

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2025

2.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Paul Fellows Chairman
Councillor Ian Selby 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 Helen Crawford
Councillor Steven Cunningham
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Patsy Ellis
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Jane Kingman
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Zoe Lane

Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Rob Shorrock
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Ian Stokes
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

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and
Monitoring Officer

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing Options)
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance
David Scott, Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Gary Andrew, IT Services Manager
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
John Child, 2nd Line Support Officer
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Peter Harrison, Environmental Protection Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Phoebe Potter, Communications Officer

67. Public Open Forum

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

68. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Ben Green
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Peter Stephens

69. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

70. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025

Note: Councillor Charmaine Morgan arrived at the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

71. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements.

The Chairman of the Council had visited Stamford to attend an event commemorating three years since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, a very moving occasion. A minute's silence was held in the Council Chamber to mark this occasion.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

- An artist at the Union Street gallery had loaned artwork to be displayed in the Leader's office at SK House. This was part of a rolling exhibition. The 'Whale Art Project' was also arriving in Grantham soon with the aim of educating and raising awareness of the environment and oceanic species health and pollution. The whale had been funded by UK Shared Prosperity monies.
- There would be artists in residence in Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping in the coming weeks.
- A replica of the Turin Shroud was being exhibited at St. Wulfram's Church in Grantham until 3 March.
- Discussions had collapsed over the future of Deepings Leisure Centre. Enormous thanks were offered to the community that had been involved in the campaign, particularly the Community Interest Company and Virginia Moran who had worked to try and achieve a solution. There would be no decisions about the £850,000 held in reserves for the Leisure Centre at this time.
- The Head of HR and Organisational Development had been shortlisted for the Rising Star award at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2025. East Midlands Building Consultancy (EMBC) had made it through in the medium sized Team of the Year category at the same awards.
- South Kesteven District Council were represented in three awards at the Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards 2025: Wellbeing Team of the Year, Most Inspiring HR Leader of the Year (Head of HR) and Excellence in Employee Engagement.

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

The Cabinet Member made the following announcements:

- The A1 litter collection work was due to start on 3 March. Thanks were offered to officers for their role in this, as well as members of the public reporting litter.
- All members were encouraged to review the Environmental Crime report. South Kesteven were represented on the Lincs Environmental Crime Partnership.
- 'Fixmystreet', a site for reporting street repair issues and getting them fixed was now live for South Kesteven. This was already in operation with Lincolnshire County Council, You can report fly tipping, dead animals and street lighting issues amongst other things.

Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

The Cabinet Member made the following announcements:

- Councillor personal development plans had been raised in the past and had been unanimously accepted as being desirable to have. Development of members must be a step forward in the quality of representation seen by residents.
- It was important to treat the Personal Development Plan seriously and try to accommodate requirements of members.

72. Budget proposals for 2025/26 and indicative budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28

Members considered the Budget Proposals for 2025/2026 and indicative budgets for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028.

Council agreed to relax the standing orders to allow the Leader of the Council to speak for longer than five minutes when introducing the Budget.

The Budget proposals had been discussed at several meetings prior, including Joint Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

In moving the Budget proposals, the Leader of the Council ran through a presentation to accompany the Budget, which was appended to these minutes. The following points were highlighted:

- The maximum amount of Council Tax allowed to be claimed by the Council was being sought.
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was money to set aside from investments the Council had made, which included St. Martin's Park in Stamford and the Depot in Grantham. The Depot was on track to be opened in November 2025.
- A balanced Budget was proposed for 2025/2026 with plans for this to be repeated for 2026/2027, but there were pressures on the Budget beyond this time.
- There were proposed budget increases in some areas such as work on domestic violence, homelessness, welfare provision and others.
- A new post of Licensing Support Officer should enable existing licensing officers to be more mobile and spend more time out of the office as part of their job.
- Drainage rates – there had been several recent flooding events in the district, and the Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) needed to take action. Drainage rates were set by the IDBs; there had been a higher increase in rates in Boston and South Holland District Council. £641,000 of recurring expenditure was due for South Kesteven.
- The night shelter within Grantham had helped people back into housing.

