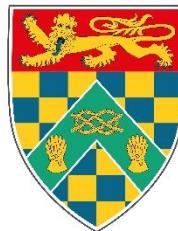


Minutes

Cabinet

Monday, 11 September 2023



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

The Leader: Councillor Richard Cleaver, The Leader of the Council (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste (jobshare)

Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

Councillor Patsy Ellis, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste (jobshare)

Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Councillor Rhea Rayside, Cabinet Member for People and Communities

Councillor Paul Stokes, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Virginia Moran

Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Councillor Ian Selby

Councillor Lee Steptoe

Councillor Mark Whittington

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)

Nicola McCoy-Brown, Director of Growth and Culture (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Craig Spence, Acting Director of Housing

Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Fran Beckitt, Interim Head of HR

Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

Charles James, Policy Officer

Adam Murray, Principal Planning Officer

19. Introduction to the meeting

Prior to the commencement of business, Members of Cabinet and those others present stood for a minute's silence to mark the recent passing of their colleague, Councillor Ray Wootten.

20. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Patsy Ellis was acting as Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste for the meeting, under the job share arrangement with Councillor Rhys Baker.

21. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

22. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests.

23. Proposed Replacement Depot Turnpike Close Grantham

Purpose of report

To consider the proposals and agree the next steps to enable the development of a new depot at Turnpike Close in Grantham.

Decision

To recommend to Council:

1. That an allocation of £8million be included in the General Fund Capital Programme to provide funding to construct a new depot at Turnpike Close, Grantham.
2. A delegation of authority to the Council's Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to allocate further funding if required due to unforeseen costs during the project.
3. A request that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee adds the replacement depot to its work programme and establishes a working group to receive regular updates and monitor the project.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Option 1 - To do nothing, not approve the budget for the construction of a new depot and remain at Alexandra Road. This had been discounted due to the growth of the District as identified in the Local Plan and the inability of the existing site to meet growth demands.

Option 2 – Investigate whether Alexandra Road (under the ownership of South Kesteven District Council) could be re- modelled to reconfigure the site.

Option 3 – Sell the Turnpike Close site and look for another site to purchase.

Reasons for decision

The site was chosen and purchased as the ideal situation for a replacement depot. The costs for the scheme were volatile but the building of the site was a priority due to potential changes in the Environment Act.

The Council needed to find an alternative provision for delivering its statutory function of this service. The site at Alexandra Road was geographically constrained and therefore could not accommodate any further service growth to meet future operational needs as identified in the Local Plan.

The welfare facilities did not meet modern standards for the Council's workforce. A new facility would provide drying areas, new locker provisions as well as canteen and training facilities. The training room could be used by officers and Members providing a multipurpose space.

The ability to maximise sustainable systems so that the operational cost of the facility was lower showed a progressive approach working towards a carbon reduction target of 30% by 2030 and zero carbon by 2050.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement highlighted several key points on the depot:

- An options appraisal on the Alexandra Road site still needed to be undertaken.
- The Lincolnshire County Council waste recycling centre must remain on the Alexandra Road site until at least April 2025 so as not to disrupt crucial services.
- The priority of delivering a new depot was highlighted in the Corporate Plan when it was being drafted in 2020, under the priority 'building a fit for purpose depot'. The current site was not fit for purpose and had no capacity for key areas such as welfare facilities and the workshop to expand into.
- The Design team had worked on plans for a fit for purpose depot, which would allow for services to be housed together, whilst retaining land for future growth.
- The Joint Meeting of the Finance & Economic, and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committees recommended to Cabinet at its meeting held on 25 July 2023 that an allocation of £8 million should be included in the General Fund Capital Programme in order to construct the new depot at Turnpike Close, Grantham.

The following points were highlighted during discussion:

- The engagement with the external cost consultants had led to the assurance that a contingency fund of 4.8% would be sufficient for the project. The Outline Programme for the works had to be ambitious, and the indicative timeline reflected that it was.

- It was important that a contingency was built into the project to allow for unforeseen issues. If further major events impacted the project, then the relevant approvals would be sought from members and officers.
- As much of the information as possible seen by any working group set up by the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be in the public domain.

24. Proposals for the upgrading of District Council street lights to LED units

Purpose of report

An overview regarding South Kesteven District Council's potential to upgrade District Council operated streetlights to energy efficient LED (Light Emitting Diode) units.

