

Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 3 December 2024



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Date of publication: 11 December 2024

**Call in expiry: 18 December 2024, decisions
can be implemented 19 December 2024 (if
no call-in)**

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Paul Stokes (Vice Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

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

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison

Officers

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing

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

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place

Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of Planning

Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management and Market Services

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)

Chris Prime, Communications Manager

Mark Rogers, Head of Service (Technical Services)

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

Shaza Brannon, Planning Policy Manager

Jade Porter, Arts and Cultural Services Manager

67. Public Open Forum

The Leader of the Council opened the meeting and highlighted that 2024 marked 50 years since the creation of District Councils.

The Leader congratulated the Head of Waste and Markets and her team for their nomination for 'Most Improved Performer for waste collection services' at the national APSE Performance Networks Awards. The results would be announced on 5 December 2024.

68. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

69. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests.

70. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

71. Council Tax Base 2025/26

Purpose of the report

To explain the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2025/2026.

Decision

That Cabinet recommends to Council a Council Tax Base for 2025/26 of 50,140.5 in accordance with relevant legislation. This will form the basis on which the Council will estimate Council Tax income for the 2025/26 budget.

Alternative options considered and rejected

No other options had been considered.

Reasons for the decision

Statute required the Council to calculate the Council Tax Base and the timeframe by which this must be completed. The Council was required to inform relevant preceptors of the Council Tax Base by 31 January 2025.

The Council Tax varied between different Council Tax bands according to proportions laid down in legislation. These proportions were based on Band D properties and were fixed so that the bill for a dwelling in Band A would be one third of the bill for a dwelling in Band H. Applying the relevant proportion to each band's net property base produced the number of Band D equivalent properties for the area.

Adjustments were made for the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and the Empty Property Premium.

The Tax Base growth was 0.86% against the previous year.

The resolution would be used in budget preparations for 2025/2026.

72. Award of Contract - Guildhall Arts Centre Pantomime

Purpose of the report

To award a pantomime contract to the successful bidder following a compliant procurement exercise.

Decision

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the award of the Guildhall Arts Centre pantomime contract to Polka Dot Pantomimes for a period of one year with the potential to extend for a maximum of three further years.**
- 2. To delegate any potential extension of the contract for a maximum of three further years to the Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.**

The decision was not subject to call-in due to its urgency.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council had the option to do nothing and continue to procure the pantomime on an annual basis. However, entering a contract with a provider secured the pantomime for a longer period, thus protecting a significant revenue stream and the Council's reputation.

Reasons for the decision

The Guildhall Arts Centre had a track record of delivering high quality pantomime performances; special Christmas productions generated a higher income than 'standard' performances and tended to encourage repeat bookings.

The annual pantomime at the Guildhall Arts Centre generated a significant amount of income for the Council through 10,000 ticket sales during the festive period. Some tickets were booked a year in advance.

Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union had asked questions before the report had been written to ensure that the provider was compliant with relevant theatre good practice. No concerns were highlighted to Cabinet.

73. Award of Contract - Security Services

Purpose of the report

A compliant procurement process had been undertaken to identify a preferred supplier to satisfy the Council's security requirements. This report sought Cabinet approval to award a contract to the successful contractor.

Decision

Cabinet approved the contract award for the Council's security arrangements to A1 Fire and Security Solutions Ltd at a projected cost of £50k per annum for a period of three years with the option to extend for a further two years.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The option to do nothing had been discounted due to the Council's ongoing requirement for security services.

Reasons for the decision

This report had been withdrawn from the 8 October 2024 Cabinet meeting to allow further due diligence to take place.

A fully compliant procurement process had resulted in the identification of a supplier which met the Council's security requirements.

74. Contract Award for Ventilation Services in the Council's Housing Stock

Purpose of the report

To approve the award of a contract to Envirovent for the installation and maintenance of ventilation systems in the Council's Housing Stock.

