

Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 10 December 2024, 10.00
am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Ian Selby (Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Rhys Baker

Officers

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection
Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager – Environmental Protection & Private Sector Housing
Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management and Market Services
Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager
Louise Case, Sustainability Project Support Officer
Andrew Igoea, Tree Project Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Hannah Rowe, Performance Analyst

33. Public Speaking

There were none.

34. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barry Dobson, substituted by Councillor Charmaine Morgan, and from Councillor Steven Cunnington, substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

35. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

36. Minutes from the meeting held on 7 October 2024

The minutes from the meeting held 7 October 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED as an accurate record.

37. Updates from the previous meeting

The Chairman noted that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

38. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Cabinet Member for Waste & Environment noted that South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) had won the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Most Improved Waste Service. The Cabinet Member praised the hard work and collective efforts of the Head of Waste & Markets, the Environmental Health Manager, and residents.

39. Garden and Bulky Waste Collections - Fee Proposal

The Garden and Bulky Waste Collections – Fee Proposal item was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

Bulky Waste Collections

At the time of the report's publication, SKDC charged £21 for the first bulky waste item and £11 for each subsequent item. Fridges and freezers were charged at £21 per item and could not be counted as the 'first item' to allow for the discounted additional item price. The service collected approximately 5,700 items per year.

The total operating costs for this service were approximately £88,160 per year and a fully subscribed service had a potential income of around £90,000 per year (based on 2023/24 figures).

The operating costs (including fuel, salaries and equipment) had tended to increase each year in-line with inflation. If a fee increase wasn't considered there was a possibility that the cost of running the service would not be covered by the income generated for the delivery of the service.

Following analysis of the bulky waste collection data the report suggested that if there was a £1 increase on all bulky waste charges, an additional £6,100 in income could be raised.

Garden Waste Collection

The garden waste collection service charged participating residents £51 per year to empty their first bin and £42 per additional bin. In the first year, new customers paid £79 for the service (an additional £28 for the bin and £12 for delivery).

The service was very popular and, at the time of the report's publication, there were approximately 36,000 subscriptions. The service generated an income of approximately £1.8million and this income was used to fund the operational costs of running the service as well as contributing towards the provision of new freighters.

Based on the current customer base, the report suggested that an increase of £1 would generate an additional £38,000 per year.

It was noted by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste that the suggested price increase may lead to a slight decrease in uptake of the Garden Waste Collection service. However, the Cabinet Member was positive about this, suggesting that this would likely lead to an uptake in home composting which was a more eco-friendly method of disposal.

During discussions, members commented on the following:

- It was noted by the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer that contrary to the recommendation within the report, any recommendation made during the item would be considered by the Budget Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2025, before the Cabinet.
- The Vice-Chairman suggested considering the suggested price increase for Garden Waste Collections and Bulky Waste Collections as separate proposals. This was proposed, seconded and AGREED by Members.
- Several Members commented that they supported the proposals to increase the prices of the service, roughly in line with inflation, as it was necessary to cover the increasing costs of the service.
- In this respect, Members queried whether the suggested £1 price increase was not only sufficient for the service, but also accounted an appropriate margin for contingency planning. This was confirmed to be sufficient and include an appropriate margin by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste and by the Head of Waste & Markets.

Councillor Philip Knowles arrived at the Chamber.

- Given that Members had agreed to consider separate price increase proposals for the two services, it was queried whether one service could cross subsidise another. It was confirmed that this was possible.
- The Cabinet Member noted that whilst there were figures within the report for the prices charged by other neighboring authorities, it was

difficult to compare given the different challenges faced by each authority. The example given was that SKDC was a large and sparsely populated rural area. Therefore, Waste Collection drivers faced different challenges to their counterparts in more urban areas such as Lincoln.

- It was queried whether the costs of the service outlined within the report included the costs of the call operators. This was confirmed.
- An **ACTION** was taken away by the Head of Waste & Markets to establish the average amount of bulky waste items collected following a Members query.
- Confirmation was given by the Head of Waste & Markets that the costs of fly tipping were under a different waste classification and therefore dealt with by a different team. Consequently, the costs of the Bulky Waste Collection Service did not need to account for this.
- Following a Member's query, it was confirmed that 45% of SKDC residents had a Garden Waste bin and 5% had two Garden Waste bins.
- The Leader of the Council expressed the view that individuals that had opted in to the Garden Waste Collection Service tended to be able to afford it. Another Member suggested this to be the case as if they required a garden waste bin then this suggested their garden to be a substantial size, implying sufficient wealth to afford the suggested price increase.