- Grantham town events and the Economic Development Support Officer would be funded from the Council's contribution to the Future High Streets Fund.
- Capital proposals included the replacement of vehicles, wheelie bins, the Stamford Cattle Market Car Park extension and a programme to refurbish Grantham Wharf Road Car Park.
- There was an ongoing conversation about the replacement of leisure equipment at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre, and the scrutiny of this. There was a proposal within the Budget to make a loan to LeisureSK Ltd. for new equipment at the Meres Leisure Centre. Members of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked to review any potential loan.
- Many people who took part in the public consultation on the Budget were in favour of increasing council tax by the highest amount.
- The implementation of the fixmystreet app allowed for residents to report issues to Lincolnshire County Council and South Kesteven District Council in one visit. If you had the app, you could report other issues in areas beyond Lincolnshire.
- A refuse collection review would take place to achieve efficiencies. This would likely result in some changes to bin collection days; any changes would need to be communicated to residents. Other areas of refuse collection, such as the in cab technology would be reviewed.
- The new Customer Service Centre had opened in Grantham.

The Budget proposals were seconded.

An amendment to the Budget proposals was moved and seconded which aimed to:

Remove all separate fees related to Muslim interments and incorporate into the standard fee structure.

It was believed that this differential was originally introduced in good faith to account for the fact that Muslim burials may take longer than some non-Muslim burials. This therefore increased the cost to the Council. Whilst it may be reasonable to charge more, most religious groups would not want to be singled out within the charging structure and the amendment sought to bring these costs in line with other burials and interments.

There had been 4 Muslim burials during the previous 5 years. The Section 151 Officer was content that the overall Budget would not be compromised as it was not a significant financial amendment, and therefore it could be considered.

This amendment was **ACCEPTED** by the mover of the original motion and became part of the substantive motion.

A further amendment was moved:

Appendix C General Fund Reserves

Propose that the sum of £100,000 is transferred from 'Local Priorities Reserve' and added to the 'Flood Reserve Fund'.

The mover of the amendment highlighted the devastation caused by flooding. Lincolnshire County Council was the lead flood authority but other agencies, including South Kesteven District Council were involved. There was currently a small budget proposed to deal with flooding within the General Fund Reserves Statement.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the amendment to move money to a discretionary reserve was not significant enough to compromise the overall budget and could therefore be considered. There was already a £30,000 reserve for a flood response. Latest costings were that £21,000 would be used to fund the recent flood response. The Section 151 Officer's recommendation to the Governance and Audit Committee would be to replace that reserve as part of outturn work at the financial year end.

The following points were highlighted on the amendment:

- A similar amendment had been moved at Lincolnshire County Council on a larger scale, as they were the lead flood authority.
- The flood reserve was being used for flood events and the costs incurred. The Council's response was outside of the statutory response required and focused on the local community.

This amendment was **ACCEPTED** by the mover of the original motion and became part of the substantive motion.

Debate resumed on the substantive motion:

- There were a number of risks mentioned within the report. Rurality and sparsity were no longer indices by which funding could be calculated. Councillors needed to get the message across to government that deprivation was not just an issue for urban areas.
- Bin services across rural areas were costly to provide. If the Council was losing money and not taking rurality seriously then it would lead to further losses.
- The recommendation on funding for gym equipment would be considered by the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the pre-election period starting on 19 March.
- The St. John's area of Grantham was one of the lowest income areas in Lincolnshire and many residents were paying private rental charges. They were hugely dependent on the support of the Council.
- New temporary housing was welcomed, but it was noted that this would be an ongoing issue requiring management.

- It may be that the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee would need to review the level of funding provided for any flood response if the reserve was to increase to £100,000.

