ahead of any report being considered by Finance and Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That the Council:

- 1. Approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 based on the same overarching criteria as the existing scheme and including the following:**
 - a. Continuation of the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support with effect from 1 April 2024 (as detailed in paragraph 3.3 of the report).**
 - b. The alignment of the value of the capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to the pension age claimant values with effect from 1 April 2024 (as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of the report).**
 - c. The introduction of a second home premium of 100% with effect from 1 April 2025, following the required 12 months' notice to those ratepayers impacted by this change (as detailed in paragraph 3.5 of the report).**

89. St Martin's Park Redevelopment Project, Stamford

The St. Martin's Park Redevelopment Project, Stamford was not considered due to time constraints and may be considered at an extraordinary meeting prior to 29 February 2024.

90. Climate and Ecology Bill

The Climate and Ecology Bill report was not considered due to time constraints and may be heard at the next ordinary meeting of Full Council on 29 February 2024.

91. Members' Open Questions

Members' Open Questions were not heard due to time constraints.

92. Notices of Motion

93. Councillor Vanessa Smith

Councillor Vanessa Smith's motion was not considered due to time constraints and may be heard at the next ordinary meeting of Full Council on 29 February 2024.

94. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 5:42pm.