

Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 10 February 2025, 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

Other Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Richard Cleaver

Officers

Graham Watts, Assistant Director
(Governance and Public Protection) and
Monitoring Officer
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate
Projects, Policy and Performance
Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and
Health & Safety Lead
Kay Boasman, Head of Waste
Management and Market Services
Serena Brown, Sustainability and
Climate Change Manager
Louise Case, Sustainability Project
Support Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Officer

47. Public Speaking

Ms Anne Gayfer – Question to the Committee, in relation to extreme weather events:

“Every week, every day, we hear of or experience more and more severe weather events. A couple of weeks ago we were hit by a weather bomb - our normal weather squashed up into a few hours, causing high winds and heavy rain.

The impact is unpredictable and that severe weather event flooded much on Grantham and its approaches. The town and flood plains were flooded, the A1 in a couple of places, the A52, Boston to Derby Road and the A607, Melton Road.

This situation will not improve.

So what can we do? Firstly, we simply cannot continue to build on greenfield. The proposed Price William Barracks site and the Southern Quadrant would be built on land that is already bursting with water. To build there would exacerbate run off into the Witham at Saltersford and Bridgend Road, increasing the flood risk to the town and turning the Eatch Estate, the Saltersford Estate into rivers and worsening the already critical flooding on Bridgend Road and the bottom of Somerby Hill.

Secondly, we must focus on greening our town, more trees, swales, less tidying of grass and cutting, green roofs and walls. This would not only slow down water, but increase pollinators, keep the temperature stable and absorb air pollution. Other councils do it!

In the world’s largest survey over 50% of people are more worried about climate change than they were last year. We need leadership, but the old model of leadership isn’t working for this problem.

What does the leadership propose to do?”

The Leader of the Council thanked Ms Gayfer for her question and offered the following response:

- The Leader stated that the Climate Reserve Fund had increased from £30,000 under the previous administration to £500,000 in the 2025/26 Budget.
- Whilst the Leader did concede that South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) were mandated by central Government to increase the annual housebuilding targets from 600 to 900, SKDC had also employed two dedicated Tree Officers to oversee and improve the record of SKDC’s tree management and protection.

Ms Gayfer acknowledged the Leaders response but urged Members to pursue bolder measures to create a more resilient Local Plan.

Ms Joanna Hayges – Question to the Committee, regarding her experience as a resident of Belton Lane, Grantham during the January 2025 flooding:

Ms Hayges explained that the flood water approached her property from the lower banks of Wyndham Park to Hill Avenue, across the public park, highway, pavement and towards the flood wall at the bottom of Ms Hayges' garden.

On the day of January 6th, when the flooding of Ms Hayges property occurred, Ms Hayges recalled an SKDC van driving through the flood water which momentarily exacerbated the water level towards the property. It was noted that the van did not stop to assist. Furthermore, Ms Hayges voiced her frustration that a central location was not facilitated by SKDC offering warm drinks and blankets as a refuge from standing in the water, and that sandbags were not offered to residents quickly enough.

Ms Hayges noted that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) had previously been made aware that the path between the banks of the Whitebridge and Belton Lane Bridge were flooded after every downpour.

The personal impact of the flooding on Ms Hayges has been anxiety and other health issues, as well as family pets having to be temporarily rehomed. As a result of the recent flooding, Ms Hayges noted that she would not be able to secure flood cover on any subsequent insurance and have lost their no-claims bonus.

Following the events of the flooding, Ms Hayges confirmed that SKDC had offered a month's free council tax and 75% to pay for X amount of months to follow.

Ms Hayges concluded by asking the Committee, *'How are you going to help us as residents to protect our properties, but more deeply, our lives?'*

The Leader expressed sympathy with Ms Hayges situation and offered to speak to the Council Tax Team regarding the offer of a month's free council tax to see what other resolution can be sought in order to support. Furthermore, the Leader confirmed that SKDC would act upon the findings of the Section 19 report produced by LCC to seek to prevent such an instance from happening to the property again.

The Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead outlined that the response from SKDC regarding Belton Lane had been coordinated on the information received that all but one family had left Belton Lane and the remaining family had declined temporary accommodation.

A Member confirmed that contingency planning for local emergencies would fall under the remit of the newly formed Town Council going forward, particularly for aspects such as facilitating a central refuge location as Ms Hayges suggested.

The Public Speakers item concluded and the Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead left the Chamber to speak further with Ms Hayges and other Members of the public in attendance regarding the flooding response.

48. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Barry Dobson, substituted by Councillor Charmaine Morgan.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Steven Cunnington, substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

Apologies for absence were received was received from Councillor Rhys Baker in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

49. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

50. Minutes of the meeting held 10 December 2024

The minutes of the meeting held 10 December 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED as an accurate record.

