

Council



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's
Hill, Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Members: Councillor Paul Fellows, Chairman of the Council
Councillor Ian Selby, Vice-Chairman of the Council

Councillor Matthew Bailey	Councillor Tim Harrison	Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Emma Baker	Councillor Graham Jeal	Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Rhys Baker	Councillor Gloria Johnson	Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Ashley Baxter	Councillor Anna Kelly	Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor David Bellamy	Councillor Jane Kingman	Councillor Rob Shorrocks
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	Councillor Gareth Knight	Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Pam Bosworth	Councillor Philip Knowles	Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Pam Byrd	Councillor Zoe Lane	Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Richard Cleaver	Councillor Robert Leadenham	Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Helen Crawford	Councillor Bridget Ley	Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Steven Cunnington	Councillor Nikki Manterfield	Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor James Denniston	Councillor Paul Martin	Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Phil Dilks	Councillor Penny Milnes	Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren	Councillor Virginia Moran	Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Barry Dobson	Councillor Charmaine Morgan	Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Patsy Ellis	Councillor Chris Noon	Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Phil Gadd	Councillor Habibur Rahman	Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Ben Green	Councillor Rhea Rayside	Councillor Sue Woolley

Agenda

This meeting can be watched as a live stream, or at a later date, [via the SKDC Public-I Channel](#)

Published and despatched by democracy@southkesteven.gov.uk on Wednesday, 10 July 2024.

☎ 01476 406080

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

www.southkesteven.gov.uk

For those Councillors who wish to attend, prayers will be held at 1:55pm before the commencement of the meeting. Please be seated by 1:50pm.

1. Public Open Forum

The public open forum will commence at **2.00 p.m.** and the following formal business of the Council will commence at **2.30 p.m.** or whenever the public open forum ends, if earlier.

2. Apologies for absence

3. Disclosure of Interests

Members are asked to disclose any interests in matters for consideration at the meeting.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024

(Pages 7 - 26)

5. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

(To Follow)

6. Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by all Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2023/2024.

(Pages 27 - 46)

7. To amend Administration and Monitoring Fees set out in the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2012)

To agree the proposed amendments to the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document in relation to administration and monitoring fees for Section 106 (S106) planning obligations.

(Pages 47 - 54)

8. Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton

To update the Council on the outcome of the consultation undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton and consider the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group.

(Pages 55 - 74)

9. Members' Open Questions

A 45-minute period in which members may ask questions of the Leader, Cabinet Members, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and opposition group leaders excluding the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, Licensing and Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment Licensing Committees and Governance and Audit Committee.

10. Notices of Motion

a) Councillor Vanessa Smith (voting system)

The UK's current voting system (known as First Past the Post, FPTP) originated when land-owning aristocrats dominated parliament and voting was restricted to property-owning men.

Currently in Europe, only the UK and authoritarian Belarus still use archaic single-round FPTP for general elections. Internationally, Proportional Representation (PR) is used to elect the parliaments of more than 80 countries. These countries tend to be more equal, freer and greener.

PR ensures all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast. Under PR, MPs and Parliaments better reflect

the age, gender and protected characteristics of both local communities and of the nation.

MPs better reflecting the communities they represent in turn leads to improved decision-making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership of decisions taken.

PR would also end minority rule. In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power. Fair, proportional votes also prevent 'wrong winner' elections such as occurred in 1951 and February 1974.

The current FPTP system leads to some of the electorate questioning the point of voting since they do not feel their views are represented. This contributes to apathy and subsequent low turnout in elections. Engaging with the electorate is vital for a functioning democracy.

PR is the national policy of the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Reform UK and Women's Equality Party along with a host of Trade Unions and pro-democracy organisations. 31 District, Borough, City and County Councils have already passed motions asking for Proportional Representation to be used in General Elections.

PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. So why not Westminster?

South Kesteven District Council therefore resolves to write to H.M. Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws and to enable Proportional Representation to be used for UK general elections.

b) Councillor Vanessa Smith (divestment)

Motion to Divest Pension Funds from Fossil Fuels

SKDC notes that:

- that across the UK, local authority pension schemes invest over £16 billion into fossil fuel companies¹ - driving the climate crisis and risking workers' retirement pots in the process.*
- Lincolnshire County Council who manage SKDC pensions via the West Yorkshire Pension Fund invest £94.7m out of a total fund of £3.1bn in fossil fuel production, expansion and exploration. This places them just in the upper quartile as regards amount invested in fossil fuels.*
- SKDC has declared a climate emergency and that investing pension funds in fossil fuels is inconsistent with the council's climate ambition*
- the United Nations Paris Agreement commits our governments to keep the global temperature increase to under 2 degrees and aim for 1.5 degrees. Carbon budgets produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, United Nations and the International Energy Agency show that preventing two degrees of warming relies on not burning the vast majority of all proven*

fossil fuels reserves.

- former bank of England governor, Mark Carney, has warned that fossil fuel investments risk becoming “enormous, stranded assets”, i.e. worthless, unsellable shareholdings². Pension funds have a

fiduciary duty to consider the material risks of continued investment in fossil fuels. Fiduciary duty is defined by the Law

Commission as “ensuring the pensions can be paid, ensuring that this is undertaken at the best possible value”. The long-term sustainability of the SKDC should not be put at risk by investing in companies which are in terminal decline resulting in ‘stranded assets’. Nor should the Pension Fund fail to take responsibility for the credibility and financial support it currently provides to fossil fuel companies by continuing to invest in them even as they open up new fossil fuel reserves which the world can no longer afford to burn.

- the UN International Energy Agency (IEA) has called on financial bodies to stop investing in fossil fuel production³ and predicts that global oil demand will significantly fall by 2030. Expected action by governments to limit carbon emissions will ultimately leave fossil fuel reserves unsellable.

- pension funds have a legal duty to treat members “fairly as between them”. That means taking seriously the longer-term interests of younger members who will be most affected by the climate crisis.

- the current generation owes it to future generations to ensure we do not exceed the internationally agreed temperature increase threshold of 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial global heating levels, by removing support for the continued production of new fossil fuels. Climate change is the greatest challenge humanity has encountered. Warming in excess of 2°C will have catastrophic consequences. In order to have a chance of staying below this maximum upper limit of warming 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must not be burnt.

- public divestment from fossil fuel producers supports the introduction of effective climate legislation that would ensure the world achieves the level of carbon reduction required to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown.

The Council therefore commits to

1. Call on Lincolnshire County Council Pension Scheme to urgently put in place and act on:

a) A public commitment to immediately freeze any new investment in the top 200 publicly-traded fossil fuel companies with largest known carbon reserves (oil, coal and gas)

b) Divest from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds in the top 200 list and shift these funds to lower risk, ethical investments within 5 years

c) Advocate to other pension funds, including members of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum and Local Government Pension Scheme to do the same

d) To do the above in a timely manner - by setting up a working group to report back on a strategy to bring about divestment within three months

2. To put in place a transparent process by which they will carry out this divestment.

3. Work with other local District and County

Councils and councillors in Lincolnshire and other relevant employers in the pension scheme, to call on our shared Pension Fund to urgently and publicly end their investment in fossil fuel producing companies.

Sources:

1. <https://divest.platformlondon.org>.

2. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/21/climate-stranded-assets-show-the-need-for-rapid-energy-transition-carney-says.html>

3. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/18/stop-investing-in-fossil-fuels-to-meet-net-zero-target>

c) Councillor Sue Woolley

This Council restates and reaffirms its profound concerns regarding the unsustainable proliferation of solar farm developments in South Kesteven.

South Kesteven District Council hereby resolves to:

1. *Acknowledge the adverse impact of clustering solar farm developments around substations, leading to catastrophic consequences for the landscape, biodiversity and local amenities. Solar farms classed as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), numbering 15 in the Greater Lincolnshire area alone, will contribute to the industrialisation and transformation of open countryside, negatively affecting current and potential residents alike.*

2. *Affirm that land classified as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) should not repurposed for the development of solar farms. Considering the limited efficiency of solar energy (10-12%), due to the UK's limited sunlight, the Council regards it as a poor investment compromising food security and escalating food imports and costs, resulting in questionable net carbon savings.*

3. *Promote superior alternatives to solar development on farmland, endorsing the principles set out by the Solar Campaign Alliance. The Council supports the smarter deployment of solar on domestic and industrial buildings and recommend this be added to the local plan.*

4. *Express concern about international labour practices, union rights and use of forced labour, as well as the adverse environmental impact in the supply chain of solar panels, particularly in NSIP developments.*

This motion underscores our steadfast commitment to safeguarding food supply, preserving the landscape, our heritage and environment, while advocating for responsible and sustainable development within South Kesteven, aligning with our shared goal

of achieving net zero carbon reduction targets.

In support of Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council, this council resolves to send a copy of this motion to the Minister of Energy Security and Net Zero.

d) Councillor Murray Turner

Free School meals for Primary School children in South Kesteven

It has been proven that well fed children eating nutritious meals achieve a higher standard of educational results. Children growing up in the District of South Kesteven could expect to be more competitive in a nationwide economy having been given a better start in life through the introduction of the simple and effective policy of free school meals.

During the current financial crisis local parents would benefit from not having to fund school meals for their children. This Council notes the approximate £2,000,000 budget underspend by Lincolnshire County Council in the last financial year.

South Kesteven District Council therefore resolves to:

Write to Lincolnshire County Council to ask them to review their policy and funding for free school meals and request that the free school meals scheme be extended to all primary school age children within the South Kesteven District Council area.

11. Close of meeting

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 23 MAY 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 Steven Cunnington
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 Leadenham

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 Max Sawyer
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Rob Shorrocks
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
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
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and
Monitoring Officer
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Gary Andrew, IT Services Manager
Heather Green, Licensing Team Leader
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of Planning

1. Apologies for absence

Prior to the commencement of formal proceedings, the Chairman asked Members to join her in a minute's silence following the recent deaths of former Councillors Dorothy Dawson and Brenda Sumner. Councillors Ian Selby and Graham Jeal gave short speeches in memory of the former Councillors.

The Vice-Chairman then apologised unreservedly to the Council and residents for the way in which he spoke in response to a point of information raised by Councillor Ben Green at the Full Council meeting on 29 February 2024.

It was moved, seconded and following a vote **AGREED** to vary the order of the agenda to allow the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to take place prior to the Public Open Forum.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Ian Stokes

2. Election of Chairman

Members were invited to make nominations for the Chairman of the Council for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

A proposition was moved and seconded that Councillor Paul Fellows be elected as the Chairman of South Kesteven District Council.

A vote was taken, and the Council **AGREED**:

To elect Councillor Paul Fellows as the Chairman of the Council for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

The Chairman was invested with the chain of office and Members offered their congratulations.

COUNCILLOR PAUL FELLOWS IN THE CHAIR

Councillor Gloria Johnson addressed the Council, outlining the events she had experienced during her time as Chairman of the Council. She highlighted the support that had been given to her charities (Military vs Cancer, and Place2Bee for men) through fundraising and attendance at events. Thanks were expressed to the Vice-Chairman, as well as those officers that had supported the Chairman over the previous year.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

Members were invited to make nominations for the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

A proposition was moved and seconded that Councillor Ian Selby be elected as Vice-Chairman of South Kesteven District Council.

A vote was taken and the Council **AGREED**:

To elect Councillor Ian Selby as the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

The Vice-Chairman was invested with the chain of office and thanked fellow members and officers for granting him the honour of representing the District in a civic capacity.

4. Public Open Forum

There were six questions submitted to Full Council by members of the public. Questions numbered 1-4 were answered during the meeting as below. Questioners 5 and 6 were not present to ask their question, and would receive a written response:

1) John Sayer to the Deputy Leader of the Council:

Why does SKDC think that the marketplace redevelopment will bring in more trade for our businesses when the 2011 redevelopment didn't deliver any of the promises? What difference is levelling of the marketplace going to make this time? I've been in the marketplace for 20 years and this could be the final nail in my business; please help support local businesses today, thank you.

The Deputy Leader of the Council responded:

SKDC was aware of the lessons learnt from the 2011 redevelopment. The works to the market place would create a more flexible space with a greater scope for holding events and activities both in support of increasing footfall in the town in general, and supporting the continued development of the market. But this was only one of a series of actions to promote this retail and hospitality area. SKDC was painfully aware of the need to reinvigorate Grantham Town Centre and we were already seeing a very noticeable growth in the Saturday market; we were refurbishing and reopening the Conduit Lane public toilets, we were planning to redesignate Conduit Lane car park as short stay to attract more footfall, we were planning to introduce 2 hours free parking at Wharf Road car park and an hour's free parking in SKDC car parks elsewhere, and we were planning a series of promotional events for the area across the coming months. We had provided grants to businesses through the government's Heritage Action Zone funding to improve shopfronts and to refurbish Westgate Hall which was now due to reopen as a hospitality business, and we had also provided grants through the government's Future High Street Fund to convert upper floors above shops in the town centre into residential units which would increase local footfall for local businesses.

2) Paul Adams to the Deputy Leader of the Council

What arrangements will be in place after the market place work is completed both for deliveries but also to avoid anti-social behaviour from car drivers, motorcycles and cyclists with no road separation?

The Deputy Leader of the Council responded:

Although the carriageway would be at the same level as the surrounding paving, the extent of the carriageway, and the existing layby/loading/unloading areas would be clearly delineated from the pedestrian areas. The edges of the carriageway would be marked with a contrasting material from the surrounding York stone paving. Road users should not have any confusion over the extent or location of the road.