Decision

1. Cabinet recommended to Council the allocation of funding of £1 million to accelerate the replacement of the Council operated streetlights with LED energy efficiency lamps. The scheme to be funded as follows:
 - £500k Invest to Save Reserve
 - £250k Budget Stabilisation Reserve
 - £250k Local Priorities Reserve
2. Cabinet requested that Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the current Street Lighting Policy with regard to further reducing energy costs at specific times and locations.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Option 1: Accelerate programme to upgrade all existing lights to LED. Indicative costs were obtained to upgrade all possible streetlight units to LED within a year of contract commencement. This included an allocation for the potential upgrade of obsolete street light columns where required, estimated at 5% of the total stock of lights. A dimming schedule between midnight and 6am was assumed, where lights were dimmed to 50% of full illumination, in line with current policy. An overall energy saving by upgrading to LED with 6 hours of dimming of 63% was assumed based on supplier projections.

Option 2: Accelerate programme to upgrade all existing lights to LED and implement policy to switch off lighting between midnight to 6am. This option used the same assumptions as Option 1, but rather than using the existing dimming profile assumed streetlights would be dark between midnight and 6am, with an assumed energy saving of 75%.

Option 3: Review provision of streetlighting with the aim to upgrade every other unit to LED and decommission remaining units. The potential to reduce the overall stock of streetlights which the Council had the responsibility to illuminate had also been explored.

Regarding option 3, consideration would need to be made on the placement of individual lamps to ensure the remaining provision of lighting was adequate around decommissioned columns. Once agreed, the Council would need to remove fuses from streetlights to be decommissioned at a cost per lamp. The lamps would remain liable for a standing charge for electricity when not in use. Once the light was declared as obsolete, the Council was obliged by the National Grid to potentially disconnect and remove lighting columns after a 2-year period, at a further cost. The Council also had a duty of care to ensure the obsolete lighting column was inspected annually to ensure they remained safe. Finally, adequate signage would need to be added to every lighting column decommissioned, to help minimise the number of reports to the Council of faulty lights. Given the number of impediments to decommissioning and removing lamps, detailed costs had not been provided to Cabinet.

Option 4: The Council could choose not to pursue a proactive programme of LED upgrades. This would require no upfront investment and lamps would only be replaced by LED when a streetlight has failed. This would mean a significantly longer programme of replacement and would need to have considered a potential scarcity of replacement parts for existing lamps.

Reasons for decision

South Kesteven District Council was responsible for 3893 streetlights within the district which were all funded from the Council's General Fund.

The majority of lights operated by the Council were 35W (or 36W) low pressure sodium lamps, responsible for just over 4% of the Council's total carbon emissions – a significant contribution.

Several different options had been considered in the past regarding the most efficient management of the Council's stock of streetlights. Following a recommendation by Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet on 12 July 2018 considered and approved a policy, addressing how the Council's streetlights were to be managed.

Following a decision at Cabinet on 11 June 2019, a project was initiated to accelerate the upgrade of the Council's stock of streetlights to LED lamps, replacing the existing policy to upgrade only failed lamps. This allocated £100,000 from the Council's Invest to Save reserve as part of a 12-year overall programme. Benefits noted from the upgrades included a reduction in electricity use and associated costs, with a consequent reduction in carbon emissions.

In tandem with project development work required for the main LED upgrades, repair and maintenance arrangements for existing lamps had also been reviewed. Current arrangements were for ongoing reactive maintenance of non-LED lamps where feasible, and where lamps were beyond repair they were now being updated to LEDs. Currently, there was no budget to replace every failed unit with an LED upgrade. To date, 699 street lights had been upgraded to LED.

Through upgrading existing units to LED (with capability for dimming), the energy reduction achieved in the latest month, across the whole stock of lights, was 12%.

Since the agreement of the Invest to Save budget, South Kesteven District Council, like many other organisations, had seen vastly escalating utility costs. The electricity budget for streetlighting for 2022/23 was set at £171k and the total spend for 2022/23 was £221k.

The original expectations of reinvesting savings from reduced electricity use could no longer be met, as the increased cost of energy had outpaced the savings made through reduction. There had been no agreed standalone budget for upgrading the streetlights to LED, beyond an existing fund for reactive maintenance of broken lights.

As a result of the sharp escalation in energy costs, the business case for an accelerated programme of upgrades to LED across the whole stock of streetlights became stronger. Prices for wholesale electricity and gas appeared to have 'spiked' last winter. Nevertheless, current costs remained at a historic high and, given the volatility of energy markets and potential for further disruption next winter, it was reasonable to expect continuing high prices for both gas and electricity.

Reducing energy consumption from streetlighting would contribute to the Council's declared carbon reduction target of at least 30% by 2030.

Four options had been explored to fulfil the Council's obligations to provide lighting in the most cost and environmentally effective way. It was recognised that several other options could have been considered but these will depend upon the scope and scale of any replacement programme.

The Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 22 June 2023 to review the four options, with particular regard to the financial, environment and service level implications. They agreed to pursue the full upgrade programme of Option 1 or 2, with the recommendation to allocate funding from Council reserves.