A recorded vote on recommendations 1-11 of the motion was required as it related to the Council's Budget; recommendations 12-18 did not require a recorded vote as they did not directly impact the Budget,

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For: Councillors Emma Baker, Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Pam Byrd, Steven Cunningham, Phil Dilks, Barry Dobson, Patsy Ellis, Paul Fellows, Phil Gadd, Tim Harrison, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Penny Milnes, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Rhea Rayside, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Rob Shorrock, Vanessa Smith, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Murray Turner, Jane Wood and Paul Wood (32)

Against: None

Abstentions: Councillors Matt Bailey, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Richard Dixon-Warren, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Nikki Manterfield, Ian Stokes, Sarah Trotter and Mark Whittington (15)

The remaining recommendations had been moved, seconded, and following the vote they were **AGREED**:

DECISION:

That Full Council:

- 1. Set a General Fund budget requirement of £20.603m for 2025/26 inclusive of special expenses (detailed in section 2 and Appendix A of the report).**
- 2. Approve a Council tax base of 50,140.5 for the South Kesteven District.**
- 3. Set a Council Tax level of £189.37 for 2025/26 (Band D property) after taking into consideration the consultation feedback.**
- 4. Note indicative Budget estimates for 2026/27 and 2027/28 (detailed in Appendix A of the report).**
- 5. Agree to remove all separate fees related to Muslim interments and incorporate into the standard fee structure.**

6. Approve the General Fund Capital Programme and financing statement 2025/26 to 2027/28 (detailed in Section 6 and Appendix B of the report)
7. Approve General Fund Capital Programme budget carry forward £11.433m from 2024/25 (detailed in Appendix B of the report).
8. Approve the movements in General Fund Reserves, to include the transfer of £100,000 from the Local Priorities Reserve to the Flood Reserve Fund (detailed in Section 8 and Appendix C of the report)
9. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (detailed in Section 10 and Appendix F of the report).
10. Approve the Capital Strategy (detailed in Section 10 and Appendix I of the report).
11. Note the calculations and set the Council Tax for the year 2025/26 made in accordance with requirement set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (detailed in Appendix J of the report).

The remaining resolutions were subject to an ordinary electronic vote:

12. Approve HRA dwelling rent increases of 2.7% for 2025/26 providing an average rent of £100.77 per week.
13. Approve increases in HRA garage and shared ownership rents of 1.7%.
14. Approve the HRA Revenue Budget 2025/26 and note the indicative budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 (detailed in Appendix A of the report).
15. Approve the Housing Capital Programme and financing statement 2025/26 to 2027/28 (detailed in Section 6 and Appendix B of the report).
16. Approve the HRA Capital Programme budget carry forward of £2.842m from 2024/25 (Appendix B of the report).
17. Approve a delegation to the Chief Executive, S151 Officer and the Cabinet Members for Housing and Property to accept the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and to amend the Capital Programme Financing Statement as required.
18. Approve the movements in HRA Reserves (detailed in Section 8 and Appendix C of the report).

73. Appointment of Local Returning Officer - Combined Authority (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017

Members considered the appointment of the Chief Executive as the Local Returning Officer, responsible for administering the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority Mayoral elections in South Kesteven.

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

DECISION

That Full Council approve the appointment of the Chief Executive as Local Returning Officer for the South Kesteven area for the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority Mayoral elections.

74. Political Proportionality and Allocation of Seats to Committees

Members considered appointments to seats on committees, and noted a change in the authority's political proportionality.

In writing this report, the Monitoring Officer consulted Group leaders about the proposed changes in committee seats.

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

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Note the changes in political proportionality and the allocation of seats on committees to each of the Council's political groups.**
- 2. Approves appointments to committee seats as proposed by respective political group leaders:**
 - Councillor Philip Knowles to take the seat on the Licensing Committee and Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment Licensing Committee.**
 - The Independent Group gifts its seat on Licensing Committee and Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment Licensing Committee to Councillor Patsy Ellis.**
 - Councillor Tim Harrison to take the seat on the Standards Committee.**
 - Planning Committee – Councillor Vanessa Smith to continue as a member of the Committee.**
 - Governance and Audit Committee – Councillor Rob Shorrocks to continue as a member of the Committee.**
 - Employment Committee – Labour and Co-operative seat to be gifted to Councillor Rhys Baker.**

- **Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Lee Steptoe to continue as a member of the Committee.**
- **Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Lee Steptoe to continue as a member of the Committee. Councillor Emma Baker to also continue as a member of the Committee, the seat for which was gifted from the Grantham Independent Group**
- **Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Vanessa Smith to continue as a member of the Committee**
- **Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Emma Baker to continue as member of the Committee.**
- **Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Emma Baker to continue as member of the Committee. Councillor Rhea Rayside to replace Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing.**

75. Amendments to the Council's Constitution

Note: The meeting adjourned at 3:27pm and reconvened at 3:44pm.