Also, we would seek to ensure that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) resolved any issues of 'loading-only' bays not being adequately signed in the future, as we are aware that is an issue at the moment.

The market place was covered by SKDC's existing CCTV provision which was currently in the process of being improved with better cameras, and the CCTV was regularly monitored for anti-social behaviour of all kinds – the Control Room was monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. CCTV officers worked closely with the Police and other necessary authorities to ensure that this was dealt with effectively. If necessary, a Public Space Protection Order could be brought in to

give SKDC officers enforcement powers to issue fixed penalty notices, as had already been seen elsewhere in the District.

During the project development phase, as part of the submission of the bid for funding the Council was required to evaluate the public benefit of all projects which were put forward as part of the bid. This included the requirement for projects to reach a certain value of land value uplift, as a marker of the wider economic benefit of the scheme.

There was an expectation of an increase in footfall in the Market Place following the completion of the works, which would be supported by a programme of events and activities. The Council monitored footfall in the market place, and would monitor the footfall throughout the works, and also following their completion. We were able to access this data after the end of the month.

Paul Adams asked a supplementary question; *Who was monitoring the CCTV footage, given there was often anti-social behaviour and a large amount of littering in that part of Grantham?*

The Deputy Leader advised that the CCTV Control Room was being moved to the Police Station, and it was hoped that this, along with better cameras would contribute to solving problems such as anti-social behaviour.

3) James Meadows to the Deputy Leader of the Council:

What are we going to do with regards to parking for businesses like the bakery and barbers on Westgate in Grantham as a result of the market place works, as it appears we are chasing customers out of Grantham town centre before they have arrived?

The Deputy Leader of the Council responded:

The administration was conscious of increasing footfall in Grantham Town Centre, as something needed to be done. There were plans to introduce an hour's free parking, with 2 hours free at Wharf Lane. Conduit Lane car park would be designated as a short stay car park. This would hopefully lead to a higher degree of footfall and a high turnover of people.

James Meadows asked a supplementary question: *Why were shopkeepers not told about the market place works?*

The Leader of the Council outlined that businesses in Grantham and across the District were being supported. There was a desire from the Council to improve Grantham Market and increase footfall. In order to do that there were some roadworks, carried out in partnership with LCC. He was sorry that the questioner

didn't find out; with hindsight there could have been further consultation. Works were proposed in 2019, with some consultation in 2020.

There was now a position where there was a scheme on the table, and there was a further scheme at Station Approach.

With events taking place in the market place there was a desire to encourage new and existing businesses to succeed and flourish.

4) Rupert Stanton to the Deputy Leader of the Council:

Why are the roadworks being carried out during the busiest time of the year? Almost all of the businesses in the market place are of a seasonal nature and have a lot greater footfall during the Summer than they do in the Winter.

The Deputy Leader of the Council responded:

The timing of the works was largely determined by the time limitations applied to the funding and how this fitted in with the County Council's delivery plan for the project and the availability of the contractors. In order to be completed within the required window for the funding works had to be under contract by September 2024, and completed by March 2025. This unfortunately limited the window in which works could take place.

Rupert Stanton asked a supplementary question; *What was being done to ensure that the roadworks were being completed in a speedy and efficient manner?*

The Deputy Leader responded that the roadworkers were under contract to LCC and that he would be happy to raise this issue with them.

5) Colin Lambert to the Leader of the Council for a written response:

I am a disabled amputee in the Council assisted living accommodation of Priory Court.

Sorry I cannot attend as I have a physio appointment, meaning I'm going to have to run the dangerous junction at the Nobody Inn. You are being forced to cross two live lanes to get into lane for the hospital, an accident waiting to happen.

When the development started they blocked half the road off at the Nobody Inn. I tried to call the "emergency" number given due to the chaos being caused at that junction to us, but the phone was switched off. That same day my food delivery couldn't get through due to the lorries delivering portacabins to the car park opposite the entrance to Priory Court. Food deliveries are my lifeline.

Unfortunately last week my neighbour had to call the emergency services due to her husband having a heart attack. Even the emergency services were not sure

how to get to them. I'm not saying that their delay led to the bereavement but if the emergency services are having troubles what chance have we got?

They ruined Westgate with the last lot of so-called improvements in 2011 taking away parking etc. at great cost, only to be told they are going to spend another £4.1 Million of public money to alter it again. I personally think putting it back to the way it was would have been the best idea.

I cannot comment for the rest of the residents of the Grange, Greyfriars, Priory Court, but with restricted access it is nothing but problems, the Council just don't care. When the fair is here we have to suffer for about 5 days, but the so-called improvement forced upon us is going to take 5 months.

A question to the Leader- why were the residents in the assisted living Grange, Greyfriars, Priory Court not consulted or considered around the 3 months of disruption caused by the Market Place redevelopment?

6) Kishor Darbar to the Leader of the Council for a written response:

I write in respect of the Council meeting that's due to take place on Thursday 23 May regarding the work taking place in Grantham marketplace to express my views. As the owner of the Conduit Tea Gardens, I am materially affected by this work and yet was never offered the opportunity for consultation on the matter, which is a disgrace!

When we first considered opening the Conduit Tea Gardens in 1987, Grantham market was the thriving, bustling hub of the community. We were certain, from our market research, that a café such as the Conduit could only thrive within the heart of such a hive of activity. It took us 11 months to put the café together with substantial personal investment and for the first few years we prospered as hoped. With the state of the marketplace as it is now, I would never have chosen to make such an investment.

Fast forward to 1995, and the closing of Grantham Leisure Centre together with the adjoining car park was the first death knell for the marketplace and consequently for our trade. Then came in Asda superstore in 1998 and footfall and trade has never since reached pre-Asda levels. This in itself was difficult, but not content with the introduction of a giant Asda, the council then considered pedestrianisation of the Market Place in 2011 as a legitimate option. This, quite clearly, was also a disaster, and put further pressure on trade. We have not seen the benefit from pedestrianisation that was promised. Instead, it has very much affected independent traders and the Saturday market stall holders as we have seen such a huge loss of footfall. In my opinion, the market now stands at less than 25% of what it was when we first started trading.

Then came 2020, and the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, with lockdowns and terrifying pressure on business that has only just ceased. Finally, we were hoping that this year may start to restore some stability for us - particularly over

the summer season, where our customers do enjoy sitting outside in our peaceful garden.

Imagine then our dismay to find out, very much at the last minute, that this work in the marketplace was to be undertaken throughout the whole of this summer. It really is a horrifying situation for a business that is doing its level best to keep its head above water. The access to the marketplace is all but shot now and Councillor Matt Bailey agreed that when the work does start in earnest next week, the level of dust and noise created cannot be anything but severely detrimental to our trade.

I understand that this Council meeting (which really should have been set before any work was agreed) was due to take place next Thursday. Clearly, I will be unable to join you in person, as my presence is vital in the café during the lunch period, so I wanted to put forward my views in writing. The Council must act fast to give the businesses in the marketplace any hope of weathering this storm created by the Council's own stupidity. It is inconceivable that we weren't consulted on the plans in the first place. We must be compensated for the severe inconvenience caused. Failure to do so, could lead to many small traders and businesses in the marketplace getting further into debt and potentially going under - thereby leaving the marketplace in a much worse position than prior to any work having been considered. We will not rest until we receive this compensation and look forward to seeing what's put in place by the Council as soon as possible.

5. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Tim Harrison declared a pecuniary interest in item 14, Update of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy as it directly impacted on his business. He would leave the Council Chamber during consideration of this item.

Councillor Harrison also declared that whilst he had premises in Grantham Market Place, it was 'non-trading' and therefore he would take part in proceedings related to item 17, 'Grantham Market Place'. He also declared that he had a family member involved in a business within 100 yards of Grantham Market Place.

6. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The public and private minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8 February 2024 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record.

7. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the outgoing Chairman's engagements.

The following members and officers made announcements to Full Council:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

The Housing department had previously been subject to national special measures. An urgent priority involved working closely with the Chief Executive and the Housing team to put in place new policies and practices. The Housing Regulator subsequently signed the Council's approach as legally compliant.

The Council had now exchanged contracts to buy 36 new homes close to Swinstead Road in Corby Glen at a cost of £6.5 million over three years. This had been the biggest investment in brand new social housing in more than a generation. Buying brand new homes was a cost-effective way to mitigate right-to-buy housing losses. The housing ranged from one-bedroomed to four-bedroomed properties.

Further progress had been seen on other new build programmes on Swinegate (Grantham), Larch Close (Grantham), Wellington Way (Market Deeping), Gorse Rise (Grantham), Kesteven Road (Stamford) and Bourne End Road (Colsterworth).

The Council had also acquired 21 properties specifically to house Ukrainian and Afghan families.

Leader of the Council

Work towards a new tier of local government in the form of the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority was progressing. The mayoral election was due to take place in May 2025; a shadow authority would be in place in the lead up to this election.

Second tier authorities in Lincolnshire would be represented on the Combined Authority by having four seats. Further details on this would be brought to a future meeting of Full Council.

Head of Paid Service

Further information was awaited on the upcoming General Election on 4 July 2024. The Council was also working with government to understand the statutory instrument on making the new Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority.

The Head of Paid Service had used her emergency powers to appoint District Councillor Penny Milnes, and County Councillor Alexander Maughan to Stubton Parish Council.

Grantham Town Council met for the first time on 14 May 2024 – congratulations were offered to their Chairman, Councillor Tim Harrison, and all Grantham Town councillors, some of whom were also district and county councillors.

8. Announcement by the Leader of the Council on the Size and Membership of Cabinet and Cabinet Members' Remits

The Leader of the Council, prior to announcing the members of his Cabinet highlighted the following points:

- There were some challenges ahead on the financial front. There was insufficient funding available to undertake all of the projects that the Council wanted to undertake; there would be some difficult decisions to take.
- Thanks were made to Councillor Richard Cleaver, particularly in regard to the work he contributed to the flooding relief effort. Councillor Cleaver would continue a role within the Cabinet but would no longer be the Deputy Leader.
- Hopefully a direct link would be made between the Youth Council, Cabinet and the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Despite the fact that there had been significant changes in Housing staff throughout the year, it had been a strong year for the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing. In addition to the housing secured over the course of 2023/2024, efforts were ongoing to secure further housing stock on the edge of Grantham.
- A new role of Cabinet Member for Housing was being created. Councillor Virginia Moran had previously been the Chairman of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and had delivered a number of housing related workshops across the year.
- Thanks were offered to Councillor Patsy Ellis for her hard work on the Environment and Waste portfolio throughout 2023/2024 as part of a Cabinet jobshare.
- The purple lidded bin scheme would be a key topic moving into 2024/2025. Contamination in silver lidded bins in South Kesteven had reduced, in part due to the work of the Cabinet Members for Environment and Waste.
- There was a determination to deliver on the East Midlands Councils' Councillor Development Charter.
- A Productivity Plan would be produced and returned to government by July 2024.
- Over £4 million had been secured for Grantham Meres Leisure Centre.
- Bourne Leisure Centre roof would be replaced as part of general maintenance of the building.

The Leader stated during his speech that the Cabinet would consist of eight members:

Councillor Ashley Baxter - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

Councillor Paul Stokes - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Councillor Rhys Baker – Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Councillor Richard Cleaver – Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement

Councillor Phil Dilks – Cabinet Member for Planning

Councillor Philip Knowles – Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Councillor Virginia Moran – Cabinet Member for Housing

Councillor Rhea Rayside – Cabinet Member for People and Communities

9. Programme of Meetings of Full Council, Cabinet and Committees for 2024/2025

Full Council was presented with a report of the Chief Executive which set out a draft programme of meetings for Full Council, Cabinet and Committees for 2024/2025.

The draft programme of meetings for 2024/2025 was proposed and seconded.

It was noted that Housing Overview and Scrutiny meetings were likely to start at 2pm. There was also a slight amendment to the printed programme, as the July Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny meeting was likely to move from its date of 25 July 2024 to earlier in July, subject to the agreement of the Chairman of that committee.

Having been proposed and seconded, taking into account the above suggestions, upon being put to the vote the draft programme of meetings for 2024/2025 was **AGREED**:

DECISION

That Full Council approves the programme of meetings of Full Council, Cabinet and Committees for 2024/2025, subject to the change to July's Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as attached as Appendix A to the report.

10. Appointments to Committees and Panels of the Council and the Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen

The Council was presented with a report of the Chief Executive on appointments to Committees and Panels of the Council and the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees.

Group Leaders were responsible for nominating Members from within their respective political groups to each Committee and Panel, in accordance with the political

balance and allocation of seats as calculated and set out in the Appendix to the report.

Nominations were put forward for Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees; whilst the Leader was able to appoint according to suitability and merit in his opinion, he was content to allow Full Council to vote on each appointment without his intervention.

There were a number of appointments to committees that could not be finalised during the meeting; therefore the membership of committees would be finalised outside of the meeting by Group Leaders.

Note: The meeting adjourned in the middle of this item for a 20 minute period for 3:50pm to 4:10pm.

A delegation in respect of appointments to Committees and the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees were proposed and seconded. Upon being put to the vote it was **AGREED:**

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Notes the political proportionality of the Council as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. Delegates the appointment of Members to its Committees and Panels to senior officers, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.**
- 3. Approves the appointments of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen as follows:**

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman - Councillor Murray Turner
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Barry Dobson

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman - Councillor Ian Selby
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Emma Baker

Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman - Councillor Bridget Ley
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Gareth Knight

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman - Councillor Lee Steptoe
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Zoe Lane

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman - Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Steven Cunnington

Licensing Committee

Chairman - Councillor Pam Bosworth
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Elvis Stooke

Governance and Audit Committee

Chairman - Councillor Tim Harrison
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Helen Crawford

Standards Committee

Chairman - Councillor Pam Byrd
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Sarah Trotter

Employment Committee

Chairman - Councillor Anna Kelly
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Gloria Johnson

Planning Committee

Chairman - Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Vice-Chairman - Councillor Penny Milnes

Chief Executive's Appeals Panel

Chairman - Councillor Richard Cleaver

11. Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies

The Council was presented with a report of the Chief Executive on the appointment of representatives to Outside Bodies.