A Member proposed recommending to the Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the period 2025/26, a £2 increase on the Green Waste Collections but freezing the price of the Bulky Waste Collections. This was seconded and following a vote the proposal was **AGREED**.

Councillor Mark Whittington requested that his vote against the proposal be recorded.

40. Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report

The Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing. This reported covered the period July to September 2024 (Quarter 2 2024/25).

To break this down, the report presented the overall performance against ten actions using a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) system. The results were as follows:

- Eight of the actions were rated Green overall. These were actions which were on, or above target as planned.

- Two actions were rated as Amber, these were off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement was delayed but with a resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.
- Zero actions were rated as Red. These were actions that were significantly below target.

The KPIs were developed in close consultation with the relevant officers for each service.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Whether any remaining budget in the Climate Reserve could be carried over at the end of the financial year. The Sustainability & Climate Change Officer confirmed that reserve could be carried over but there were plans to fund additional solar panels prior to the conclusion of the financial year. It was noted that there would be an update on the Climate Reserve at the next meeting.
- The status of the Home Upgrade Grant Scheme was queried. It was confirmed that terms had to be met to qualify for the funding, such as an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or below, or the household income falling below a certain level.
- Whether there was any update on the Alexander Road Depot. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer confirmed that a feasibility study of the existing site was being undertaken in conjunction with the construction of the new depot site. The hope being that the Alexander Road site could then be decommissioned following the transition to the Turnpike Close site. However, this would not be before November 2025.
- Clarification was sought whether the Alexandra Road site could be considered for social housing. It was confirmed that this was an option, however, the site's significant historical industrial use needed to be considered which would likely lead to significant contamination issues..
- It was queried why the construction time for the 'Enviro13' project had increased by 50% from eight months to twelve months with the value engineering included. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer didn't recognise March 2025 as ever being a realistic completion date and noted this timeline as being inserted early in the process rather than running live alongside the project. Furthermore, the expenditure had only been approved in September 2023, meaning that bids had not been received from the market until April 2024. Given that two bids had been received over the allocated budget, this resulted in time spent allowing for the value engineering. The Deputy Chief Executive believed November 2025 to be a realistic target, and this was under regular review by the Finance & Economic Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators: 2024/25 Mid-Year (Q2) Report was noted by the Committee.

41. Green Fleet Strategy Update

The Green Fleet Strategy Update was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste.

At the time of the report's publication, the fleet was made up of over 150 vehicles which were used across multiple service areas including Housing, Waste and Street Scene. Varied in size and type, the vehicles covered everything from basic cars through to refuse collection vehicles. These vehicles were vital to the delivery of effective and efficient services in a district which was both large and predominantly rural.

In 2022, SKDC commissioned a 'Transport Decarbonisation Report'. The report was written by the Energy Saving Trust, and it provided a benchmark for the greenhouse gas emissions and the energy consumption associated with the SKDC's road transport fleet.

This strategy envisioned that by the end of the 3-year period, the fleet was considerably less dependent upon fossil fuels. This was a facilitating strategy; green technology was still in its infancy and there was much debate over the best way forward within the industry. It was because of this inertia that this three-year Strategy focused on how the carbon emissions of the current fleet could be reduced without a full switch to one solution.

The Strategy focused on the following areas:

- Adopting cleaner technologies and fuels – embedding green criteria (for example choosing electric vehicles where feasible) within SKDC's procurement process to encourage the exploration of alternative vehicles.
- Encouraging efficient vehicle use – introduce a system for monitoring and analysing vehicle usage across all service areas to explore how to reduce overall fuel use.
- Managing demand – reducing mileage, encouraging efficient journey planning and optimising routes. This included rationalising the fleet to reduce the number of vehicles required where possible and ascertaining where vehicle life cycles could be extended. Current practices would be examined and improved to ensure demand was managed to maximise resource efficiency.
- Improving supporting infrastructure – the new depot project (due to complete in late 2025) offered the opportunity to increase the number of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. This increase could influence the vehicle replacement schedule moving forward.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members were encouraged that SKDC was being proactive in this field and welcomed the consideration of alternative fuel sources.
- It was queried whether taxis were covered within the strategy. This was confirmed not to be the case.
- Establishing a fuel reduction target was suggested. The Cabinet Member noted to Members that the technology was not sufficient for a solely electric fleet yet.
- It was suggested that lessons were undertaken from other council's approaches.

Following discussions, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to recommend the Green Fleet Strategy Update to Cabinet for approval.