Councillor Ian Stokes did not return to the meeting.

Members considered proposed changes to the Council's Constitution, recommended by the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 13 February 2025.

Both recommendations sought to improve openness and transparency. The first amendment dealt with the procedure for removing the Leader of the Council from office, and the second recommendation sought to improve clarity on dealing with amendments to motions on notice at Full Council.

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

DECISION

That Full Council approve the following amendments to the Constitution:

- 1. Article 7 (Leader) at Part 2 (Articles) be amended to reflect the requirement for the submission of a Notice of Motion for the Council to approve a resolution to remove the Leader of the Council from office, as set out at paragraph 3.3 of the report.**
- 2. Council Procedure Rules at Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) be amended to provide greater clarity regarding amendments and their relevance to an original motion, as set out at paragraph 3.7 of the report.**

76. Appointment of Lead Member for Armed Forces

Members considered a report examining the role and responsibilities of the Council's Lead Member for Armed Forces before taking the opportunity to make an appointment to the role.

Thanks were given to officers and the current Armed Forces Champion who had been involved in putting together a job description for the role.

Two Councillors were nominated for the role, Councillors Richard Dixon-Warren and Bridget Ley. Neither had been forewarned and neither had expected to speak.

Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren was nominated for the role. He had been the Armed Forces Champion at South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) since May 2022 and was formally appointed in late 2022. Since appointment, he had done all he could to support the Council in its support for the Armed Forces Covenant. He had also taken on the additional responsibility of Chair of the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant, which had given him a useful perspective on being a District Armed Forces Champion. He was now developing a strategy to take support for the Covenant by SKDC forward for the next two years. There were approximately 8000 Veterans and 1000 Reserve and Regular forces in the District, and they were the priority. With Defence expenditure going up to 2.5% the focus should be on how to support our Armed Forces. Most Members had Veterans or Armed Forces personnel in their Wards and it was a collective responsibility to make sure that the Covenant works for them as far as it possibly can. Councillor Dixon-Warren closed with a reminder of his experience and accumulated expertise.

Councillor Bridget Ley was also nominated for the role. She came from a forces background; her father was in the army, and other members in the family had served in RAF. Councillor Ley had been involved with the Armed Forces Charity 'SSAFA' and the Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit (MDHU). She had worked with many different levels of servicemen, supporting them from a medical background with mental health and helping those on benefits to find accommodation.

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

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Approve the proposed schedule for appointment to the role of Lead Member for Armed Forces.**
- 2. Approve the proposed role description for the Lead Member for Armed Forces.**
- 3. Appoint Councillor Bridget Ley to the role of Lead Member for Armed Forces 2025-2027.**

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dixon-Warren for all the work that he had taken part in during his tenure as Armed Forces Champion.

77. UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocation 2025/26

Members considered the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation for 2025/2026. The UKSPF had been a significant opportunity to secure substantial investment for the district. The Fund had been extended for a single year, and it had been indicated by the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) that funds would be passported to the Council to manage in 2025/26. The purpose of this report was to agree the principles behind the submission to the MCCA to secure the funding and to seek a delegation for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the submission.

Note: Councillors Richard Dixon-Warren and Vanessa Smith left the meeting and did not return.

SKDC was due to receive £1.2 million of funding for 2025/2026 – the final decision on the allocation of funding would be taken by the MCCA on 6 March. SKDC had been asked to revise their plan setting out how they wished to allocate funding. Funding should be fully committed by September 2025.

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

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Approve the proposed interventions to form the basis of the South Kesteven UKSPF Investment Plan submission to the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise and submit the final Investment Plan to the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority.**

78. Local Government Reorganisation

Members considered the latest updates on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council made the following points:

- Government had embarked on a policy of LGR in ‘two tier’ governance areas. The current two-tier system was being replaced with a combination of a strategic Mayoral Authority and larger councils below this. This would lead to

fewer councillors, who arguably would be less accountable and accessible to those they represented. It would also mean larger workloads for councillors.