The following nominations were proposed and seconded:

- East Midlands Councils – Councillor Ashley Baxter, in his capacity as Leader of the Council.
- The Local Government Association – Councillor Ashley Baxter, in his capacity as Leader of the Council.
- Health Scrutiny Committee (LCC) – Councillor Nikki Manterfield as a reserve, to replace Councillor Virginia Moran who was now a member of the Cabinet.

A second nomination was proposed and seconded for Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing to be appointed as the reserve member for the Health Scrutiny Committee. Upon the taking of a vote, Councillor Nikki Manterfield was successfully appointed.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, appointments to outside bodies were **AGREED**.

DECISION:

That Full Council:

- 1. Appoints Councillor Ashley Baxter, as Leader of the Council to East Midlands Councils and the Local Government Association.**
- 2. Appoints Councillor Nikki Manterfield as a reserve member to the Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee.**
- 3. Notes those appointments previously made at Table 2 of the report which would continue.**

12. Brownfield Land Release Fund Grant

Members considered a report on the bid of £2.8 million for the Brownfield Land Release Fund. The outcome of the bid was expected in summer 2024 and a delegation was sought to approve any grant award.

The report was moved and seconded. Upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED**.

DECISION

That Full Council delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council (Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development) to accept any Grant award received from the Brownfield Land Release Fund.

13. Proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution

Members considered proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution as recommended by the Governance and Audit Committee.

The following points were raised during debate on the various recommendations:

- Governance and Audit Committee could currently appoint Directors of Council-owned companies, but could not remove them.
- Every attempt would be made by officers to arrange training sessions at times to suit all members.
- Training sessions such as Prevent, and Safeguarding were also undertaken by some members as part of their job, or as part of being a Councillor at another local authority, therefore attendance at those sessions could be transferrable and would save Members having to attend a session twice. However, there were a few key elements of safeguarding training that were specific to South Kesteven.

- Training would be undertaken annually.
- Training sessions would largely take place before the General Election on 4 July 2024.

Having been moved and seconded, and following a vote, it was **AGREED** that:

DECISION

Full Council approves:

- 1. An amendment to the Council's Constitution, for clarity, to include provision for the removal of Directors of Council-owned Companies under the terms of reference of the Council's Governance and Audit Committee.**
- 2. That the following training and development sessions be mandatory for all Members of the Council:**
 - **Councillor Code of Conduct**
 - **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**
 - **PREVENT**
 - **Safeguarding**
- 3. That failure to attend training and development sessions within six months of the Council's Annual Meeting, or six months since election to office, means that a Member is unable to act on any committees or bodies to which they have been appointed until they have attended all mandatory training and development sessions. Attendance at the relevant training sessions as part of a Member's employment elsewhere will be accepted, subject to the Monitoring Officer's judgment.**
- 4. That the relevant Articles and Procedure Rules in Part 2 (Articles) and Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Constitution in respect of its committees or other bodies be amended to reflect (1), (2) and (3) above.**
- 5. That the following be included under the list of notices referred to in paragraph 24(e) (Planning and Planning Policy) in Part 3(c) of the Constitution (Responsibility for Functions – Delegated Powers to Officers) and the Planning Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 1 of the same part of the Constitution:**
 - **Urgent Works Notices (Listed Buildings)**
 - **Repairs Notices (Listed Buildings)**
- 6. That the Planning Scheme of Delegation in Appendix 1 of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) be amended to reflect that that Assistant Director of Planning is authorised to issue those notices listed in the document, subject to consultation with the Council's legal advisors.**

14. Update of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Note: Councillor Tim Harrison left the Council Chamber for consideration of this item

Members considered recommendations from the Council's Licensing Committee regarding proposed amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

The Licensing Committee referred five items within the Policy for public consultation, these were:

- Driver proficiency
- Vehicle condition check
- Vehicle age limits
- Setting fare scales; and;
- Flexible transport services

The results of this consultation was reported back to Licensing Committee on 10 May 2024 and they agreed to recommend a number of amendments to the Policy to Full Council, which were contained in red within the report.

The following points were highlighted during debate on this item:

- Best practice guidance for a fire in an engine bay was to 'get out'. If you were to lift up the bonnet during an engine fire it could cause further damage to the vehicle. Therefore, the recommendation was to remove the penalty point offence for not carrying fire extinguishers, and to not enforce fire extinguisher byelaws.
- A requirement for taxis to be no more that 5 years old was out of sync with other regions. Government guidelines were silent on the maximum age of taxis, but they did recognise the need for the best quality vehicles. They needed to be Euro 6 compliant and be subject to a rigorous testing regime.
- Taxi services were vital to local communities. In particular there was a low number of taxis available in Grantham that could accommodate wheelchairs.
- If a vehicle had been regularly serviced this was far more desirable than requiring an arbitrary maximum age. It also removed the unnecessary burden of purchasing a new vehicle every 5 years.
- It could be argued that a maximum age of 15 years was a sensible requirement given that Euro 7 engines would be available soon. Euro 6 compliance would soon be out of date with the availability of new engines.
- The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy had to be reviewed at least every 5 years but could be reviewed sooner if required.

Having been moved and seconded, and upon being put to the vote it was **AGREED**.

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Approves an amendment to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy relating to vehicle age whereby vehicles are required to be Euro 6 compliant at first registration, and delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to alter the policy accordingly.**
- 2. Approves those other amendments to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy recommended by the Licensing Committee as set out in the report at Appendix 1.**
- 3. Confirms that the review of existing licences includes applying the new application requirements to existing drivers at renewal.**
- 4. Approves the amendments at (1), (2) and (3) above are to take place from 1 August 2024.**

15. Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/2024

Note: Councillor Tim Harrison returned to the Council Chamber.

Members considered the Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee for 2023/2024, which included the indicative timetable and work plan for 2024/2025.

The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee highlighted the following that had taken place over the course of the year:

- Governance and Audit Committee gained assurance that the Council's governance, risk, and internal control environment remained robust and fit for purpose.
- In January 2024 the Committee approved the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 along with the External Audit Findings report 2022/23 and Value for Money reports 2021/22 & 2022/23 (provided by Grant Thornton, the External Auditors). At that time the Council was among only 10% of Authorities in the country to have received unqualified audit opinions on both the 2022/23 Accounts and Value for Money assessment.
- The issues with the completion of Audited Accounts in the sector was well documented with a September 2024 backstop imposed by Government for the 2022/23 Accounts. This meant that the Council was in an excellent position and had a robust platform for future closedowns and audits.
- KPMG will replace Grant Thornton as external auditors for 2024/25.
- The Committee approved the appointment of interim internal auditors in year to ensure the delivery of the 2023/24 plan. In January 2024 the Committee also approved the appointment of BDO LLP as the Council's new permanent Internal Auditors on a 3-year contract.

- The internal audit plan for 2024/25 was currently being prepared and would be presented to the Committee in June.
- All those Members and Officers who had contributed to the work of the Governance and Audit Committee over the last 12 months were thanked.

Having been moved and seconded, and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED**.

DECISION

That Full Council approves the Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee for 2023/2024 and approves the indicative workplan and timetable for 2024/2025.

16. Decisions Taken Under Urgency

Members considered a report setting out those decisions that had been made in the 2023/2024 municipal year under urgency provisions set out within the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Constitution.

Full Council **NOTED** the contents of the report.

17. Grantham Market Place - Possible interventions to encourage footfall and support businesses

Note: The meeting was extended to 5:30pm.

Members considered potential support measures for local businesses that may be adversely affected by the redevelopment of the Market Place in Grantham through the Future High Street Fund.

The Leader of the Council introduced the item, highlighting that the issue had been raised by Councillor Matt Bailey. The suggestion had been for a £50,000 hardship fund to support local businesses whilst roadworks were in place within Grantham Market Place. The Leader suggested that a hardship fund would be an unusual step for the Council to take. However, the reduction in footfall seen at the Market was being taken seriously, and measures were being taken to improve the situation in Grantham Town Centre.

The Leader proposed option 4 within the report, which was seconded.

Councillor Matt Bailey raised the following points:

- The Grantham Market Place redevelopment was a project that the people of Grantham felt they were not consulted on.
- The original plan had been to fully pedestrianise Grantham Market Place.

- There was a deadline of March 2025 to spend the monies granted through the Future High Streets Fund. It was not too late for the Council to change its plan regarding the Market Place. A letter could have been drafted to the Government to change plans for the Market Place but wasn't, and it was believed that this was a missed opportunity.
- The footpath on the outside of the Market Place was open to dust; people would not want to use outside café and restaurant facilities whilst the Market Place was a building site.
- Many local businesses did not support the Market Place redevelopment.

Note: Councillor Emma Baker left the Council Chamber and did not return.

In debating the item, Members of Full Council made the following points:

- £50,000 would not be enough to support a business, if this fund were to be successful a higher amount of money would be required. Alternatively, it would be more beneficial to put money into a fund for the completion of the project, to support events and ultimately local businesses.
- By creating a hardship fund for this project it could set a precedent and open the Council up to similar schemes.

Note: The meeting was further extended to 5:45pm. Councillors Nick and Penny Robins, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Vanessa Smith, Rob Shorrocks, Peter Stephens and Rhea Rayside had left the Council Chamber and did not return.

- The issue around the total amount of funding available is complex, as it was difficult to calculate how much income each business had lost as a result of the works.
- The details of any hardship fund needed to be thought through quickly. If a business could demonstrate a material loss then they could apply.
- There was sympathy with local businesses, however one issue was that the businesses affected were all of a different ilk. There were also several businesses affected that did not support a compensation scheme. Grantham Market had suffered a lot of criticism, but the new Market Manager had increased business due to putting in place new plans for the Market.
- Lincolnshire County Council were managing the redevelopment scheme on behalf of South Kesteven District Council.

Note: The meeting was further extended to 6pm.

- It was the best approach to not limit funding at this stage and instead focus it on any issues at the Market Place.

A request was made to amend the proposal of option 4 within the report and replace it with option 2. The Chief Executive confirmed that this had the effect of negating the substantive motion, and therefore it could not be accepted.

A request was made that a recorded vote on option 4 be taken, as in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.5 any ten Councilors present at the meeting of Full Council could request this:

For: Councillors Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Steven Cunnington, Phil Dilks, Barry Dobson, Patsy Ellis, Paul Fellows, Phil Gadd, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Murray Turner. (22)

Against: Councillors Matt Bailey, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Richard Dixon-Warren, Ben Green, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Nikki Manterfield, Paul Martin, Penny Milnes, Sarah Trotter, Mark Whittington, Jane Wood, Paul Wood, Sue Woolley. (19)

Abstain: Councillor Tim Harrison. (1)

Having previously been moved and seconded, it was **AGREED**.

DECISION

That Full Council not set up a Market Place Hardship Reserve, but increase the budget available to the already identified mitigation measures and the activities to promote footfall to the Market Place in the short and medium term. The level of this increase and the policy on its deployment is to be discussed at the next meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

18. Members' Open Questions

Due to time constraints, Members' Open Questions did not take place.

19. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 6:01pm.



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Council

Thursday, 18 July 2024

Report of Councillor Bridget Ley –
Chairman of Finance and Economic
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Annual Review of Overview and Scrutiny 2023/2024

Report Author

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

 james.welbourn@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by all Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2023/2024.

Recommendations

That Full Council notes the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/2024.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

All

Which wards are impacted?

(All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 As this is a look back at the previous year and is an annual report for noting, there are no financial implications.

Completed by: Paul Sutton, Interim Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Constitution requires that there is an annual report on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the previous year. The Constitution also allows for a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen to take place to discuss the content of the report; this year all Chairmen were consulted via email and asked to select notable pieces of work for the year. This is reflected in the Appendix to the report.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Under Article 6.4 of Part 2 of the Council's Constitution, the Chairmen of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees are required to determine the content of an annual report relating to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The report is to be co-ordinated and signed off by the appointed Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2 At the Council's AGM in May 2023 a new Overview and Scrutiny structure was agreed, increasing the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees from four to five. These Overview and Scrutiny Committees are:
- Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 2.3 In addition to the above, there is also a yearly meeting of the Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee which involves all Overview and Scrutiny Members.
- 2.4 The Constitution outlines that the Environment and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees can meet jointly to discuss certain issues, such as Planning and Licensing Policy. Other Overview and Scrutiny Committees can meet jointly as and when required.
- 2.5 This annual report covers those Committees that were in place during 2023/2024. It contains a summary of the topics that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered at their meetings during the 2023/2024 municipal year.

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1 The Council's Constitution prescribes that an annual Overview and Scrutiny report is produced.
- 3.2 The Council could opt to amend the content of the Annual Report, as presented.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 All Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees from 2023/2024 were asked to contribute to the content of the report.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/2024.