Whilst £1 million was a large outlay, it would mean that savings could be made on lighting in a relatively short period of time.

The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be asked to investigate whether streetlights operated by the Council would remain on or off at night.

Any impacts on surrounding wildlife would need to be considered; assurances on this would be sought through the operational stage of the LED rollout. In rural areas where there wouldn't normally be a light source special coloured lighting could be considered.

25. Housing Revenue Account Acquisitions Capital Budget

Purpose of report

To recommend to Council the amendment of the 2023/2024 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital allocation of Housing Development Investment by an additional £1m to be able to respond promptly to opportunities to purchase properties to increase the Council's housing stock.

Decision

That Cabinet recommended to Council the amendment of the Housing Revenue Account 2023/2024 Capital Programme Housing Development Investment by an additional £1m.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council could have decided not to purchase any additional properties. This would not have met the housing needs priority of the Corporate Plan and would not have supported the pipeline of delivering new housing in the District.

Reasons for decision

The decision enabled the increase of the housing stock to meet the needs of South Kesteven's residents. The Council currently loses around 40 units per year through the 'right to buy' scheme.

The £3 million capital programme had already been committed towards two new-build schemes at Swinegate in Grantham and Elizabeth Road in Stamford.

If possible, the Council wanted to develop a hybrid approach of building their own units and also purchasing from larger, existing developments. The additional budget would give the flexibility to do this.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- The additional £1m of funding was for the period from now for the remainder of the financial year.
- There was a need for social housing across the district and on a national level.
- The Council were coming to the end of their Housing Regulatory Compliance period and once out of this period would have more options to increase their housing stock.
- A number of housing associations who were registered providers of social housing were finding themselves in a difficult position with the increase in interest rates, as they found it harder to purchase and manage properties on larger developments. This funding enabled the Council to take opportunities in the housing market when they arose.
- The £1 million of funding was taken from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and would not affect Council Tax rates.

26. Contract Awards in relation to social landlord responsibilities

Purpose of report

This report was for the contract award for installation of new fire doors and associated safety works identified as part of the fire door inspection programme.

This award would complement the award for compartmentation works approved at Cabinet on 30 May 2023.

Decision

Cabinet approved the direct award of a contract for Fire Door and associated works via the CPC East England regional lot to Global HSE Solutions Ltd. for a two-year period with the option for two one-year extensions. The estimated contract value was £500,000 per annum for the life of the contract.

Alternative options considered and rejected

There were no other options available.

Reasons for decision

The proposed contract award had followed compliant procurement processes and would provide the Council with the appropriate contracts to aid the Council on delivering their Corporate Priority to provide *“Housing that meets the needs of all residents”*.

The award of the contract was aimed at protecting council tenants and aiming to ensure that the Council remained free of any regulations imposed as part of the Housing Regulatory Compliance.

27. Control Room Relocation

Purpose of report

The relocation of the Control Room (containing CCTV) to the Grantham Police Station.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the relocation of the Control Room to the Grantham Police Station.
2. Approved a budget amendment of £16,800 to be funded from the Council's Local Priorities Reserve.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Control Room could have remained at its current location, but this would have impacted on any future options for Alexandra Road if the depot relocation was to be approved at Full Council.

The Control Room could be included in the new depot site, but this would remove the benefits that came with sharing the Police Station site.

Reasons for decision

The relocation of the Control Room would remove the limitations of the current location, increase partnership working with the Police and would also bring a number of benefits to the Council, such as:

- Reduced timeline for the Police to review CCTV footage
- Reduced lone working as the CCTV operatives would be based at the Police Station
- Provision of modern facilities for the CCTV operatives
- Reduction in operating costs from the current location

There was a requirement to sign a 20-year lease agreement, but this came at no cost to the Council.

28. Comprehensive Masterplan for Local Plan allocation at Low Road, Barrowby

Purpose of report

To approve the Comprehensive Masterplan document for the Local Plan residential development site allocation at Low Road, Barrowby.

Decision

Cabinet approved the proposed Comprehensive Masterplan (dated June 2023) (Revision Q) enclosed at Appendix 1 of the report as the agreed Masterplan for the Low Road, Barrowby Local Plan allocation.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The alternative of not approving the submitted Comprehensive Masterplan had been discounted. Failure to approve the Masterplan document would have resulted in the planning applications for the remaining parcels of the site allocation being determined in the absence of an agreed masterplan, and this may have resulted in the applications being deemed contrary to the Local Plan policy requirements. This may also have resulted in planning permission being delayed and/or withheld for the site allocation.

