

Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 May 2025



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Date of publication: 19 May 2025

Call in expiry: Call in expires 27 May 2025 – decisions can be implemented 28 May 2025 (if no call in)

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter (Chairman)
The Deputy Leader: Councillor Paul Stokes (Vice Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Richard Cleaver, Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning
Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Bridget Ley

Officers

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing Options)
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
Mark Rogers, Head of Service (Technical Services)

138. Public Open Forum

No members of the public had registered to speak.

139. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Philip Knowles and Councillor Rhys Baker.

140. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests.

141. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

142. Decant Policy

Purpose of report

To seek approval from Cabinet for the adoption of the Decant Policy which was recommended by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 20th January 2025.

Decision

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the adoption of the Decant Policy.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Projects to make minor alterations and amendments to the Policy post adoption as required by changes to regulations and expectations by the Regulator for Social Housing.**

Alternative options considered and rejected

The other option considered was not to produce a Decant Policy. However, this would have meant that there was no policy in place and therefore no clear guidance in dealing with such cases.

Reasons for the decision

Officers could ensure that they were compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's landlord expectations when dealing with decants. Adopting the policy would ensure a consistent and transparent approach for dealing with such cases.

The Housing Ombudsman stated that: 'landlords should have a clear and accessible policy for decant procedures, outlining the circumstances a decant may be considered'. South Kesteven District Council, as a landlord, was obliged under the terms of its tenancy agreements to keep the structure and exterior of its properties (including communal areas) in good repair.

Improvement works and major repairs were normally carried out whilst the tenant remained in their home. However, there were certain situations, such as those when the health and safety of the tenant would be at risk or the works are extensive, when works could not be carried out with the tenant in the property. Where this was the case, the Council would arrange to move the tenant and their household. This would either be done on a temporary or permanent basis, depending on the nature of the works and the tenant was normally given this option.

Respondents to the consultation had been positive about the policy.

This policy outlined the practical steps the Council would take to facilitate this process.

143. Contract Award for Warm Homes Social Housing Fund works

Purpose of report

To seek approval to enter into a contract with Equans Buildings Ltd. for a programme of works to upgrade Council owned properties with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures, in line with the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund grant funding allocation.

Decision

That Cabinet approves the award of a contract to Equans Buildings Ltd. for a period of 3 years with an estimated value of £7.81 million for energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures in Council owned properties.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council could have chosen not to deliver a programme of energy efficiency projects and return any funding allocation to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. This would not have made progress towards upgrading the Council's stock of properties to a minimum of EPC C by 2030 and would further expose tenants to high and volatile energy prices.

Reasons for the decision

The Council was responsible for around 6,000 properties which were let to tenants.

The average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the Council's housing stock was an EPC D. There was a requirement for the Council to achieve an average of at least EPC C across the portfolio by 2030 to mitigate fuel poverty for tenants, as well as to contribute to wider decarbonisation of the district of South Kesteven. This required a significant programme of targeted energy efficiency upgrades.

The energy shocks of recent years showed the urgent need to upgrade homes to protect billpayers, reduce fuel poverty, and contribute to national and local targets to meet net zero carbon targets. Following the ongoing delivery of a programme of upgrades through Wave 2.1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Council identified the opportunity to submit a bid into the following round of funding: the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF).

The bid window opened on 30 September 2024.

The Council conducted a procurement exercise to select an experienced partner to support with bid development and submission to give the Council the best possible

chance of securing government funding for this project. The preferred procurement route identified was a direct award via a framework, to meet the delivery timeframe dictated by the key dates of the WH:SHF scheme. The Council completed a three-stage process to appoint a successful supplier and ensure value for money.

Equans were selected as the successful provider: they had extensive experience of working with housing providers to deliver decarbonisation programmes which put SKDC in a strong position for delivery of a programme of energy efficiency upgrades on the Council's housing stock.

The Council submitted a formal bid in November 2024 for a £12m project to be funded by £6m WH:SHF grant and £6m match funding from the Council to be delivered over a three-year period commencing April 2025. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero wrote to the Council in late February 2025 with a revised grant allocation letter. This update noted that, due to the volume and scale of applications received the fund was oversubscribed, and all successful applicants were subject to a scaling exercise to reduce the original grant funding allocation requested. It was confirmed that South Kesteven District Council's grant allocation amount was a maximum of £4.19 million, to be matched by co-funding.

There would be a combination of works required to bring a property up to EPC C; this would vary per house depending on what was identified from the survey but typically this would include air source heating, solar pv and insulation and ventilation measures.

144. Cabinet Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted, with several amendments to take place.

145. Open Questions from Councillors

Question One – Councillor Elvis Stooke

Councillor Stooke raised the complaint of residents within the Belmont Ward, citing that alarms were going off in the early hours of the morning in the industrial estate (namely at 3am and 7am). It was noted that requests had previously been made to the company involved to be more considerate, but the company's restraint only lasted for a matter of months before the excessive noise started again.

Councillor Stooke requested that the matter be investigated.

The Leader of the Council agreed to ask the Environmental Health Manager to investigate the matter and urged residents to keep a diary of the instances in the meantime.

Question Two – Councillor Tim Harrison

Councillor Harrison raised the matter of Standards Committee hearings and requested clarity about the timescales for dealing with code of conduct complaints.

The Leader of the Council agreed to speak to the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring/ Deputy Monitoring Officer, and the Chairman of the Standards Committee.

The meeting closed at 14:24.