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SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Report of: The Chairmen of the Overview
and Scrutiny Committees

Annual Report 2023-2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 During 2023/2024 South Kesteven District Council had five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each comprising nine members of the Council.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are responsible for discharging the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the discharge of functions under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, which require councils to put arrangements in place to designate a committee as a crime and disorder scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring the Council's performance, considering its decisions, questioning how those decisions are made and recommending improvements. The committees may also undertake external scrutiny to examine wider issues that affect the District.

2. Role of Scrutiny

- 2.1 There are four key functions of scrutiny:
- 2.1.1 To provide a "critical friend" challenge to the Cabinet as well as external authorities and agencies
- Challenge by scrutiny should be constructive, robust and purposeful
 - Scrutiny should work effectively with the Cabinet and senior management
 - Scrutiny should provide an effective mechanism for the Cabinet to demonstrate public accountability
- 2.1.2 To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Scrutiny should take a community leadership role by focusing on issues of public concern
 - Scrutiny should have a constructive relationship with the press and media
 - Scrutiny should create the conditions for plural views and concerns to be considered
- 2.1.3 Scrutiny members should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Scrutiny should operate with political impartiality
 - Scrutiny should have ownership of its work programme
 - Scrutiny members should have a worthwhile and fulfilling role
- 2.1.4 Scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services
- Scrutiny should have access to timely and accurate performance information
 - The scrutiny work programme should be balanced, well co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes
 - Scrutiny work should be carried out with strategic objectives in mind
 - Scrutiny should contribute to improving local public services

3. Budget Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Bridget Ley

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Lee Steptoe

- 3.1 The Budget Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 15 January 2024 to consider the budget proposals for 2024/2025.
- 3.2 The Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered revenue and capital budgets associated with the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. It also included fees and charges proposals and information on reserves and balances.
- 3.3 Other considerations included:
- The timetable for the setting of Council Tax and budgets for 2024/2025
 - Ongoing works on major Council projects, such as the Depot
 - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)
 - Green waste collection
 - An update on funding for LeisureSK Limited
 - Proposed dwelling rent increases
 - Proposed increases for garage rents and service changes
 - The flooding response effort
- 3.4 As part of its recommendations, the Committee expressed its support for the proposals in the Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development's report in respect of the General Fund (both Revenue and Capital) and the Housing Revenue Account (again, Revenue and Capital). The Committee also recommended to Cabinet the proposed Band D 3% increase in Council Tax.

4. Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Paul Fellows

Vice-Chairman: Councillor James Denniston

During the 2023/2024 municipal year, the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions, and there were two further Joint Meetings involving its members. Several update reports and reports for information were considered by the Committee. There were a number of performance reports on LeisureSK Limited throughout the year.

A summary of other key items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Grantham Christmas Lights

- 4.1 The Committee recommended that £30,800 of the District's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation was utilised to fund one-off infrastructure costs to enhance the festive lighting offer for Grantham. It also recommended that a three-year hire agreement with Gala Lights was implemented in readiness for the Christmas 2023 period.

Cultural Strategy

- 4.2 At the June 2023 meeting of Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee members recommended the Cultural Strategy to Cabinet, underpinning the corporate priority of Healthy and Strong Communities. The Committee requested six-monthly updates on the topic, as well as raising ideas of how the Cultural Strategy could best be communicated to members of the public in the District.
- 4.3 At its meeting in March, the Chairman suggested that all Committee members took part in a tour of the Arts Centres and met colleagues within those settings.

Markets

- 4.4 An update on markets within the District was presented to the September 2023 Committee. The report was welcomed, and Members sought reassurance that the Council was committed to preserving, protecting and enhancing the markets.
- 4.5 Ongoing dialogue with shopkeepers and car parking charges were raised as areas that needed addressing, particularly in Grantham.
- 4.6 The Grantham Charter Trustees, alongside the Town Councils of Bourne and Stamford were tasked with overseeing a consultation regarding the future of markets, with the support of South Kesteven District Council. The Chairman of the Committee wrote to each of these organisations.
- 4.7 Members of the Committee were praised for the way in which they had rallied their local communities into coming forward with ideas to progress markets. It was recommended that further work be carried out in looking at markets through three small 'task and finish groups'.

HelloSK App

- 4.8 Items on the HelloSK app were considered by the Committee as its September 2023 and March 2024 meetings. Members received a history of the app and how it had been developed.
- 4.9 At the September meeting of the Committee members raised areas where they felt the app could be improved or amended to suit the Council's requirements.
- 4.10 The Committee received a further report on the app in March 2024, and they endorsed the recommendation in the report to cease the use of the HelloSK app and look to offset its features by initiating partnership activities with Destination Lincolnshire. Cabinet took the final decision on the cessation of the app's usage at its meeting in May 2024.

LeisureSK Limited Management Fee Request

- 4.11 The Chairman of LeisureSK Limited presented reports at November and January's Committees requesting a management fee from the District Council to secure the ongoing provision of leisure across the District. The report detailed the restructure and the

significant changes in key income costs that were increasing (fitness, swimming, staffing and utilities).

- 4.12 Concern that the Council was using taxpayers' money to bring the company up to operating standards was raised, along with reference to subsidies, grants and loans – it was confirmed to the Committee that the company was a subsidiary of the Council and was 100% owned by the Council.
- 4.13 Members held discussions and asked questions related to VAT returns, EPC certification and staffing costs and vacancies.
- 4.14 Members of the Committee subsequently recommended to the Governance and Audit Committee that there be a vote of no confidence in the Board of LeisureSK Limited.

Council Funded Arts Venues

- 4.15 Members considered an update on how the arts services had recovered from the impact of the pandemic. Although the behaviour of cultural audiences had changed, it was pleasing to see how the Council's venues had responded. The programmes on offer currently were returning to pre-pandemic levels. As detailed within the report, the Council's arts service was not only centred on the venues themselves, but it also included outreach activity and the provision of high-quality performances within rural areas.
- 4.16 It was suggested the Committee receive a tour of all Council-operated arts venues in the District. One Member informed the Committee of the Deepings short film festival. It was suggested other arts venues may consider the provision of showcasing short films with the assistance from local authorities.
- 4.17 An update on the replacement boiler in the Guildhall arts centre was requested and members wondered whether it would impact ticketed performances.
- 4.18 The Committee decided to support an application to Arts Council England for a project grant to undertake an audience development project.

Discover South Kesteven and the Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy

- 4.19 Members received information on how the Council's Tourism and Visitor Economy Officer collaborated with partners, stakeholders and businesses at a national, regional and local level. They also received an overview of website visits during January 2024.
- 4.20 Committee members fed their comments into the Strategy, which included whether the Council required the use of consultancy services, links with London, and links to Lincolnshire coast authorities to encourage the increase of footfall within South Kesteven.

5. Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Ian Selby

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Emma Baker

During the 2023/2024 municipal year, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions, and there were two further Joint Meetings involving its members. During the year, the Committee was visited by the Lincolnshire Environmental Crime Partnership, and the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, as well as members of the public. A number of update reports and reports for information were considered by the Committee; a summary of the items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Collection of Paper and Card

5.1 The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which outlined the adoption of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Lincolnshire. The Strategy set out how the seven Lincolnshire District Councils would work together with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) as members of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership. The Council introduced wheeled bins for the separate kerbside collection of residual waste and mixed dry recyclable (MDR) materials in 2007. All target MDR was currently collected in one silver bin or clear sack which is then sorted at a materials recycling facility.

5.2 Concerns raised by the Committee included:

- residents living in flats, terraced houses and houses with small gardens
- the accommodation of food waste bins in the future
- whether the collection of paper and card would be mandatory, and what education would be available for residents so that they could recycle more efficiently?
- could smaller recycling bins be an option?
- the carbon footprint of the manufacturing of the new purple lidded bins.

Upgrading Street Lights to LED

5.3 The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste outlined options for the provision of LED street lighting at two meetings during the year. The Council was responsible for 3,893 streetlamps. The Council was not responsible for streetlights on main roads such as the A1 and other highways. It was noted that the options presented in the report demonstrated a positive payback of approximately five years.

5.4 Questions and comments raised by the Committee included:

- the available funding for the upgrade and whether the Climate Change Reserve could be utilised
- more information was needed on the dimming and hours of operation of the lights
- further consultation with Town and Parish Councils was suggested
- costs of public consultation
- safety implications for pedestrians
- clarification on the ownership of street lighting between Lincolnshire County Council and South Kesteven District Council
- concerns over switching off lighting in some rural areas and remote footpaths
- the colour of the lighting and its effects on wildlife

A1 Litter issues

- 5.5 The Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection provided the Committee with an update on the litter issues on the A1 and principles around background work on the matter at two Committee meetings during the year. The District Council was responsible for litter picking on trunk roads, which included the A1. National Highways were responsible for litter picking on motorways and special trunk roads and had the overarching responsibility for the use of the A1 road and its maintenance.
- 5.6 Questions and comments raised by the Committee included:
- could specialist companies be approached to litter pick given that the A1 was an incredibly busy road?
 - a bad impression may be given to motorists passing through the District if there was a perceived drop in cleanliness of the road – could CCTV assist with catching perpetrators?
 - officers should undertake work in liaison with National Highways and provide a business case on costs and options
 - issues were hidden by vegetation on the side of the road
 - lessons learned by other authorities
 - consideration needed to be given to the financial implications of the works, particularly if any issues on the road were to return shortly after any cleaning
- 5.7 Members requested the Leader to lobby National Highways on behalf of the Council to enable possible funding opportunities.
- 5.8 When the report returned to Committee in December 2023 three options had been explored by officers as a result of the initial discussions involving members, and these were volunteer-based litter picking, a contracted service, or collaboration with National Highways.
- 5.9 Agreement was reached to work together as Councillors to identify the worst-hit areas on the A1 so that feasibility studies could be worked out and reported back to Committee.

Climate Action Strategy

- 5.10 On 14 March 2023, the first Climate Action Strategy document had been presented to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee recommended that the Strategy go out for consultation to gauge public opinion, and for a revised Strategy to be brought back to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.11 The consultation was open for just over four weeks from 10 July. As well as residents of South Kesteven, specific stakeholder groups identified included District Councillors for South Kesteven, Town and Parish Councils, and voluntary and community groups with an environmental focus.

- 5.12 Questions and comments raised by the Committee included:
- The results of the consultation should be integrated within planning policies and the Corporate Plan.
 - The issue of Climate Change should not be party political.
 - Consideration needed to be given to local businesses.
 - Could the Council promote the Climate Action Strategy in the local press?
- 5.13 The Committee recommended the revised South Kesteven Climate Action Strategy to Cabinet whilst undertaking with the wider community to inform the development of the Climate Action Plan.

Recycling of Batteries

- 5.14 Officers had been tasked to look at a number of options in respect of safe battery recycling which also included reviewing the scheme of another local authority who were collecting directly from the householder.
- 5.15 Members discussed the practicalities of any scheme, and how the Council's current recycling fleet would be best equipped to collect batteries from households. During discussion, members raised issues with residents supplying bags, the promotion of any scheme, whether vapes would be included, and whether there was value in collecting old mobile phones.
- 5.16 Members decided to recommend a kerbside collection, with residents providing their own bags as the most cost efficient and sustainable method.

Contaminated Land Strategy

- 5.17 The Strategy was last updated in 2010 following legislative and guidance updates. The revisions of the Strategy were a light touch refresh to reflect the current position across the District and ensure that legislation, addresses, and other details were current. There have not been any significant or major changes to legislation leading to a material change in the Council's approach.
- 5.18 Members of the Committee asked questions related to the inclusion of animal health within the Strategy. They also identified that the Planning process was closely related to considerations involving contaminated land and highlighted the reporting process for reporting contaminated land.
- 5.19 Members recommended that the updated Contaminated Land Strategy be subject to a four-week consultation, and further recommended that the Strategy be approved by Cabinet following any changes as a result of this consultation.

Tree and Woodland Strategy

- 5.20 The Council had identified the need to take further action with regards to enhancing and protecting the trees of the whole District, as well as those directly managed by the Council.
- 5.21 Following recommendations from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee a new Tree Officer post had been established for the 2024/25 financial year, in order to

deliver on the Council's work on trees on land within the ownership of South Kesteven District Council as well as to deliver on the actions of the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy.

- 5.22 Members discussed the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy with comments being made in respect of the amount of land that was available to plant trees having regard to clean energy and the use of solar panels, agriculture and the demand for housing. Comments were made that green spaces were disappearing rapidly, with questions raised as to whether the new strategy linked with the new Local Plan being compiled.
- 5.23 The Committee recommended the new South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024-2034 to Cabinet for approval.

6. Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Mark Whittington (May 2023-November 2023), Councillor Bridget Ley (from January 2024)

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Bridget Ley (to November 2023), Councillor Lee Steptoe (from January 2024)

During the 2023/2024 municipal year, the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven occasions, and there were three further Joint Meetings involving its members. The Committee as part of its remit considered a number of Financial Update and Budget Monitoring reports.

Whilst there were in-year changes of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Committee had settled into cross-party working. Members from outside of the Committee had raised items with the Chairman outside of formal meetings which had then been included on future agendas.

A summary of the items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Provisional Outturn Report

- 6.1 This report focused on the more significant variances, a financial threshold of £20k had been followed in order to focus on those variances that were considered material. An overview of the provisional outturn was presented in the main report and there were a number of supporting appendices that provided greater detail in respect of the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.
- 6.2 During discussion, Members raised the following points:
- Were all our investments low risk and actively managed?
 - With interest rates increasing, there was a positive result from holding funds in reserve.
 - It was important to know what the priorities were in reference to Climate issues so the funding for the Climate Reserve could be focussed accordingly. The Climate Action Strategy remained at a consultation stage so further oversight and scrutiny was required.