Decision

Cabinet approves the award of a contract to Envirovent for the installation and maintenance of ventilation systems in dwellings owned by South Kesteven District Council with an annual value of up to £150k for a period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Consideration had been given to the option of installing products using existing staff, however this was a specialist area requiring expertise from the marketplace to provide the best outcome for the tenant and property. Therefore, this option was rejected.

Reasons for the decision

On receipt of reports of damp and mould within its housing properties, the Council worked with tenants to identify actions to be taken. If not addressed in good time, condensation could lead to problems with damp and mould.

Envirovent were ranked number one on the procurement framework for price and quality.

75. Contract Award for Void Repair Works

Purpose of the report

To approve the award of contracts to Foster Property Maintenance Ltd. and Gratton Construction Ltd. for the provision of void property repair work to Council owned social housing stock.

Decision

Cabinet approves the award of contracts to Foster Property Maintenance Ltd. and Gratton Construction Ltd. for the provision of void property repair work to the Council's social housing. The annual contract value will be up to £2m, split between the two contractors, for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Cabinet could have chosen to appoint one contractor, but this would not have created additional capacity for void property repair works to be undertaken and would not support the Council in achieving a void turnaround time of 60 days (target date of 2026/2027). Consequently, this action was discounted.

Reasons for the decision

The contract awards had followed compliant procurement processes. They would enable the council to deliver safe and sustainable housing.

Foster Property Maintenance Ltd. currently provided void repair work to the Council; the contract with Gratton Construction Ltd. was new. Included within the contracts was kitchen, bathroom and electrical repair work. The percentage of properties returned to the Council as a 'major void' requiring repair works had increased in recent years.

The Council had received 18 tender submissions for this work, which was initially reduced to 13. Following an evaluation process a moderation meeting was held with Welland Procurement. Foster Property Maintenance Ltd. ranked first out of the competing tenderers.

Void contractors would operate across the whole of the District rather than being divided into certain areas of South Kesteven, such as 'north' and 'south'.

76. Finance Update Report: April - September 2024

Purpose of the report

To present the year end forecasts for the financial year 2024/25 as at 30 September 2024 including General Fund Revenue Budget, Housing Revenue Account Budget, and Capital Programmes for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

Decision

Cabinet noted the forecast 2024/25 Outturn projections for:

- **General Fund Revenue**
- **General Fund Capital Programme**
- **Housing Revenue Account Revenue**
- **Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme**

Alternative options considered and rejected

This was a monitoring report, therefore there were no other options considered.

Reasons for the decision

This was the first report to include forecasting information running to the end of the financial year in 2024/2025. Financial update reports were considered by Cabinet on a quarterly basis, with the next report due in February 2025.

The report confirmed a forecasted underspend for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. This was partly due to prudent financial management, but also due to:

- Lower than budgeted fuel costs
- Lower than budgeted salary costs
- Higher investment income due to the Bank of England base rate and an improved return on investments

Effective budget management was critical to ensuring financial resources were targeted towards the Council's priorities. Monitoring enabled early identification of variations against the plan and facilitated timely corrective action.

This report provided an overview of the forecasted 2024/25 financial position for the Council and focused on the position as at the end of September 2024. Appendix B to the report had been corrected prior to the meeting and was appended to these minutes.

This Council would be adversely affected by the removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant, which would be withdrawn next year. This Grant would be re-purposed and renamed but it was unlikely that South Kesteven District Council would

be eligible to receive it. The Council would bolster its reserves cushioning it from future challenges.

77. Discretionary Council Tax Payment Policy 2025/26

Purpose of the report

This report provided an update on Discretionary Council Tax Payment (DCTP) expenditure.

Decision

That Cabinet approves the policy for the administration of Discretionary Council Tax Payments for 2025/26.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not approve the Policy or continue the Discretionary Funding – these options were rejected.

Reasons for the decision

There were no agreed changes to the proposed Policy; it would be reviewed annually. £20,236 of funding remained available to be claimed by individuals in receipt of Council Tax support who experienced a shortfall between the weekly amount awarded and their Council Tax liability.