- This was the first local government reshuffle for over 50 years.
- The government wanted new unitary authorities to be responsible for a population of 500,000 people. It was unclear from where this target had been derived. If you simply divided up Lincolnshire by its current population you would get two new authorities.
- It was an option to create a new authority for a combined population approaching 400,000. Examples were given of both Rutland County Council and SKDC whose populations of c40,000 and c150,000 respectively would not qualify as viable new authorities as they were not close to the 400,000-population threshold.
- SKDC had been asked to put together proposals for a unitary authority having consulted their local neighbours by 21 March 2025. SKDC had first been notified that this was a possibility on 16 December 2024, with a letter from the Minister on 5 February 2025.
- Government were asking for an outline business case, described as a 'touching point'. Once proposals for a new authority were agreed locally, the next step would be public consultation, with a final submission by 28 November 2025. Government had not yet indicated when authorities would get feedback on their initial interim proposals.
- SKDC would submit their proposal in March, and there would likely be other proposals from Lincolnshire authorities that would not align with each other. It was unclear yet where efficiency savings would come from.
- It was hoped by government that LGR in Lincolnshire would be delivered by 2028. However, with competing proposals the scenario for the county was not clear. The area could submit multiple competing proposals, which could include proposals across existing county lines. Strong justifications would be required.
- If the proposal was to split an existing local authority area, there would need to be a strong justification and involvement from the Boundary Commission.
- The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council were having ongoing conversations with leaders and chief executives from neighbouring and local authorities regarding potential models and data sharing.
- Initial discussions had outlined that SKDC did not wish to be aligned with Peterborough City Council, City of Lincoln Council, East Lindsey District Council and Melton Borough Council. The most agreeable authorities for alignment were North Kesteven District Council, South Holland District Council and Rutland County Council.
- All member briefings were delivered to SKDC councillors on 10 March. There was due to be an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 18 March.

Note: It was agreed to reduce the length of councillors' speeches to three minutes maximum.

The following points were raised by members:

- Although the existing two-tier governance arrangements would be abolished, the replacement structures for Lincolnshire would also be two-tier, with the Mayoral Combined County Authority being the 'upper tier'.
- It was unclear yet whether larger councils would be more efficient than smaller ones. It was also unclear whether there were plans by government to consult with residents.
- There was a huge amount of information that was currently speculative. It would be more beneficial to wait for the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 18 March before announcing anything to the media.
- Focus groups and further meetings available to members of the public would help shape how local government should be organised.
- If LGR was imposed on existing authorities, then SKDC needed to make provision for this scenario.
- The Leader of the Council had spoken to, amongst others, the district and county leaders across Lincolnshire, Peterborough City Council, Rutland County Council and Melton Borough Council.
- There was the option to create a new authority which encompassed current authorities outside of Lincolnshire. Rutland County Council was not part of a devolved Mayoral Authority and therefore had a number of options. They were also part of the Local Enterprise Forum (LEF) which had been merged into the MCCA.

Note: Councillor Rob Shorrock left the meeting and did not return.

- The new principal authority would gain ownership of SKDC's current assets once the reorganisation was completed. The MCCA would act as the strategic authority.
- Councillors were accountable to those that had taken part in the district elections of 2023. They were due to have a say in 2027 on how councillors represented their views. There was now the potential to undo this accountability.
- Costs for this proposed change must be found from SKDC's assets and reserves.

Note: Councillor David Bellamy left the meeting and did not return.

- It was likely that LGR would not fill the local government funding gap. A report by Grant Thornton 'The Move to a Unitary Authority' outlined that the savings supposed to happen did not, even 3-4 years following the reorganisation. It had taken the civil service a long time to migrate three authorities, therefore, it was hard to believe the capacity was there to meet the 2028 deadline for Lincolnshire.
- The end position might be similar to that of the pre-1974 position of Kesteven and Lindsey.