- It was understood that the Draft Climate Change Strategy was almost at public consultation stage and decisions would, in turn, be made at Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- What was the potential impact in the delay in signing off the 2021/2022 accounts on current balances?

6.3 The Committee recommended to Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee a number of balances to be carried forwards.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme - Veterans

6.4 Consultation on the Scheme had been undertaken in the past using various methods. The Council had written to everyone in receipt of Council Tax support, giving them a link on the website or the opportunity to complete a form if they were unable to access the internet. Last year it was recognised that the response rate of applications received was quite low, so the Council undertook a social media consultation. The requirement of the consultation was set in legislation and required the Council to advise what the current scheme was and to provide details of any proposals. This was required to be set by 31 January of each year.

6.5 During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- As the scheme was successful previously, a Member suggested there should perhaps be no changes.
- A Member suggested that veterans additionally be considered for the council tax discount scheme.
- Were Blue Light Services to be included within the discount scheme?
- The distinction was discussed regarding unpaid volunteers protecting the community and those who provided general volunteering services past.
- There was some support for the move from a 10% discount to a 100% premium on second homes.

6.6 The Committee agreed at its July meeting to extend the consultation of the Scheme to veterans, and officers modelled the financial impact of any scheme. Public consultation began in September 2023 and ran to October 2023; it was held with major precepting authorities, stakeholders and residents.

6.7 At the Committee's meeting in November 2023, members raised a number of further points related to any Scheme for Veterans, such as benchmarking, thoughts from the local community, the Armed Forces Covenant, and other groups that the Scheme could potentially be extended to (Emergency Services). At the conclusion of the item Members agreed to explore the feasibility of providing Council Tax relief exclusively to employed veterans residing in Band A properties, considering relief rates of 5 and 10%.

Review of Car Parking Charges – Grantham and Stamford and Car Parking Utilisation and Capacity Study

6.8 A review was undertaken to look at existing car parking stay bands and charges in the District and to benchmark these against other neighbouring local authorities of similar demographics; a report on this was considered by Committee in September 2023, followed by a set of draft tariffs in November 2023.

- 6.9 Members raised the following points during discussion:
- The Chairman acknowledged the complex process working out the different income levels and the varied needs for parking
 - How much was the survey likely to cost?
 - Bourne and the Deepings didn't have the High Streets that Grantham or Stamford had and charging for parking in those towns would deter custom from the centre of towns. Commuters need to be considered to prevent mass parking in residential streets.
 - Could District-wide season tickets be considered for residents parking?
 - How much was budgeted for the review?
 - The use of apps as that would exclude some residents
 - It was essential that residents were updated with the plans and thanked for their input.
 - The hour free parking in Grantham would reduce a lot of parking in town-centre streets which was welcomed. Lower prices for parking will encourage people to stay longer with the town centre – a necessity for local businesses.
 - It was important to encourage families into Grantham for shopping purposes
- 6.10 Draft car parking tariffs were presented to the Committee at its November 2023 meeting. The report brought forward a number of tariff options, and changes proposed as a result of analysis. After having considered the report, the Committee made recommendations to Cabinet on the preferred charging structure.
- 6.11 Members considered the results of the Car Parking Utilisation and Capacity Study and commented on issues related to timings of the survey, the different needs to the four main towns, accessibility and motorcycle spaces, the Council's income, and futureproofing. The Committee requested further work to be undertaken with respect to future car parking arrangements, as well as supporting the extension of the Cattle Market car park in Stamford.

Turnpike Depot Project

- 6.12 Full Council approved the replacement Depot Project in order to provide a new facility at Turnpike Close, Grantham. At its meeting in November 2023 Committee members were given the opportunity to further scrutinise the progression of the project to ensure there was satisfactory governance in place.
- 6.13 The Committee requested that the working group set up to support the project include a formal Cabinet Member presence, as observers.
- 6.14 Updates in respect of the project were tabled through the 2023-2024 year, and there would be regular updates on the project into 2024-2025.

St. Martin's Park, Stamford

- 6.15 In January 2024, the Committee received a report containing options for the next phase of the project at St. Martin's Park. The report was seeking a way forward, through a recommendation to Full Council.

- 6.16 During the meeting the Committee fully explored all options available to the Council, before recommending an option for all members to discuss at Full Council in February 2024.
- 6.17 Members would continue to receive updates on this largescale project into 2024-2025.

Economic Development Strategy

- 6.18 At its meetings in February and May 2024 the Committee received updates on the work undertaken to update the Economic Development Strategy. A Cabinet Member workshop had been created and all members of the Committee had been invited to take part and contribute.
- 6.19 Members welcomed the updates, and highlighted areas within the document of note, such as aspirations for future development, the timing of the publication of the final document, and specific projects that would play a part in the District's economic growth.

7. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Virginia Moran

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Lee Steptoe

During the 2023/2024 municipal year, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions. A summary of the items considered by the Committee is set out below:

- 7.1 A number of policies were considered by the Committee, with many being recommended to Cabinet for adoption. The policies included:

- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- HRA Disposal and Acquisitions Policy
- Total Housing Compliance Policy
- Private Sector Housing Houses of Multiple Occupation Licensing Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Total Housing Compliance Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy

Choice Based Letting System

- 7.2 The Committee reviewed updates regarding the implementation of the Choice Based Letting System in year. The new system allows applicants to play an active and engaged role in the allocations process, giving them the chance to bid for a property that suits them. They can access their account online, track their existing bids, see where they are placed on property shortlists and be notified if/when an offer is made. It gives applicants a realistic view of the likelihood of having a successful bid allowing them to make informed choices of the properties they would consider.

Voids

- 7.3 Committee reviewed data related to Voids. Completion of over 380 void properties was considered at the Committee in March.

New build properties

- 7.4 22 properties had been purchased which included 21 properties funded from the Local Authority Housing Fund. Nine Properties were in the process of being purchased which included eight properties funded from the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- 7.5 New build schemes had commenced at Swinegate, Grantham and Elizabeth Road, Stamford which would deliver 24 properties.
- 7.6 Planning permission had been granted for a 21-unit scheme at Larch Close, Grantham. There was also approval to purchase 36 units in Corby Glen between March 2025 and June 2028.
- 7.7 In previous years, the number of new builds was as follows:
2018/19 – 4 units
2019/20 – 13 units
2020/21 – 15 units
2021/22 – 9 units
2022/23 – 6 units
- Total – 47 units
- 7.8 The following inspections, assessments and updates were also considered by the Committee over the course of the year:
- 259 Asbestos inspections / re inspections - these are legally required annual inspections.
 - 147 Fire risk assessments (FRA) – these are blocks/schemes with communal areas and this is a legal requirement.
 - 147 Fire prioritisation tool reports on the blocks - the tool assigns a priority rating to buildings based on a series of questions about the structure, external walls, and flat entrance doors – (Best Practice).
 - 147 compartmentation surveys for Fire safety – this is in addition to the FRA and is far more substantial than anything previously undertaken by the Council in terms of the extent to which it examines the building fire safety.
 - The results from the above are directing the compartmentation program which is now underway with the first 15 schemes due to complete later this year.
 - LOLER (lift inspection) – 26 inspections – each lift receives 2 inspections a year.

8. Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Nikki Manterfield

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Steven Cunnington

During the 2023/2024 municipal year, the Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions, and there was also one further Joint Meeting involving its members. A key highlight from the year was the great work in achieving improved safeguarding training figures.

The Committee received a number of standing updates throughout the year on topics such as Customer Services, the SK Community Fund, Cost of Living, Changing Places and Safeguarding.

A summary of other items considered by the Committee is set out below.

Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs)

- 8.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning presented the report which provided an overview of the current end to end time for the delivery of disabled facility grants (DFG) to residents of the District, in comparison to the previous year. The Council were given £975,000 per year of Government funding from the 'Better Care Fund.' This fund was utilised to make agreed adaptations in homes in the private sector to assist people in having the best quality of life whilst remaining in their own homes.
- 8.2 Members highlighted the following issues within the report prior to noting it:
- Occupational health assessments were undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council. The delays in assessments had been overcome on their side as their waiting lists had reduced. The assessments were crucial to ensure the right adaptations are put into place.
 - the delivery time for DFGs
 - the majority of properties were surveyed depending on the adaptations required.

Community Engagement Strategy

- 8.3 A public consultation held via the Council's website and direct opportunities were offered to the voluntary and community sector organisations within South Kesteven to comment on the proposed content of the Strategy. The response to the consultation was higher from residents than it was from community groups, with general agreement of what was proposed. It was clarified that the strategy would be amended to reflect the new Corporate Plan and the plan would become a living document and could be developed over time.
- 8.4 Members contributed to the formation of the Strategy and suggested that actions related to Armed Forces and engagement with local communities be added.
- 8.5 The Committee then recommended the Strategy to Cabinet.

Crime and Disorder

- 8.6 At its meeting in March the Committee held a joint presentation including Lincolnshire Police. The key officers within the Crime Disorder and Local Partnership and their roles were confirmed along with the multi-agency approach which was to consist of joint patrols and visits and a shared system of case management. CCTV played a crucial role in the partnership, particularly working to avoid criminal activity.
- 8.7 Inspector Mark Hillson provided an overview of the crime data from the last year, confirming that shoplifting had seen the most significant increase. The Committee was also informed that crime was reducing overall although business crime had seen a

national increase. Lincolnshire Police had been working with partners to target prolific offenders and support crime prevention.

- 8.8 Members raised issues during discussion on the subject of Community Protection Notice; the numbers of Policemen on patrol at any point; the rise in drug trafficking and possession of weapons; CCTV relocation, and rural communities.

Safeguarding

- 8.9 The Cabinet Member for People and Communities presented the report that provided an update on the progress of the review and the updated Safeguarding Policy 2024 – 2027.
- 8.10 A multi-agency approach was essential in assisting transient families.
- 8.11 Working Together to Safeguard Children was statutory guidance updated in December 2023 – it was last updated in 2018. Many of the changes to Working Together related to partner organisations such as Lincolnshire County Council – Social Care, Care Leavers, Child protections etc and Health including changes around procedures relating to child death, for example.
- 8.12 The importance of multi-agency working was highlighted to ensure successful outcomes for children and young people. This would relate to cases of early help through to child protection.
- 8.13 It was confirmed that there were 63 relevant officers across Housing, Public Protection and Revenues and Benefits. The percentage of relevant, or ‘community facing’ officers at that time who had completed or who were undergoing year 1 training stood at 84%.

9 Joint Committees

- 9.1 There were three Joint Scrutiny meetings held in year:
- **Joint Meeting of the Finance & Economic and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (25 July 2023).** This was an extraordinary meeting on the subject of the replacement depot project at Turnpike Close. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that an allocation of £8m be included in the General Fund Capital Programme to enable the construction of the new Depot. It also recommended to Cabinet a review of the contingency calculation.
 - **Joint Meeting of the Finance & Economic and Culture & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee (9 January 2024).** This was an extraordinary meeting on the subject of proposed funding for the Deepings Leisure Centre Community Interest Company. The Committee recommended that Full Council provide one-off funding to the sum of £850,000 based on conditions provided within the report.
 - **Joint Meeting of the Environment and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (18 March 2024).** This was an extraordinary meeting looking at the response of the Council to flooding in the District. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that a fund be made available for direct costs in relation to any emergency, and also asked for a report to be added to the workplan of

Environment Overview and Scrutiny investigating options available to combat flooding.



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Council

Thursday, 18 July 2024

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning

To amend Administration and Monitoring Fees set out in the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2012)

Report Author

Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of Planning

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Purpose of Report

To agree the proposed amendments to the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document in relation to administration and monitoring fees for Section 106 (S106) planning obligations.

Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Approves the proposed amendments to the adopted Planning Obligations supplementary Planning Document in relation to Administration and Monitoring Fees for Section 106 (S106) planning obligations as set out in Table 1 of this report.**
- 2. Agrees that the Administration and Monitoring Fees for Section 106 planning obligations are reviewed and agreed annually through the Council's budget setting process.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Sustainable South Kesteven Enabling economic opportunities Housing Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	(All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The introduction of a monitoring fee will enable the Council to recover the staffing and other associated costs involved in the monitoring of S106 obligations. The work involved in properly monitoring S106 agreements is complex, and it is essential that a robust process is in place to ensure that obligations are complied with. Having a robust system will also support spending any financial contributions that are secured.
- 1.2 Whilst the post of Infrastructure Delivery Officer has been created to carry out this role, any income generated will be linked to development rates and there will be a lag between income being received and the introduction of this monitoring fee. Therefore, the income should not be budgeted as a guaranteed income stream.
- 1.3 Fees will need to be monitored to ensure they are reflective of the true costs of administration and monitoring of S106 agreements.

Completed by: Paul Sutton Interim Head of Finance (Deputy 151)

Legal and Governance

- 1.4 Section 93 of the Local Government Act Council and the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 provide the legislative basis upon which the Council can charge for the monitoring and administration of S106 agreements.