51. Updates from the previous meeting

It was confirmed that the action agreed at the previous meeting had been undertaken.

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

There were none.

53. Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) Presentation

The representative from Rowleys Commercial Energy Assessment Limited presented an overview of domestic Energy Performance Certificate's (EPCs) to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The presentation encapsulated the following key information:

- EPC bandings were cost based, rather than carbon based.
- The expiry date of the EPC was important for new tenancies and for landlords wishing to evict tenants via the Section 21 process.
- The floor area outlined on the EPC did not necessarily include the full property as it failed to account for aspects such as unheated porches, unheated garages, or “thermally separated” conservatories.
- The indicative household energy bill suggested within the EPC documentation was theoretical. It did not account for the actual cost of fuel for the occupier, the number of occupants, or the usage habits of the occupants. It was also noted that the indicative household energy bill suggested was based on the average utility cost from the year that the EPC was produced, therefore rendering the indicative cost outdated during the remaining timescale of the valid EPCs.
- The presentation also outlined methods for seeking to improve the EPC rating, such as removing secondary heating (a two-point increase), blocking open chimneys (a two to five-point increase) or perversely changing from liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) central heating to oil fired central heating (up to a thirty-point increase).
- Central Government were keen to pursue EPC ratings of C or above for domestic rental properties.

During discussions, Members discussed the following:

- It was confirmed that a log burner with a metal plate would count as a closed system, however this was still typically two-points worse off than not having the secondary heater at all.
- It was confirmed that the age or the listing of the property did not necessarily impact the EPC rating.
- Clarification was given regarding the process of getting the energy performance of a property assessed. In these instances, Members were signposted to the online Register of Assessors.

The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation.

54. Flooding Q&A

The Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead returned to the Chamber.

The Chairman initiated the Q&A by noting that the following queries had been raised by Members of the public effected by the recent flooding:

- Causing of the flooding,
- Mitigation planned to prevent future flooding,
- Whether local building developments had exacerbated flooding issues,
- Issues regarding river blockages,
- An action plan to be shared with local residents.

Clarification was given by the Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead that, since the Public Speakers item, they had been in dialogue with the public speakers in attendance that had been impacted by the flooding. Following the dialogue, the Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead agreed to support the residents effected by chasing the responsible organisations and updating residents regularly.

A point of information was raised that new developments within the area were assessed for flooding risk and had to meet particular standards or ensure sufficient mitigation was enacted.

During discussions, Members discussed the following:

- It was queried whether the insertion of weirs and alternative adjustments made to the River Witham had impacted flooding levels. Confirmation was given that it was the view of the Environmental Agency that these had no impact.
- A Member expressed the view that specialist impact assessments should be undertaken regarding the flow of the River Witham.
- The matter was raised whether building developments had an impact on underground water levels.
- It was queried who was responsible for cleaning the dyke by Tennyson Avenue, Grantham. Confirmation was given that the work was being undertaken on the SKDC-owned section of the dike in early March.
- Clarification was given that Section 19 reports were produced by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) following instances of flooding to not only identify causing issues but also to recommend specific mitigations. It was the view of several Members that these Section 19 reports needed to be both produced and acted upon quicker. A Member offered further advice that, in their experience, it was the responsibility of the relevant County Councillor to arrange a site visit following the publication of the Section 19 report.
- Regarding the immediate response to flooding events, a Member noted that LCC request specific information when a flooding issue is reported. Therefore, the Member suggested that such information as the number of vulnerable individuals within specific areas of residence should be readily available in such exceptional circumstances to ensure a swift response.
- Clarification was sought regarding the role and operations of SKDC's Housing department during the recent flooding. The Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead confirmed that management within the Housing Department were a key aspect of shaping the senior management response. Furthermore, Members of the Housing teams were contacting both Council and private tenants in which temporary accommodation was offered to those whose residence was uninhabitable due to the flooding.

- The Head of Waste and Markets agreed to continue to chase LCC for an update regarding the cleaning of the drainage systems in SKDC.

ACTION

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED to invite representatives from the following key agencies during such flood responses to attend the March meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Lincolnshire County Council, the Environment Agency, the Internal Drainage Board, and senior Planning Officers.

55. Weekly Food Waste Collections Update

The Weekly Food Waste Collections Update was presented by the Head of Waste Management & Market Services.

The Head of Waste Management & Market Services outlined that the reforms Central Government were seeking to implement were under the updated Environment Act 2021. The reforms were designed to simplify the rules and make recycling easier for people in England; they enabled consistent, more streamlined collections from all households and businesses. The approach was designed to ensure the same set of materials were collected everywhere in England. The reforms sought to reduce confusion, end the postcode lottery of bin collections and ensure the correct materials were captured for recycling.