- Rutland was a high Council Tax/high cost for services authority. Any authority merging with Rutland County Council would have to consider cross-subsidisation.
- There have been elections postponements this year for those authorities in the 'priority' or first wave of the program. Current thinking was that whichever new authorities represented Lincolnshire would move to shadow organisation elections in 2027 dependent on the size of the new strategic authority. Officers and leaders would continue to work with MHCLG colleagues over this time.
- Extent of the change proposed will have an impact on all, residents, councillors and officers.
- Any changes cost money. LGR would encompass IT changes, buildings and staff. SKDC would have to start looking at which buildings would and would not be needed going forward.
- Non-statutory services included, parks, leisure amenities and libraries. The Local Plan would require a revisit of these areas in the context of a much larger authority.

Note: Councillors Sarah Trotter and Rosemary Trollope-Bellew left the meeting and did not return.

- This version of devolution had continued piecemeal since the breakup of Humberside in the 1990s. The current reorganisation of Northamptonshire was another example.
- SKDC had a range of reserves and investments. It had also enjoyed financial stability over the years as Heads of Finance had remained in post at the authority for a long period of time.
- There would be significant costs attached to rebranding.

In summing up, the Leader of the Council outlined that government had been repeatedly asked to explain the 500,000-population figure and what figure close to this they would accept. Nothing had yet been received in response. SKDC would move forward with a solution they believed to be best. An authority responsible for less than 500,000 people would be acceptable if it had a reasonable case. It was believed there was a good argument for this in Lincolnshire where there are large swathes of rurality.

The City of Lincoln Council wanted to be part of a larger local authority, but numbers in greater Lincoln did not add up to close to 500,000 people. If areas were sliced up, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) implications were complicated. It was perceived that it was easier for government to keep the building blocks of District Councils together and intact.

The council tax at SKDC was the lowest between themselves, North Kesteven District Council, South Holland District Council and Rutland County Council. However, as Rutland was a county it was not quite a fair comparison as there were economies of scale within adult and children's social care.

The Leader of the Council had met with representatives from Northamptonshire – their Councils were still progressing through a previous reorganisation. An example was given of planning issues in the county – Planning Committee was split into several areas.

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

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Note the current position on Local Government Reorganisation.**
- 2. Agrees to receive an interim proposal regarding Local Government Reorganisation for South Kesteven District Council at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on 18 March 2025.**

79. Members' Open Questions

Question 1 – Councillor Max Sawyer to Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

Councillor Sawyer asked what could be done to avoid wasting thousands of pounds on investigating Councillor Code of Conduct complaints related to social media posts.

Councillor Baxter was disappointed that a great deal of money had been spent on complaints. He believed that some found it difficult to let go or apologise. He determined to work with the Standards Committee along with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer where possible to try and avoid the large bills that could be attached to complaints.

Question 2 – Councillor Rhys Baker to Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

Councillor Rhys Baker asked the Leader of the Council to join him in congratulating Councillor Helen Crawford for hosting a charity bingo event in Bourne where a great deal of money was raised.

Councillor Baxter was happy to congratulate Councillor Crawford on her event, which raised around £1000. He was grateful to all mayors and chairmen of town and parish councils around the district for the work that they did in terms of fundraising.

Question 3 – Councillor Penny Milnes to Councillor Philip Knowles Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Councillor Milnes asked what plans there were to change SKDC's ethical investment strategy to invest in defence at the earliest opportunity considering the ongoing threat to Ukraine and Europe, and an increase in the national defence budget.

Councillor Knowles did not think there was currently the space for SKDC to investigate national policies. The government had now decided to increase defence expenditure. He recognised concerns, but the difficulties of the present time were greater than those seen in recent years. If there were ways that SKDC could contribute to national developments, then he was happy to hear them.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the Council had approved an ethical investment strategy as part of the budget for 2025/2026, in line with CIPFA guidance, attached at Appendix F of the Budget report.

Question 4 – Councillor Charmaine Morgan to Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

Councillor Morgan asked the Leader of the Council to join her in urging all members to view consultations related to the Grantham hospital building and dementia ward on Manthorpe Road in Grantham.

The Leader of the Council praised Councillor Morgan's commitment to this issue. If people were concerned about health services in Grantham, he urged them to participate in the consultation.

Question 5 – Councillor Graham Jeal to Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

Councillor Jeal wanted to recognise the hard work carried out by the Deeping Community Interest Company (CIC) in relation to the Deepings Leisure Centre.

As this was a statement, there was no need for a response from Cabinet members.