Completed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The planning process supports the delivery of the Council's economic growth and sustainable neighbourhood ambitions, as identified in the Corporate Plan (2024-2027). This includes housing and economic development objectives identified in the Local Plan. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which means balancing economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 2.2 A Section 106 (S106) agreement is a legally binding agreement or 'planning obligation' between a local planning authority, like South Kesteven District Council and a property owner or developer. The purpose of a S106 agreement is to mitigate the impact of the development on the local community and infrastructure. Typically, these agreements address issues such as:
- Affordable housing
 - Highways
 - Education
 - Public open space and leisure
 - Town centre improvements
- 2.3 When planning obligations are negotiated, it is necessary to ensure the Planning Authority consider the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) (CIL Regulations), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan. The NPPF applies only to England and was first published in 2012. It provides the framework for producing Local Plans for housing and other development, which in turn provide the background against which applications for planning permission are decided.
- 2.4 Whilst the Council has not adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy or CIL, the regulations also provide certain rules that apply to S106 agreements. Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations sets out the three legal tests that must be complied with when entering into a planning obligation. Essentially, any obligation must be;
- (a) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - (b) Directly related to the development; and
 - (c) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

- 2.5 The Council is able to set charges to the recover cost of delivering discretionary services. For the Planning Service, this means the Council can recover costs associated with monitoring Section 106 agreements. The legal basis for this charge can be found in the Local Government Act 2003 (Section 93) and clarified in an amendment to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CIL) (2010 as amended) in 2019.
- 2.6 The CIL Regulations set out that any monitoring or administration fee should be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development and does not exceed the authority's estimate of its costs of monitoring the development over the lifetime of the planning obligations relating to that development.
- 2.7 The Council has an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relating to planning obligations (see **Background Papers**). Whilst the document sets administrative costs, these have not been reviewed since 2012, despite costs of monitoring (principally staffing costs) increasing.
- 2.8 The SPD suggests a monitoring or administration charge should be applied for proposals of more than five dwellings and 1,000 Square Metre (sqm) for commercial developments. Whilst an administrative charge is included in the SPD, a court case in 2015 cast doubt on the ability of a Planning Authority to apply a monitoring fee. This has since been superseded by the amendment to the CIL Regulations (2019) as referenced above (paragraph 2.4).
- 2.9 Proper administration of the S106 monitoring regime is resource intensive and it is considered appropriate to ensure monitoring is cost neutral to the Council.
- 2.10 At the February 2024 meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC) it was resolved to *"recommend to Full Council that the charging mechanism for the administration and monitoring of Section 106 agreements as currently set out in the "Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2012) was updated"*.

Why a monitoring fee is necessary.

- 2.11 By updating and consistently applying a monitoring fee, the Council will be able to provide a more efficient service for all matters related to the monitoring of S106 planning obligations. This will be of benefit to all parties involved in the process.
- 2.12 It is acknowledged developments need to be viable to be delivered and any monitoring fees will be added to the cost of the development. The legislation requires monitoring fees to be proportionate and cover the costs associated with the delivery of the service i.e. aiming for a cost neutral position.
- 2.13 There are two distinct forms of monitoring within S106 agreements:

- Monitoring of commencement and phasing triggers to ensure financial contributions are collected; and
 - Physical monitoring of compliance with the terms of the agreement e.g. monitoring the physical delivery of infrastructure on site or delivery of affordable housing.
- 2.14 Obligations relating to highways and education are usually a County Council matter. Where Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is a party to the agreement and responsible for collecting and monitoring obligations, it will be a matter for that authority to set its own monitoring fees. South Kesteven District Council will only charge monitoring fees for those elements that it is responsible for monitoring, collecting and using and not for those elements which LCC will be responsible for.
- 2.15 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to keep a copy of any planning obligation, along with details of any modifications or discharge of the obligation. Every LPA in receipt of developer contributions is required to publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) at least annually (see **Background Papers**).
- 2.16 To ensure a development is delivered in line with its planning permission, it is important the Council effectively monitors planning obligations. This includes ensuring in circumstances where contributions have been secured in lieu of on-site infrastructure provision, this is spent appropriately. Unspent contributions should be repaid back to the developer in accordance with any agreed clawback clauses.
- 2.17 The PPG states that *“monitoring fees can be a fixed percentage of the total value of the s106 agreement or individual obligation; or they could be a fixed monetary amount per agreement obligation (for example, for in-kind contributions”*, and confirms that Authorities should consider setting a cap to ensure any fees are not excessive.
- 2.18 Work involved in monitoring S106 planning obligations includes:
- Recording the details of the S106 planning obligation on a database,
 - Recording triggers for the obligation contained within the agreement,
 - Monitoring the progress of the development to identify when obligations are due to be paid, this includes site visits to monitor development progress,
 - Writing to developers to request financial contributions and ensuring that they are paid by the relevant deadline, this also includes calculating any indexation and late payment amounts,
 - Working with the enforcement team where there are breaches of any obligation,
 - Liaising with third parties to ensure that they are aware of any contributions that have been secured,

- Manage the process through which third parties can request financial contributions are released to them, ensuring this complies with requirements of the planning obligation,
- Recording how financial contributions are spent,
- Working with the planning policy team to prepare the Infrastructure Funding Statement and report as appropriate on delivery of infrastructure.

Setting a proportionate fee

- 2.19 In setting any fees, the Council is required to be proportionate and should not exceed the overall estimated costs of delivering the service. Officers have reviewed the approach taken by other Local Authorities to ensure the proposed fees is similar.
- 2.20 Many Authorities apply a 5% fee for financial contributions to cover the costs of monitoring. The Government also allows 5% of CIL receipts to be used for administration of the Community Infrastructure Levy, as it considers this a proportionate fee for CIL given requirements to effectively monitor collection and spending.
- 2.21 Given Government considers 5% is a reasonable monitoring fee, Officers consider this would be a reasonable fee for the monitoring of Section 106 agreements.
- 2.22 Not all obligations relate to financial contributions yet there are still requirements to monitor those agreements. For example, in relation to affordable housing, the Council will need to ensure the agreed mix is provided at the relevant triggers and a suitable registered provider is on board to manage the affordable housing.
- 2.23 As illustrated in **Table 1**, it is proposed the total monitoring fee per agreement is capped at £15,000. This is an uplift from the £10,000 cap set out in the 2012 SPD and has been calculated by applying indexation to the 2012 cap. The use of a cap will ensure the monitoring fee is reasonable and does not exceed the actual cost of monitoring.
- 2.24 Larger developments (over 1,000 dwellings or 5,000 sqm floorspace) are ordinarily complex, with multiple obligations payable at several trigger points spanning many years. Recent and current examples include the urban extensions to Grantham and Stamford, as well as the Designer Outlet schemes. In these cases, to ensure any administration and monitoring fee covers the costs of monitoring, all fees will be calculated on a case-by-case basis. For the larger developers where a bespoke fee is required, this will be based on the estimated time it takes to monitor the agreement using the Council's published hourly rates.
- 2.25 There are some initial administration costs associated with monitoring S106 agreements which are similar, regardless of the number of dwellings or the amount

of floor space proposed. For this reason, a one-off charge of £1,500 to monitor agreements is proposed where there are no financial obligations secured. This amount will also be the minimum monitoring fee in all other cases. It is recommended that the Administration and Monitoring Fees are reviewed annually through the usual fees and charges review process which forms part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

2.26 To ensure the fee continues to cover the costs of monitoring Section 106 planning obligations, it is recommended the proposed monitoring fees are reviewed on an annual basis and increased in line with the indexation factor set by the Building Cost Information Service All-in Tender Price Index (BCIS TPI). This will ensure monitoring fees are kept up to date, in-line with other financial obligations required by S106 Agreements.

2.27 The proposed monitoring fees are set out in **Table 1**, as follows:

Table 1: Proposed monitoring fees		
	Fee 2023/2024	Comment
Section 106 – Non-Financial Up to 1,000 dwellings or 5,000 sqm floorspace	£1,500	One-off fee for any Section 106 agreements with non-financial clauses. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and subject to indexation
Section 106 – Financial Up to 1,000 dwellings or 5,000 sqm floorspace	£1,500 minimum monitoring fee plus 5% of financial obligations	Monitoring fee capped at a maximum of £15,000 per agreement. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and subject to indexation
Section 106 agreements with over 1,000 dwellings or 5,000 sqm of non-residential floorspace	Variable, to be agreed on a case-by-case basis.	Each development over 1,000 dwellings or more than 5,000 sqm floorspace will be worked out on an individual basis based on the amount of monitoring work involved. Any agreed monitoring fee will be subject to indexation

3. Key Considerations

3.1 The Council is required to monitor planning obligations and publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement. Updating the monitoring and administration fees that the Council charges will assist in recovering the associated costs and allow the Council to adequately resource the service. This will ensure that the Council is able to robustly monitor and enforce S106 agreements.

3.2 There are no budget setting implications for this financial year because there will be a lag between the amended fees and their collection.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 In relation to the monitoring and administration fees, the alternative is to retain, as set out in the adopted Planning Obligations SPD (2012), the existing fees. However, these have not been reviewed in the last 12 years, despite costs of monitoring (principally staffing costs) increasing since the previous charge was agreed in 2012. Therefore the 'do nothing' option has been discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The reason for the recommendation is to ensure the Council can recover the costs associated with the monitoring of S106 planning obligations. This will ensure the Council can robustly provide this service. The amended monitoring charge would update the overall cap applied and provide clarity about when to apply the charge.
- 5.2 As this is an updated charge and any income received is linked to development rates which are not controlled by the Council, it is not proposed to budget for any income in 2024/2025. This will be monitored and may change in future years.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Report to Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee; [S106 Report.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document: June 2012, available online at:

https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/INF8_Planning_Obligations_SPD_2012.pdf

Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022-2023: [Infrastructure funding statement 2022-2023.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Council

18 July 2024

Report of Councillor Tim Harrison,
Chairman of the Community
Governance Working Group

Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton

Report Author

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

 graham.watts@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To update the Council on the outcome of the consultation undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton, and consider the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group.

Recommendations

That the Council does not propose any changes to the community governance structure for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton, ending the Community Governance Review process.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Community Governance Review is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) and statutory guidance issued in 2010 by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 1.3 Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires Councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in the area and be effective and convenient.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 At its meeting on 29 February 2024 Full Council resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review in relation to the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxtun further to a notice of motion submitted by Councillor Ben Green.
- 2.2 A Community Governance Review Working Group was established, consisting of Councillors Tim Harrison (Chairman), Bridget Ley and Charmaine Morgan, to oversee the review.
- 2.3 The Terms of Reference for the review was approved by Full Council on 29 February 2024.
- 2.4 The Working Group has met twice - once to consider the method and content of the consultation document associated with the first formal consultation stage of the process and then again to consider the results of the consultation.

- 2.5 Section 93(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act requires the principal council to consult with local residents and any other third parties who might have an interest.
- 2.6 The public consultation began on 8 March 2024 and closed on 19 April 2024. The aim of the first consultation stage was to gauge public opinion on the status of the community governance arrangements for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton and whether there were more appropriate arrangements that could be put in place. Options included the merger of Little Ponton and Stroxton with Great Ponton, the formal grouping of the two Parish Councils or changing the status of Little Ponton Parish Council to a Parish Meeting.
- 2.7 During the initial consultation, an information document and printed survey together with accompanying letter was sent to a total of 260 residential properties to those residents of Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton.
- 2.8 Email notifications together with the link and QR code to access the survey were sent to District and County Councillors, Parish Clerks for the parishes, the Member of Parliament and Lincolnshire County Council. Including residents and key stakeholders, 334 individuals were contacted and invited to participate in the survey.
- 2.9 Responses to the survey could be made online or by completing the paper version which had been delivered to all residential households in Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton.
- 2.10 A drop-in session was also held on 21 March 2024 between 3pm and 7pm at St Guthlac's Church in Little Ponton for residents to ask any questions regarding the Community Governance Review process.

3. Community Governance Review Process

- 3.1 In carrying out the Community Governance Review, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires the District Council to have regard to the identities and interest of the community. This means that Community Governance arrangements should reflect and be sufficiently representative of people living across the whole community. In addition, the Council is required to have regard to the results of the consultation.
- 3.2 Before making any recommendations or publishing draft proposals, the Council is required to take account of the views of local people and stakeholders and ensure that the proposals reflect the identities and interests of the community in the area and are effective and convenient.

4. Key Considerations

- 4.1 Detailed analysis of the responses received to the survey as part of the public consultation process are included at **Appendix A**.
- 4.2 The Community Governance Review Working Group met on 8 July 2024 to consider the responses received and to agree any recommendations to Full Council on next steps of the review.
- 4.3 The survey results provided a clear indication of support for maintaining the existing arrangements, especially when breaking down the results to individual Parish Council level whereby 79.2% of respondents from Little Ponton and Stroxton outlined this as their preference. 65.9% of all respondents stated that they wanted the arrangements to stay as they are.
- 4.4 The Working Group expressed concerns regarding allegations made that there was no evidence to suggest Little Ponton and Stroxton had held public meetings since the commencement of this Community Governance Review. Similarly, it appeared that the Parish Council had not submitted its accounts for a number of years.
- 4.5 Having considered the outcome of the public consultation process and the concerns raised in paragraph 4.4, it was agreed that the community governance arrangements for an area were different to the way in which an individual Parish Council operated. The Working Group therefore agreed that the issues with Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council did not relate to the community governance arrangements, but instead were more operational matters pertaining to the way in which the Parish Council conducted its business.
- 4.6 The Working Group was content, based upon the response to the public consultation, that Little Ponton and Stroxton should continue to have its own Parish Council. However, the Working Group requested that the Council's Monitoring Officer writes to the Parish Clerk to highlight the following:
- The Community Governance Working Group is concerned that there is no evidence of Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council having held a public meeting since the commencement of the Community Governance Review
 - The Community Governance Working Group is concerned that the Parish Council has not submitted its accounts for a number of years, despite continuing to receive a precept year on year
 - Any Parish Councillor who has not attended a meeting within a six month period would be disqualified in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, with the District Council able to use its emergency powers to appoint local District or County Councillors as temporary Parish Councillors to ensure that the Parish Council can be quorate and conduct essential business

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Option 1 – Full Council to accept the recommendation of the Community Governance Review Working Group and propose no changes to the community governance arrangements associated with Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council. This would end the Community Governance Review process.
- 4.2 Option 2 – Full Council to propose changes to the governance arrangements to Little Ponton Parish Council, which would need to include boundary and warding arrangements and confirmation of the number of Parish Councillors required for any new arrangements. The Council's proposal would then be published and form part of a second formal stage of public consultation.
- 4.3 Option 3 – Full Council to recommend any further areas of consultation or investigation for the Working Group to consider.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendation takes into account the responses received as part of the formal consultation exercise undertaken, together with consideration given to this matter by the Community Governance Review Working Group.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Details relating to the consultation undertaken as part of this matter is set out in the body of the report.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – results of the public consultation process

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SOUTH
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COUNCIL

Community Governance Review – Little Ponton and Stroxton Consultation Results Report



Deborah Wyles

May 2024

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Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update members of South Kesteven District Council's Community Governance Review Working Group (CGRWG) for Little Ponton and Stroxton and Full Council with the results of the Community Governance Review (CGR) for Little Ponton and Stroxton consultation.