The new default requirements included four containers for:

1. Residual (non-recyclable) waste,
2. Food waste (mixed with garden waste if required),
3. Paper and card,
4. All other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass).

As a result of these updated requirements, SKDC was required to introduce weekly kerbside collections, from the 31st March 2026.

During discussions, Members discussed the following:

- It was raised that the report's suggested implementation date of the kerbside collections was April 6th 2026, however, this was a bank holiday. Clarification was given that this had been an oversight and there was flexibility within the timeframes requested by central Government for this to be adjusted.
- It was noted that the scheme would require single-use plastic bags to be used rather than biodegradable ones due to the machinery at the waste site. A Member expressed concern about SKDC endorsing single-use plastic. It was outlined that there was no requirement for SKDC to supply the food waste bags, however, there was data to suggest that this would help the uptake of the scheme.

- It was raised that North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) had a reserve of eight waste vehicles for this purpose, including two spare vehicles. Therefore, it was queried why SKDC required twelve vehicles. The Head of Waste Management and Market Services confirmed that the data encompassing the previous food waste collection trial, the population of SKDC residents, and the geography of the district, had concluded that 10.5 vehicles were required. Therefore, 12 vehicles included an additional 20% to account for spare vehicles in events such as maintenance and repairs.
- It was noted that SKDC had received capital funding for the scheme but were in the process of challenging the amount received.
- A Member expressed concern that the previous food waste trial had demonstrated not only a drop-off in uptake by residents over time, but other residents would likely continue to use the general waste bin for food waste. Furthermore, in certain environments, food waste bins could risk increased levels of vermin. The Head of Waste Management & Market Services acknowledged these as being common, nationwide concerns that nationwide solutions were being sought for. However, the implementation of the service was ultimately mandated.

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Weekly Food Waste Collections Update report.

56. Communal Bins Update

The Communal Bins Update Report was presented by the Head of Waste Management & Market Services.

The report outlined that changes to collections caused by the switch to twin stream recycling highlighted the following issues with communal bins and the collection of the waste from these sites:

- Lack of bin capacity – not enough bins per waste stream for the number of residents
- Improper use of bins – residents putting their waste in the wrong bins and contaminating the recycling bins,
- Attracting fly tipping – the bin stores are unmonitored and therefore both residents and non-residents used the space to dispose of large household items including sofas and beds,
- Confusion around collection schedules, especially if residents use bags.

The report also identified key locations around the South Kesteven District where these issues were particularly prevalent and outlined recommended actions.

During discussions, Members discussed the following:

- A Member expressed the nuisance that waste bins caused on narrow terrace streets for the public trying to use the pavements, particularly with pushchairs or wheelchairs. Following discussions outside the meeting, the Member clarified that they had been informed that SKDC could not impose communal bins on land not owned by SKDC, such as private terrace streets. However, the Member encouraged imaginative problem solving to tackle this issue.

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Communal Bins Update Report.

57. Update on Climate Reserve Fund

The Update on the Climate Reserve Fund Report was presented by the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer.

The Climate Change Reserve was initiated for the 2023/24 financial year in order to both help respond to the budgetary pressures driven by the increasing cost of energy, and the Council's stated ambition of carbon reduction across the Council's property portfolio. A reserve of £300,000 was established in order to respond to opportunities for inward investment and enable proactive energy savings.

The report outlined the projects for 2024/25, including cost of investment, indicative payback and expected annual savings in energy use, carbon and cost of utilities. The expected costs of the projects totaled £257,626 and included:

- Installation of a 52.955 KW solar PV system and battery storage on the existing flat roof of South Kesteven District Council's main office
- Upgrade of existing floodlights at Grantham Stadium to energy efficient LED
- Purchase of battery powered grounds maintenance equipment to replace diesel powered equipment
- Plans to upgrade circulation pumps for pool water at Bourne Leisure Centre and Stamford Leisure Pool.

As part of the financial outturn report for 2023/24, the balance on the Climate Change Reserve was increased to £300,000 for 2024/25 to allow a continued pipeline of investment in identified projects. A 2025/26 budget proposal was been put forward to increase the level of the reserve to a maximum of £500,000.

During discussions, Members discussed the following:

- Members praised the quality of the report.
- It was suggested that analysis of the contribution to attaining SKDC's target CO2 rates could be included within subsequent reports.
- Confirmation was given that the £21,032 cost of the battery electric grounds maintenance equipment was for outright purchase.
- It was queried whether sensorial streetlights were still being considered within the district. It was confirmed that there would be an update at the March Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTED the Update on the Climate Reserve Fund report.

58. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

It was requested that an update on recently published Section 19 reports was added to the Work Programme.

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

A Member requested an electronic copy of the EPC presentation slides to be sent to them by Democratic Services.