The policy was to be reviewed annually, not only to ensure it was fit for purpose, but also to be reactive to any issues faced by residents. The Policy was included within the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 public consultation which took place between 1 October 2024 and 31 October 2024. 93.5% of respondents believed that the Discretionary Payment Scheme should continue.

78. Discretionary Housing Payment Policy 2025/26

Purpose of the report

This report provided an update on Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) expenditure.

Decision

That Cabinet approves the policy for Discretionary Housing Payments for 2025/26.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not approve the Policy or continue the Discretionary Funding. This option was rejected.

Reasons for the decision

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provided extra funding to Local Authorities (LA) to provide claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) further financial assistance with their housing costs in cases where there was a shortfall between the HB entitlement and the rent payable. South Kesteven received £155,861 of funding for 2024/2025, the same allocation as the previous financial year. 362 applications had been received in 2024/2025; 38.67% of these applications had resulted in a payment being awarded.

No changes were agreed to the current Policy, but this would be kept under review.

79. Ropsley Conservation Area Appraisal

Purpose of the report

In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council was required to review its Conservation Areas from time to time and to prepare and publish any proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of the District designated as Conservation Areas. This report sought approval to carry out a consultation on the proposed Ropsley Conservation Area boundary amendment and the draft updated Conservation Area Appraisal.

Decision

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve consultation of the change of boundary of the Ropsley Conservation Area as shown in Appendix A to this report.**
- 2. Approve publication of the Ropsley Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix A) for consultation.**

Alternative options considered and rejected

An alternative option would have been not to expand the Conservation Area; however, this may have resulted in a failure to preserve or enhance the historic interest and character of the village and the conservation area as identified in the appraisal. Conservation Areas were defined as “designated” heritage assets in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the purposes of local plan making and development management. Designated heritage assets were afforded considerably more protection both in planning policy but also in legislation than non-designated heritage assets.

Reasons for the decision

Section 69(2) of the 1990 Act required local planning authorities (LPAs) to determine which parts of their area possessed special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas.

There were 48 conservation areas across South Kesteven, each of which provided a link to the past and a sense of continuity. It was important to review these areas periodically.

As the provision of a Conservation Area Appraisal was a requirement as noted in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the decision to approve the publication of the draft appraisal for consultation was taken. The adoption of the Appraisal and Management Plan would allow for the positive management of development whilst safeguarding historic character and appearance.

It was acknowledged that historically, Conservation Area boundaries had often been drawn too tightly, omitting areas now considered of special interest, especially green spaces and open space, boundary treatment or smaller outbuildings. The appraisal and proposed extension had taken this into account, considering not just the built heritage, but also the wider streetscape and the impact open space has on the appreciation of the village. Light changes to these boundaries would become material planning changes.

The detailed work carried out by the Council's Conservation Officers was highlighted, and they were thanked for this.

80. Aslackby Conservation Area Appraisal

Purpose of the report

In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council was required to review its Conservation Areas from time to time and to prepare and publish any proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of the District designated as Conservation Areas. This report sought approval to carry out a consultation on the proposed Aslackby Conservation Area boundary amendment and the draft updated Conservation Area Appraisal.

Decision

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approves consultation of the change of boundary of the Aslackby Conservation Area as shown in Appendix A to this report.**
- 2. Approves publication of the Aslackby Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 1) for consultation.**

Alternative options considered and rejected

An alternative option considered was to not expand the Conservation Area, however this may have resulted in a failure to preserve or enhance the historic interest and character of the village, and the Conservation Area as identified in the appraisal. Conservation Areas were defined as "designated" heritage assets in the NPPF for the purposes of local plan making and development management. Designated

heritage assets were afforded considerably more protection both in planning policy but also in legislation than non-designated heritage assets.

Reasons for the decision

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The detailed work carried out by the Council's Conservation Officers was highlighted, and they were thanked for this.

It was noted that whilst being a small rural village, Aslackby was home to major local businesses and the Church of St. James the Great which was 2024 UK Church of the Year.