Scope

2. This consultation was undertaken to:
 - a) Inform the decision that will be taken by SKDC in respect of the local governance arrangements for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton. Three proposals were identified. These were:
 - To abolish the Parish Council of Little Ponton & Stroxton and re-classify the parish council as a Parish Meeting. No elections are held to elect councillors and the number of powers available to the parish meeting is limited.
 - To group Little Ponton & Stroxton Parish with Great Ponton Parish Council under a common council (an arrangement where two or more parishes join under a common parish council). Each parish retains its separate identity, electing at least one member onto the representative body but decisions about precepts and spending priorities are made by the common parish council.
 - To keep things as they are. The parish council of Little Ponton & Stroxton remains separate to the parish council of Great Ponton.
 - b) Inform the decisions that will be taken by SKDC in respect of arrangements for the new parish council, should either of the alternative proposals be adopted. These include:
 - The name of any proposed grouped parish council (if applicable)
 - The number of councillors representing each of the parishes in a grouped parish council (if applicable)
 - The date of any proposed election of councillors (if required)
3. The results included in this report are from the first of two phases of consultation which may be undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton. They will be used by the Community Governance Working Group and Full Council to inform their decision as to how the review will proceed. Should SKDC's Full Council decide to put forward some draft proposals on changes to the way in which this area could be governed locally (the second stage of consultation) a further consultation document will be sent to respondents who have indicated they would like to be kept informed of the outcome of the first stage of the review.

Objectives

4. The objectives of the consultation were identified as follows. To:
 - a. Ensure those who may be affected by the proposals (i.e., those living or working in Little Ponton and Stroxton or Great Ponton) were aware that the community governance review was taking place and were given the opportunity to participate
 - b. Measure the degree of support or otherwise for each of the proposals

- c. Communicate the potential changes that may occur if either of the proposals advocating a change in governance arrangements were approved, and gather feedback on those proposed changes
- d. Inform the decisions that will be taken by SKDC in respect of the arrangements for a parish council for Little Ponton and Stroxton (which will form the basis of the second stage of consultation)
- e. Enable respondents to ask questions/seek clarification on any of the issues raised

Timescales

- 5. Preparatory work was undertaken during February and the first week of March. The consultation was open for six weeks – from 8 March till 19 April 2024. The results were presented to the CGRWG on 8 July 2024. A report detailing their recommendations will now be prepared for Full Council on 18 July 2024, to agree the next steps.

Stakeholders

- 6. The stakeholders were identified as follows:
 - a) Households in Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton
 - b) South Kesteven District Councillors
 - c) Lincolnshire County Councillors (South Kesteven divisions)
 - d) Lincolnshire County Council
 - e) The Members of Parliament for the Grantham and Stamford and Sleaford and North Hykeham constituencies
 - f) Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council and Great Ponton Parish Council
 - g) Any other person/organisation who appear to have an interest

Methodology

- 7. Different methods of engagement were used for different types of stakeholders. The table below identifies the method(s) used for each:

Stakeholders	Method(s)	Details
Households in the area under review. Also includes householders in the parish area adjacent to the area under review.	Direct mail to all households in Little Ponton and Stroxton and also those in Great Ponton	Copies of survey and covering letter sent to 260 households on Friday 8 March. No surveys returned as undeliverable.
	Dedicated page on SKDC 's website www.southkesteven.gov.uk/GranthamCGR	Page dedicated to the consultation went live on 8 March 2024. Contained link and QR code to survey

Members of SKDC's CGR for Little Ponton and Stroxton Working Group	Meetings to discuss the approach / content of consultation	The CGR Working Group met twice. Members were: Cllr TH, Cllr BL and Cllr CM Purpose of first meeting: To approve content for consultation Purpose of second meeting: To make recommendation and approve next steps in the CGR process
Other members of SKDC, Lincolnshire County Council, LCC South Kesteven Divisions, MPs for Grantham & Stamford and Sleaford & North Hykeham	Email	Email sent to all 56 members of SKDC and 14 members of LCC (SK divisions), LCC (organisation) and local MPs by JE at start of consultation period informing them of the consultation. MPs were: Grantham & Stamford - Gareth Davies Sleaford & North Hykeham - Dr Caroline Johnson
Parish Councils	Email	Email sent to Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton Parish Councils

Details

8. The decision to undertake a Community Governance Review to review the governance arrangements for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton was made at full Council on 23 November 2023¹, in response to a request from Councillor Ben Green. In order to determine the degree of support for three options for the future governance arrangements for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton, SKDC instructed its Head of Democratic Services, along with the Electoral Services Manager and the Council's Consultation Officer to consult various stakeholders. Actions undertaken included:
- Creation of a Community Governance Review Consultation Working Group for Little Ponton and Stroxton. This was made up of three members drawn from the Governance and Audit Committee. Their role was to approve the content and methodology of the consultation, consider the results of the consultation and make recommendations to Council.
 - Preparation and printing of a letter and survey outlining the reasons for the consultation. The survey contained a map showing the areas which might be affected if a proposal to change the governance arrangements was approved
 - Preparing, designing and setting up the on- line survey
 - Contacting all parish councils, the district's MPs and other stakeholders individually by email
 - Inputting and analysing feedback from respondents
 - Preparing a report

¹ [Printed minutes 23rd-Nov-2023 14.00 Council.pdf](#)

9. All households in the parishes of Little Ponton and Stroxton and also Great Ponton were contacted by letter. This outlined the purpose of the consultation and contained instructions on how households could participate, should they wish to. The envelope also contained a printed copy of the survey and a prepaid envelope, to encourage responses.

10. The survey² included the following sections:
 - a. An introduction. This included the purpose of the consultation, why their help was needed and how their feedback will be used to inform the Council's decision
 - b. A question asking respondents if they thought the governance arrangements currently in place for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton should be changed
 - c. A question asking respondents -if they thought the governance arrangements should change- which option they would prefer
 - d. A section asking respondents for their opinion on various principles designed to preserve the identity of individual parish councils when they merge
 - e. Questions asking respondents if they have a preference as to when any changes should be implemented
 - f. A section asking if respondents had any other questions
 - g. A section asking respondents to supply their contact details if they wanted to be informed about the outcome of the first stage of the consultation
 - h. Questions to capture what type of stakeholder they were, their address and postcode. The address question was made mandatory to help guard against responses being submitted from outside the area
 - i. A thank you and closing date for the consultation

11. Due to the limited scope of the review, the consultation was not promoted in the local media and on the Council's social media channels during the consultation period.

12. The two Parish Councils which could potentially be affected by the proposals advocating a change in governance arrangements were contacted on the first day of the consultation period, as were other identified stakeholders.

13. The consultation closed on 19 April 2024. 44 responses were received. 22 of these were completed on-line. 22 respondents chose to complete the printed survey – these were input manually by the Council's Consultation Officer.

² Copy of survey attached at appendix three

14. The overall response rate to the Community Governance Review Consultation was 13.2%. This was calculated by dividing the total number of responses received by the total number of households/individuals contacted as follows:

Number of households/organisations/ specific individuals contacted

No of households contacted	260
No of parish councils contacted	2
No of LCC councillors contacted	14
No of SKDC councillors contacted	56
No of MPs contacted	2
Total number of households/organisations/specific individuals contacted	334

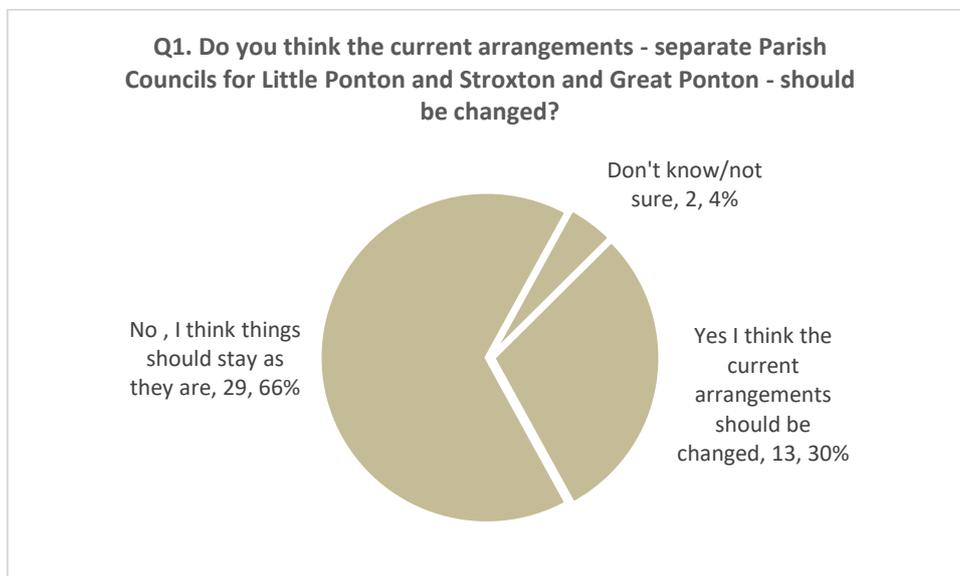
15. The response rates for those living in each of the parishes was calculated as follows: 260 households were contacted in total, of which 80 were in Little Ponton and Stroxtun and 180 were in Great Ponton. 24 responses were received from households in Little Ponton and Stroxtun (a response rate of 30%). 16 responses were received from households in Great Ponton (a response rate of 8.9%). Four responses were received from stakeholders who were not residents but were landlords of properties in Little Ponton (2), or parish council representatives. (2)

16. The statistical validity of the consultation has been determined by three factors. These are population size, the number of respondents and the confidence level. The margin of error for 44 responses drawn from a population of 260 at a 95% confidence level is 13.5%. The margin of error attached to these results is high –probably because the population is small and the number of responses to the consultation is low.

The results

17. To help those living in the parishes of Little Ponton and Stroxtun or Great Ponton make an informed decision, the introduction to the survey included some contextual information on community governance reviews – what they are and why the Council decided to consider the governance arrangements currently in place in Little Ponton and Stroxtun, in particular. As well as outlining the proposals, the survey included details of the current governance arrangements in both parishes, some information on the differences between a parish council and a parish meeting and what else the review would be required to consider – if a proposal to change governance arrangements was approved. A map of the areas covered by the review was also provided.

18. The first question asked respondents “Do you think the current arrangements - separate Parish Councils for Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton - should be changed?” Thirteen respondents (29.5%) agreed with this statement. Two thirds of respondents (29 or 65.9%) said that they thought things should stay as they are. This is illustrated on the graph below:



19. Cross tabulating the responses to question one against parish area revealed the majority of those responding from the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton were not in favour of changing the local governance arrangements for their area. Just under four out of five respondents (19 or 79.2%) said that they would prefer things to stay as they are. Those responding from the parish of Great Ponton were more ambivalent about the proposal, which is perhaps not surprising, with equal numbers of respondents (7 or 43.8%) choosing either “Yes, I think the current arrangements should be changed” or “No, I think things should stay as they are”.

20. When given the opportunity to comment on this proposal, most respondents used the opportunity to provide an explanation as to why they were not in favour of changing the current governance arrangements. Some were concerned that the smaller villages of Little Ponton and Stroxton would be overwhelmed by the larger village of Great Ponton as illustrated in the comments below:

“Great Ponton is too large and Little Ponton and Stroxton could not be well represented being smaller.”

“We believe that the needs of Great Ponton are different to those of Little Ponton and Stroxton and on the smaller group it would be overwhelmed by Great Ponton...”

The unique character of and prevalence of estate properties in Little Ponton and Stroxton was also mentioned:

“Barring one property, Little Ponton is an estate village and many of the issues and objectives faced by the parish council are sorted by the estate.”

“Little Ponton and Stroxton parishes are very different in character to Great Ponton. They are traditional estate villages being part of Little Ponton Estate and Denton Estate....”