80. Notices of Motion

81. Councillor Ben Green

Councillor Ben Green had withdrawn his motion, and it was confirmed that it would not be heard as written at a future meeting.

82. Close of meeting

The Chairman of the Council reminded all present about his Civic Dinner taking place on Friday 21 March.

The meeting closed at 5:11pm.

Budget Report 2025 - 26

Cllr Ashley Baxter
Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Finance,
HR and Economic Development
27 February 2025

1

We will not speculate about **Local Government Reorganisation** (We might do later!)

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

2

Headline figures

- Council Tax Base
50,140.5
- Council Tax (Band D)
£189.37
- Budgeted cost of services
£24,008,000

Corporate Plan 2024-27

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

3

Council Tax Details 2025/26

	2024/25 Band D £	2025/26 Band D £	Increase £	Increase %
Lincolnshire County Council	1,578.69	1,625.85	47.16	2.99
Lincolnshire Police & Crime Commissioner	304.20	318.25	13.95	4.59
South Kesteven District Council	171.81	177.30	5.49	3.20
South Kesteven + Special Expenses	183.89	189.37	5.48	2.98
South Kesteven + Special Expenses + Parishes	232.12	242.95	10.83	4.67

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

4

Minimum Revenue Provision

	2025/26 £'000s	2026/27 £'000s	2027/28 £'000s
Existing MRP (Legacy Borrowing)	116	111	107
St Martin's Park	155	152	149
New Waste Depot	0	283	277
Total	271	546	533

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

5

Budget Increase Proposals 1 (Recurring)

Details	Cost £'000
Customer Service Centre	28
Turnpike Depot	27
Conduit Road Conveniences	12
Homelessness Support Officer	45
Domestic Abuse Prevention Officer	45
Welfare Officers (x2)	37
Licensing Support Officer	28
Empty Homes Officer	18
Graduate Apprenticeships	28
Single Person Discount	9
Sub-total	

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

6

Budget Increase Proposals 2 (Recurring)

Details	Cost £'000
Carried over from previous page	
Drainage Rates	79
Insurance	44
External Audit	15
Local Plan	216
Apprenticeship Levy	10
TOTAL of NEW RECURRING EXPENDITURE	641



7

Budget Increase Proposals (One-off)

Details	Cost £'000
Turnpike Depot fit-out	500
Backlog maintenance	1,000
Homeless Emergency Accom'n	300
LeisureSK Ltd Cashflow Support	150
Grantham Canal Flood Defence	100
SK House Refurbishment	30
Grounds Maintenance Equipment	37
Garden Village Consultancy	30
Replanting and Woodland Initiatives	288
Grantham Town Engagement Manager	38
Grantham Town Events	127
Econ Dev Project Support Officer	44
TOTAL ONE-OFF	2,381



8

Capital Proposals



9

Consultation

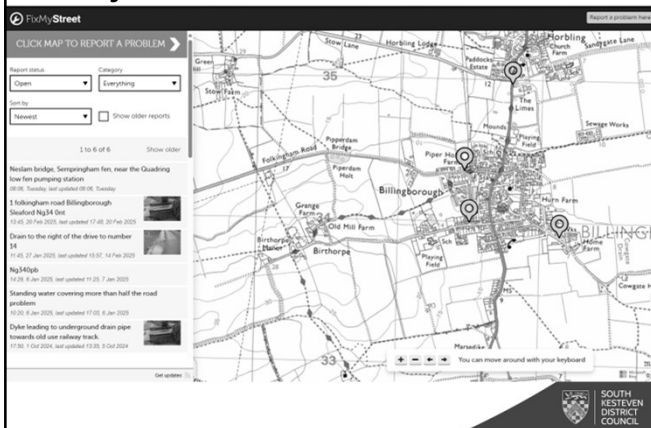
Do you support the proposal to increase SKDC's element of Council Tax by 3% (or £5.51/Band D) for 2025/26? (and previous year)

	No. 2024/25	%	No. 2025/26	%
Yes	380	48.0	423	55.2
No	366	46.2	281	36.6
Don't know/ not sure	46	5.8	63	8.2
Total	792	100.0	792	100.0



10

Fix My Street



11



'Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.'

– Helen Keller



12