81. Venue Hire and External Speaker Policy

Cabinet agreed to **DEFER** this item until a later meeting.

82. Grantham Town Centre Football Activity Report

Cabinet agreed to **DEFER** this item until a later meeting.

83. Expansion of the Bulky Waste Collection Service

Purpose of the report

To provide an overview of the opportunities and associated risks of expanding the current bulky waste collection service. The bulky waste collection service was experiencing persistent high demand, and this report highlighted the financial viability of introducing an additional vehicle and crew.

Decision

That Cabinet recommend an expansion to the bulky waste collection service be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2025/2026.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The other option considered was to do nothing and leave the bulky waste collection service as it was now. There was a risk that this would have left residents with limited options for disposing of their bulky items and may result in an increase in fly tipping.

Reasons for the decision

Cabinet considered the business case for the additional bulky waste collection vehicle and crew and expressed their views on the proposal being included in the budget setting process. Investing in a second vehicle would result in greater capacity and significantly shorter waiting times. Another vehicle would allow the collection of fridges on every weekday, which would improve the service for fridge collections especially in the south of the District.

The following comments were highlighted during debate:

- Some residents had reported a delay in booking a collection, and that collection subsequently taking place.
- Officers worked with waste partners at Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) along with various other waste transfer solutions on the disposal of waste. There were disposal sites across the District and no major additional pressures on these sites were envisaged if a second vehicle was used.
- The council was now working with a third-party waste disposal partner in the Deepings.
- It was hoped the initiative would also result in a reduction in fly tipping.

84. Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/24

Purpose of the report

To present Cabinet with the 2023/24 Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report which the Council was required to publish and submit to the Housing Ombudsman.

Decision

Cabinet welcomed and noted the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not present the report to Cabinet for their feedback.

Reasons for the decision

In 2023/24 the Housing Directorate received 284 Stage 1 complaints compared with 371 in 2022/23. The number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 in 2023/24 was 39 compared with 21 in 2022/23. There had been a positive reduction in the total number of complaints received which was reflective of the continuous service improvements the Housing directorate was striving to achieve.

The Council could only provide 'root cause' information for 129 of the complaints received in 2023/24. The corporate complaints system, Meritec, was being updated to make it mandatory to complete the 'root cause' field for complaints. This would ensure that all service areas within the Council would be able to analyse all complaints and identify trends and potential actions to avoid repeat complaints.

Records were being centralised to enable officers to investigate all queries. There were three officers in the Housing directorate responsible for logging complaints and directing them to the relevant teams: this had led to better response times. Regular meetings were held with senior officers to review complaints and identify lessons that could be learned.

Improved service delivery had been helped by tenant satisfaction measures. New and refreshed policies had been seen across the Housing directorate. Tenants had been more involved in reviewing and managing how housing services were delivered.

Cabinet Members highlighted that complaints were a learning opportunity; the outcomes of complaints showed that residents were being listened to. They were also an opportunity to improve the housing services.

When the Landlord Performance Report for 2024/2025 was available, it would be advisable to compare it to this year's results.

85. Cabinet Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was **NOTED**.

86. Any Other Business

The following additional business was highlighted by Cabinet Members:

- Christmas lights would be switched on in Bourne on Saturday 7 December.
- The 'switch on' in the Deepings occurred on 1 December and proceedings were well received.
- Thanks were extended to all involved with the Grantham Christmas lights switch on and Christmas Fayre on Sunday 1 December, which had resulted in a large footfall in the town centre. These events had taken many months to plan and was one of a series of events in Grantham to complement and rival the success of markets in Stamford and elsewhere. There had been some small issues on the day that were dealt with quickly and positively.