This course of action would have implications for the Council in respect of the requirement to maintain a 5-year housing land supply and, as a result, could have led to planning applications for speculative development within the District. Similarly, it may have also resulted in appeals against the refusal/non-determination of planning applications for the remaining site allocation, and the Council may have been liable for costs incurred for defending any decision.

Reasons for decision

The submitted masterplan document was approved to ensure that there was an agreed masterplan for the Low Road, Barrowby Local Plan allocation, which would ensure the comprehensive and co-ordinated delivery of the remainder of the site allocation. This was important because it assisted in ensuring the Council met its corporative objectives in respect of delivering housing that meets the needs of all residents, through the delivery of high-quality, well-designed developments.

The Low Road, Barrowby was within the adopted Local Plan for a development of up to 270 dwellings. There were three parcels of land under three different developers; Persimmon Homes, Allison Homes, and Platform Housing. The Comprehensive Masterplan was the result of extensive engagement between officers, developers and the local community and had included formal consultation with Barrowby Parish Council, local residents and statutory consultees; this would ensure that the site was developed in a holistic and co-ordinated manner. The consultation had identified that the Masterplan had support.

The County Councillor for Barrowby was present and highlighted to Cabinet that there had been good communication with both Persimmon and Allison Homes prior to their houses being built. Platform Housing had built their planned house and supermarket prior to the agreement of the Masterplan. They had however listened to subsequent design concerns. The potential loss of Section 106 monies as a result of this would be raised through the relevant Council channels.

The Council was in continued discussion with Barrowby Parish Council with regard to Persimmon and Allison Homes. The Masterplan was not the end of the process; future applications coming forward for planning permission would have to take into account Section 106 funding.

29. State of the District Report 2023

Purpose of report

To present to Cabinet the State of the District report.

Decision

Cabinet approved the State of the District Report 2023.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not producing or publicly releasing the State of the District Report 2023.

Reasons for decision

The release of the State of the District Report 2023 ('the Report') provided a useful resource for all stakeholders: partner, businesses, civil society organisations and members of the public, whether resident to the district or beyond who wished to learn more about South Kesteven. All the information included in the State of the District Report was publicly available, but this report was a coherent and factually accurate one that was proposed to be updated annually. It also aided the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Report was updated annually to reflect the overall state of the district. It provided an up to date, balanced, objective view of performance across South Kesteven and highlighted the characteristics of the area whilst also outlining the strategic challenges that the district faced. These four key long-term strategic challenges could be summarised as:

1. Economic underperformance relative to neighbouring areas
2. Persistent pockets of severe deprivation
3. Increasingly aged population
4. Leading the district in tackling the climate emergency

Included was a suite of socio-economic indicators that corresponded to areas where the Council wished to see change.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- This document was the type of evidence that would be useful in a forum such as the Health Scrutiny Committee at Lincolnshire County Council.
- Many of the sources of data had information that was broken down to below Ward level, known as 'super lower output areas'. This could be made available by officers.
- The level of Gross disposable household income (GDHI) was the amount of money that all of the individuals in a household had available for spending or saving after they have paid all direct and indirect taxes and received any direct benefits. The level of GDHI per head in South Kesteven was the highest in Lincolnshire.
- This document was already being used by officers as part of the new Corporate Plan.
- The Office for Local Government (OFLOG) performance indicators also fed into this Report. These performance indicators also assisted, for example, with Levelling Up funding from the government. A specific study and discussion on the Earlsfield Estate in Grantham had commenced with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC); South Kesteven was 'Grade 3' in the levelling up gradings, which meant that it was difficult to access funding. The level of detail in the Report would mean that any hidden deprivation in areas such as Earlsfield could be highlighted.
- The Report would be made available in full to all members of the Council.

30. Refreshed Corporate Values

Purpose of report

An update on the refresh of South Kesteven District Council's corporate values and the activity that had taken place to identify potential new values. The proposed new values had been recommended by Employment Committee.

Decision

Cabinet approved the new Corporate Values of Trust, Empowerment, Accountability, Making a Difference, Supportive to All and Kindness.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Other popular options for proposed values included:

At #TeamSK:

- We care
- We're fair
- We make it happen

And:

- We're positive
- We trust
- We make a difference
- #TheTeamSKWay

The consensus was that the chosen proposed values encompassed the Council most accurately and the acronym style made the values memorable.

Reasons for decision

The values combined feedback from the employee and member workshops. In total, more than 200 individuals were involved in providing feedback on Corporate Values. The Values were unanimously recommended by Employment Committee in June 2023.

A new set of values would form the basis of recruitment, policies and processes as a consistent focus on nurturing the desired culture.

The layout of the log was as follows:



31. Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers

The Key and Non-Key Decisions taken since the previous meeting of Cabinet on 11 July were noted.

32. Cabinet's Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

The meeting closed at 3:16pm.