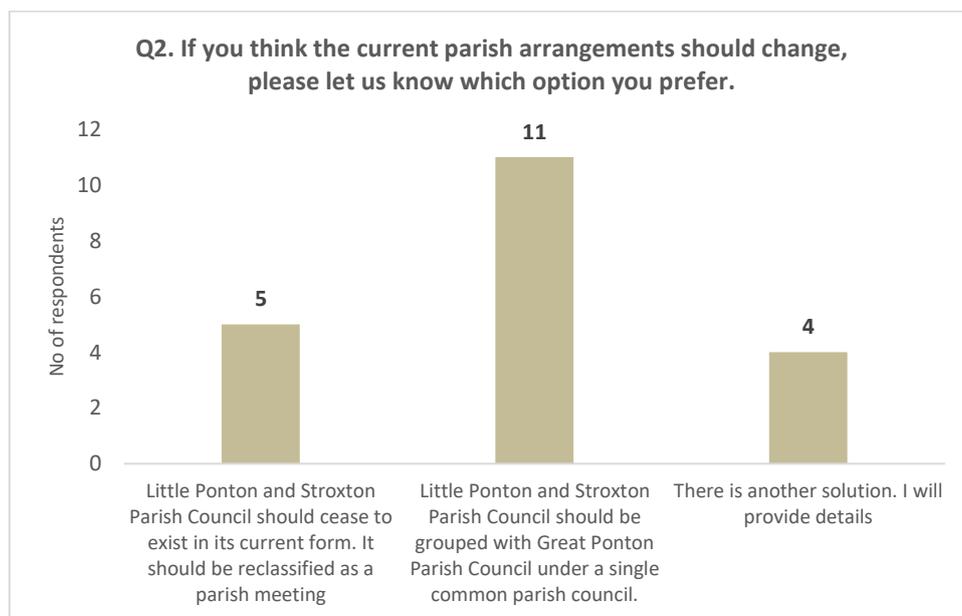
Others thought that concerns with the current parish council were not, on their own, a reason for a change in governance arrangements, and the community governance review process had already led to improvements:

“I believe that the current arrangements are the correct model with local representation at the devolved level of Stroxton and Little Ponton. The recent governance issues of the parish council do not undermine the suitability of the structure....”

“I believe that the current structure is the correct one and that it should be maintained. The fact that the council may not have been functioning as it should for a number of years does not mean that the structure itself is the wrong one but rather that those accountable for management of the structure have been less effective than they should have been.”

“As I understand it, the structure is now under scrutiny at least partly because residents have agitated for improved governance and effectiveness of the current structure.”

21. The next question on the survey asked respondents which option for future governance they preferred, if they wanted the governance arrangements for Little Ponton and Stroxton to change. A proposal to group the parish council of Little Ponton and Stroxton with Great Ponton was more popular than re-classifying Little Ponton and Stroxton as a parish meeting as illustrated on the graph here. The low number of responses to this question should however be noted.



22. When offered an opportunity to comment, most used it as an opportunity to re-iterate that they didn't want the current governance arrangements to change, as shown here.

“It should remain the same as it is now”

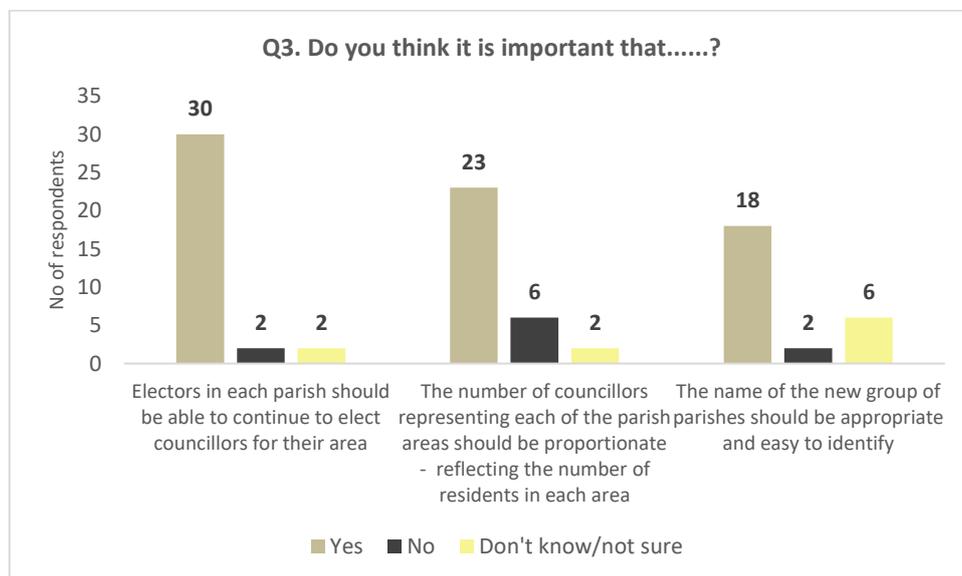
One respondent thought that the whole structure should be abandoned

“Abolish all parish councils”

23. Respondents were then asked for their opinion on some principles which would govern the operation of any joint parish council, helping to ensure that the identity of individual parish councils can be preserved. These include ensuring that:

- Electors in each of the parishes continue to elect a number of councillors for their area
- The number of councillors representing each of the parish areas is proportionate, reflecting the number of residents in each area
- The name of the new group of parishes is appropriate and recognisable

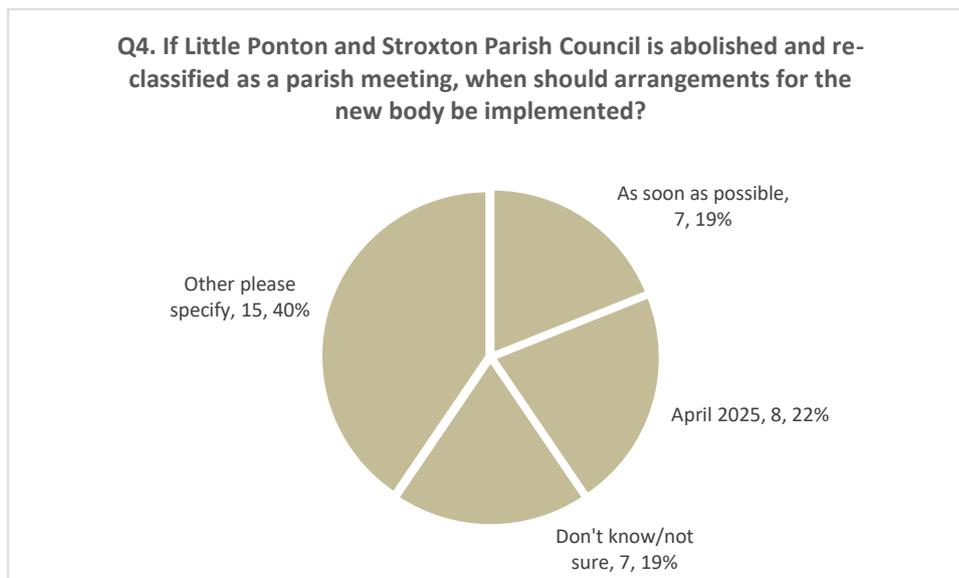
24. The graph below shows the number of respondents who thought that it was important that each of these principles is adhered to, if a joint parish council approach was approved. The percentage of those supporting each of these principles ranged from 69.2% of respondents who thought that the name of the new group of parishes should be appropriate and easy to identify to 88.2% of respondents who thought that electors in each of the parishes should be able to continue to elect a number of councillors for their area.



25. When invited to comment on these principles, survey participants were keen to ensure that their views were acknowledged. Not in favour of a joint arrangement, the majority of those answering it used the opportunity to re-iterate their position. This is illustrated in the quote overleaf:

“As explained previously I do not support a change in arrangements. However, I have answered the above on the basis that a change was to occur against my wishes”

26. Keen to establish if electors residing in the parishes of either Little Ponton & Stroxtun or Great Ponton have an opinion about when any changes should be implemented, respondents were then asked if Little Ponton and Stroxtun Parish Council was to be abolished, and reclassified as a parish meeting, when the arrangements for the new body should be implemented. The distribution of responses shows no clear mandate for any of the choices, with “other, please specify” receiving the highest number of responses.



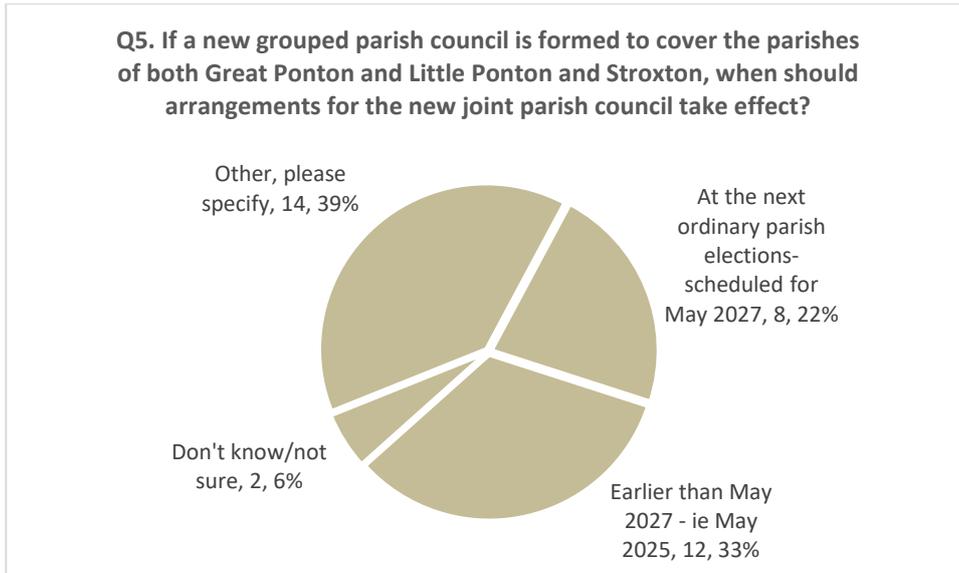
27. An analysis of the responses under the “other, please specify” category reveals why this choice attracted the most answers. Those taking part used it to object to the proposal as shown here:

“We do not want it to be re-classified as a parish meeting”

“Things should remain as they are with Little Ponton & Stroxtun Parish Council to remain independent.”

“Should not be implemented”

28. This was also the case when respondents were asked when any arrangements for the new joint parish council, if approved, should be implemented. When asked if they had a preference as to when a new grouped parish council should be formed to cover the parishes of both Little Ponton and Stroxtun, and Great Ponton, the category attracting the most votes was “other, please specify”. This is illustrated overleaf:



29. The quotes below are indicative of the comments received under the “other, please specify” answer category:

“I do not believe there should be a new grouped parish council”

“As I do not favour this option, I have simply selected the latest possible date offered.”

Anything else

30. The sixth question on the survey asked respondents if they had any questions, or wanted to comment on anything included in the survey. A couple of respondents wanted to know why the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton had been selected for a community governance review, as opposed to anywhere else. Two respondents thought the survey was biased, because there was, in their opinion, too much of a focus on the proposals advocating change. Others used the opportunity to clearly state that they didn’t want any change to the local governance arrangements for Little Ponton and Stroxton. These are illustrated in the quotes below:

“Is it only these parishes that are being considered for change or are there also others in the area, why has this change been proposed?”

“I am surprised by the seemingly directional bias-based outcome that this questionnaire is leading people to. This is disappointing, and I hope the only voice has listened to will be those of the residents of Little Ponton and Stroxton”

“This doesn’t make sense for either community.”

31. The next question asked respondents if they wanted to be informed about the results of the first stage of the community governance review for Little Ponton and Stroxton. 32 respondents (80% of those who answered this question) said that they did. They will be contacted as soon as is practicable, once recommendations from the first stage of the community governance review process have been determined.

About you

32. Responses were received from a number of different stakeholders. These included: residents from the parishes of Little Ponton and Stroxton, and Great Ponton as well as parish, town, district and county councillors, parish councils and local businesses.

	No	% ³
A resident of Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish	24	55.8
A resident of Great Ponton Parish	16	37.2
A parish, town, district or county councillor	5	11.6
Representing one of the parish councils	2	4.7
A local business	3	7.0
Other, please specify	6	14.0

33. Two responses were received from respondents living in the parish of Stoke Rochford and Easton. Further analysis revealed they were from participants who lived in the parish adjacent and owned properties in Little Ponton and Stroxton.

34. Most respondents supplied their full postcode, enabling a check to be undertaken to ensure that they were either a resident of the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton, or Great Ponton or one of the other stakeholders invited to participate. All postcodes supplied were for the areas of Little Ponton, Stroxton or Great Ponton. Two responses were from people living in the parish of Stoke Rochford and Easton.

Conclusion

35. Response rates for each of the parishes have been calculated. Over half (24 or 54.5%) were received from households in Little Ponton and Stroxton. Around a third (16 or 36.4%) were from households in Great Ponton. Making the address fields mandatory worked well, with all but six respondents supplying contact information. Postcodes were checked and found to be legitimate.

36. Cross tabulating the responses which asked respondents if they thought the current arrangements - separate Parish Councils for Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton - should be changed against

³ Respondents were instructed to tick all that apply. Percentages have been calculated by dividing the number of responses into the total number of respondents who answered this question (43)

their location revealed little support for either of the proposals advocating a change in governance arrangements – particularly from those living in the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton. 79.2% of respondents said that they would prefer community governance arrangements to stay as they are.

37. An analysis of the free text comments made in response to this question revealed why this is the case. Respondents mentioned the unique nature of the properties in Little Ponton and Stroxton, and the role the estate plays in the village. Those living in Great Ponton were more ambivalent about the proposals.
38. Respondents used the free text sections throughout the survey to re-iterate their position. Most of the comments made were in favour of keeping the governance arrangements the same as they are now.
39. Members of the Community Governance Review Working Group are asked to note the contents of this report.

Prepared by Deb Wyles
Communications and Consultation
13 May 2024