42. Waste Policy Update

The Waste Policy Update was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste.

The Cabinet Member explained that the purpose of the report was to codify operational changes within the service area that had been implemented over the previous year. The policies outlined within the report were all agreed and existing working practices.

The key areas of change within the document were:

- Section 10: Missed Bin/Sack Collections – this section outlined when the service would and would not return for a missed bin. It covered the Council's policy on rejected bins (this included for contamination). The Cabinet Member clarified that the amendments to Section 10 would outline greater consistency within the service.
- Section 13: Battery Collections – this section outlined the Council's approach to collecting batteries at the curbside.
- Section 14: Clinical sharps – the reference to direct deliver to the depot had been removed and collection of sharps bins was referenced as the only option. This was due to health and safety restrictions at the current and new depot; SKDC continued to accept direct delivery, and residents would not be turned away with sharps bins, however, SKDC sought to educate and encourage those delivering to the depot to arrange a collection.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Clarification was sought whether the set of three 240 litre bins issued to new residential properties was chargeable. This was confirmed but it was noted that SKDC encouraged developers to deal with this prior to residents moving into the property.

- Whilst noting there were challenges around this, it was queried whether officers were progressing with a sack suitable for the sole collection of paper and card rather than mixed recycling.
- Under circumstances where a resident's bin collection had been missed due to an SKDC error, it was queried whether this was rectified within five days. This was confirmed to be the case.
- It was queried whether consideration was being given to collections taking place on a monthly basis. This was confirmed not to be the case by the Head of Waste & Markets.
- Regarding the charges outlined in section 8.3 of the report, liability was queried in instances where damages had been caused by exceptional circumstances such as a rodent damaging the bin. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste backed the Waste Team to be reasonable in the flexibility of interpreting and enforcing the policy. This could be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- Concern was given to the issue caused by bins and waste sacks being left unattended on the narrow pavements in some areas of the district.
- Clarification was sought regarding the reference to fixed penalty payments within the report. It was confirmed that the implementation of a fixed penalty notice would only occur in extreme circumstances where a resident is continuously failing to adhere to the legislative standards of bin use. The rare nature of these notices was highlighted by the Head of Waste & Markets who noted that the last notice to be issued prior to the meeting had been in 2023.
- It was queried whether residents with waste sacks would miss a week of collections. The Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment confirmed this to be a misconception, clarifying that dry mixed recycling sacks would still be collected on purple-lidded bin week.
- Clarification was sought about the disposal of batteries for residents with waste sacks rather than bins. It was confirmed that the smaller battery bag could be tied to the waste sack for collection.
- The Vice-Chairman drew attention to section 9.1 of the report, highlighting SKDC's assisted collection service. Members were encouraged to raise awareness of this service via their social media profiles.

Following a proposal, it was seconded and AGREED to recommend the updated version of the Waste Policy to Cabinet.

43. Air Quality Annual Update

The Air Quality Annual Update report was introduced by the Environmental Health Manager.

SKDC declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2013 encompassing the main roads in the town centre of Grantham, with the main pollutant of concern being Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). Given the imposition of the

AQMA, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was required to be produced every five years.

Implementation of the actions contained within the existing AQAP were monitored as part of an Annual Air Quality Status Report (ASR) which the Council was required to produce.

The 2024 ASR identified that during 2023 there were no exceedances of the one hour mean objective when using annual mean as a proxy for hourly mean. This was positive and supported the overall improvement in air quality.

The ASR reported that there was compliance with the annual mean objective for NO₂ at all fifty-eight passive monitoring tubes across the thirty-five monitoring locations. This was a continuing trend since 2019.

The highest reported concentration of NO₂ was at diffusion tube monitoring location SK33,34, located on A607 Manthorpe Road, Grantham, which was within 10% of exceedance. It had shown an overall decline in concentrations between 2022- 2023 at this site in comparison to the previous year's data.

Within the 'conclusions and priorities' section of the 2024 ASR report, the recommendation was made that SKDC continues to use the passive monitoring network to monitor air quality levels, and to ensure that compliance was maintained throughout the District.

The report recommended two key priorities (in order to comply with the Air Quality Strategy (AQS) objectives) -

- Continue passive monitoring within the AQMA to ensure the NO₂ concentration remains below 40 µg/m³.
- Continue to consider amending AQMA No.6 to remove the pollution declaration of 1- hour NO₂ mean exceedances and potential revocation of the AQMA'.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Whether there were consequential costs of removing the pollution declaration of 1- hour NO₂ mean exceedances, as recommended by the report. It was confirmed that this had been recommended by the Department for Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and there was no additional cost for actioning this.
- Why there was no data set recorded for October. It was confirmed this was because the data set had been lost in transit. The November data set was currently being reviewed.
- Whether an additional testing tube could be explored at monitoring location SK33,34 given that this site produced the highest concentration of NO₂. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed this could be considered.