- Saturday 7 December was Small Business Saturday. It was important for the council to strongly support small businesses that added so much to the community.
- The Arts Centres in the District were embarking on their Christmas programmes.
- The Beeden Park re-launch had been well received. This would complement the recently refurbished Earlesfield Community Centre.
- It was recognised that the Council would need to consider its infrastructure for the future collection of food waste. This would include a food waste caddy for everyone living in the District. West Lindsey District Council were progressing this work on behalf of all District, City and Borough Councils in Lincolnshire. They had undertaken a procurement process for indoor and outdoor food caddies which could form part of a decision to be taken by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Members responsible for Finance and Environment and Waste. This deal would have to be considered along with other tenders for the equipment.

Some aspects of the procurement still required investigation, including liners for the caddies and potential funding for vehicles.

87. Open Questions From Councillors

There were no questions from Councillors.

88. Exclusion of the Public and Press

Having been moved and seconded, and following a vote it was **AGREED** to exclude the press and public during discussion of the remaining agenda item because of the likelihood that information that was exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would have been disclosed to them.

89. Lease at Unit 2, The Picture House, St Catherine's Road, Grantham

Purpose of the report

To seek approval to grant a new lease at Unit 2, The Picture House, St Catherine's Road, Grantham.

Decision

Cabinet authorised the grant of a new lease at Unit 2, The Picture House, St Catherine's Road, Grantham.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To reject the proposed lease offer and continue to seek alternative interest from the existing retail market, with the Council holding any associated financial burden in the interim. This was not proposed as a suitable option for the reasons outlined in the exempt report.

Reasons for the decision

The tenant had viewed the unit with the Council's managing agent Eddisons and requested a lease for Unit 2 of The Picture House as shown in exempt Appendix 1 – Heads of Terms.

The meeting closed at 3:30pm.

Appendix B – Finance Risk Register

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Residual Risk Score	Mitigating Action
1. Capital programmes requiring borrowing in the medium term	4	3	12 Very High	Continue to undertake financial modelling to identify consequences of undertaking borrowing and align this with savings that will need to be approved before borrowing is undertaken in order to ensure ongoing affordability and financial sustainability. The capital programme can currently be financed without borrowing although this is kept under review.
2. Lack of clarity for funding levels from 2025/26 and beyond	3	3	9 High	The Government announced a one-year settlement for 2024/25. Any changes to the assumed levels will need to be modelled to assess their impact.
3. Increase in Borrowing Interest Rates	3	3	9 High	Interest rates are continually monitored as they increased to an average of 4 - 5% compared to <1% 12 months earlier. This has a positive impact on the investment income received although should the Council consider external borrowing then there is now an additional resource pressure as borrowing rates have increased significantly.
4. Increase in bad debts as a result of economic circumstances	3	3	6 High	The Council has pro-active debt management procedures in place.
5. Increased maintenance costs of fixed assets	3	2	6 High	The budget proposals for 2024/25 include an approved budget for asset maintenance and the budget carry forward proposals include a further £142k. The medium-term outlook is a continuation of high levels of maintenance that will require financing
6. Inflation increases beyond budgeted levels	2	3	6 High	Budget assumptions kept up to date with most recent projections and monthly sensitivity analysis is produced to monitor the impact of inflationary increases.
7. Fuel and Utility Price Volatility	2	3	6 High	Weekly monitoring of fuel charge and proactive interventions to ensure optimisation of fuel consumption. Utility cost increases will continue to have an adverse impact on the Council finances.

8. Inadequate capital resources to finance future desired plans	3	3	9 High	Asset disposal programme approved and pipeline of asset disposal in progress in order to generate capital receipts
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Risk Matrix

Impact	Critical None or very low tolerance to the risk	4	4 Medium	8 High	12 Very High	16 Very High
	Major Some tolerance to the risk	3	3 Medium	6 High	9 High	12 Very High
	Moderate Risk can be tolerated in most cases	2	2 Low	4 Medium	6 High	8 High
	Minor Risk can be tolerated	1	1 Low	2 Low	3 Medium	4 Medium
			1	2	3	4
			Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Certain
			Low but not impossible <20%	Fairly likely to occur 21% - 50%	More likely to occur than not 51% - 80%	Expected to occur in most circumstances >80%
			Likelihood			