- Confirmation was sought regarding the sensitivity of the test equipment used. A Member feared whether seasonal, atmospheric changes could impact the test results. It was confirmed that the methodology of using the annual mean accounted for seasonal, atmospheric changes, however, the equipment would not have been sensitive enough to pick this up anyway.
- A Member queried whether the test areas could be expanded within their Ward. It was confirmed that the test areas had previously undertaken a review and there were not currently plans to extend further.
- Methods of enforcement to tackle significant polluters was queried within the AQAP. The Head of Public Protection confirmed that targeted approaches for localized issues could be made without the AQAP.
- With this in mind, it was identified that a significant polluter was stationary taxis with their engine's running. It was queried whether it could be included within taxi licenses issued by SKDC for the engines to be turned off when the taxis are stationary. It was suggested that this was a matter for the Licensing Committee process.
- The process for raising concerns relating to the A1 air pollution. It was advised to approach Environmental Health.
- It was queried why the report focuses on the pollution level of NO2, rather than other pollutants such as Sulfur Dioxide, PM10, or PM2.5. It was confirmed that this was because there were no areas within the district where there were exceeding levels of those pollutants.
- The Leader of the Council highlighted quarries within SKDC to be of relevance and the Head of Public Protection clarified that such quarries were subject to regulation and required permits.
- Attention was drawn to the Clean Air Lincolnshire Website.

The Air Quality Annual Update report was noted by the Committee.

44. Tree and Woodland Strategy Work Programme 2025 - 2034

Councillor Gloria Johnson left the Chamber at 12:50 PM.

The Tree and Woodland Strategy Work Programme 2025 – 2034 was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste.

The Strategy aimed to increase tree canopy cover, enhance biodiversity, and engage communities in sustainable tree management practices across South Kesteven, contributing to a greener, more climate resilient district. With this in mind, a Tree Project Officer was appointed to implement the strategy.

The following were key aspects of the wider Strategy Work Programme 2025 – 2034 presented:

- Reviewing the Council's 'Tree Guidelines' document.

- Introducing a new tree record management system.
- Analysis of the existing inventory data to obtain baseline population statistics.
- Assessing planting opportunities and constraints on land in South Kesteven to allow realistic targets to be set for new planting.
- Undertaking consultation with Councillors, Parish Councillors and local community groups on planting proposals.
- Expansion of the tree planting programme on Council owned land.
- Production of a guidance document for parish/town councils and community groups, introducing a system for recording and monitoring newly planted trees.
- Formation of a 'Tree Board' to oversee the delivery of the current and future work programmes.
- Oversight of tree-related training courses for relevant Council officers to raise awareness within the organisation of arboriculture issues.
- Production of promotional content that highlighted the key elements and objectives of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- A suggestion was made that following the approval of the new local plan, trees on land zoned for development should be assessed for their suitability to be protected by new Tree Preservation Orders.
- A Member requested closer working with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) given they believed 200 trees had been lost in their ward. The Member requested that the trees on Barrowby Road, Grantham were protected. The Tree Project Officer confirmed that a statutory consultation period for the removal of trees had been introduced in 2024.
- The Chairman requested the engagement of LCC to remove the fallen trees on Green Lane, Grantham.
- Partnership working was encouraged with the Woodland Trust. It was confirmed by the Tree Project Officer that SKDC was already working with the Woodland Trust and a formal Stakeholder Engagement Plan would be developed within the next 18 months.
- A Member encouraged engagement between the new Tree Project Officer and Members who have local knowledge of suitable places within the wards for trees to be planted. The Tree Project Officer welcomed the engagement of Members but noted that the initial focus would be on the potential of SKDC-owned land.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste confirmed that 68 trees would be planted following the festive period.

The Committee noted the Tree and Woodland Strategy Work Programme 2025 – 2034.

45. Work Programme 2024-25

It was noted by a Member that they wished for attention to be given to the unscheduled Quality of the District's Rivers and Canals item.

A Member requested attention was drawn to the efficiency of Solar Panels within the district. Advice was given for the Member to engage with Democratic Services to identify exactly the context and scope that they wished for the item to take.

46. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

There was none.

The meeting concluded at 13:10 PM.