

Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 18 March 2025, 10.00 am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Ian Selby (Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Rhys Baker

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Rhys Baker

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing
Serena Brown, Climate Change &
Sustainability Officer
Kayleigh Boasman, Head of Waste &
Markets
Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and
Health & Safety Lead
Louise Case, Sustainability Project
Support Officer
Ashley Myers, Lincolnshire County
Council (LCC) Flood Risk Programme
Co-Ordinator [External]
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Officer

60. Public Speaking

Ms Anne Gayfer – Question to the Committee relating to contaminated land:

“Last week, our Green MP Sian Berry urged the government to bring forward Zane’s Law, originally brought as a Private Members’ Bill by Caroline Lucas, to protect people from contaminated land after new research showed that out of 13,093 potentially toxic sites that councils have identified as high risk, only 1,465 have been inspected. That’s less than 10%.

Zane’s Law is named after the seven-year-old who died when hydrogen cyanide was carried by floodwater from a contaminated landfill site into his home in 2014.

Given climate breakdown, rising sea levels, increased rainfall, and flooding will continue to disturb contaminated land, can SKDC tell us where there are contaminated landfill sites in the district?

Last month, Lewes District Council unanimously passed a motion in support of the new law. Would SKDC propose a similar motion to demonstrate support for this important piece of legislation?"

Members thanked Ms Gayfer for her question and confirmed that there were no contaminated landfill sites within South Kesteven. The Leader of the Council agreed to speak to the relevant portfolio holder regarding Zane's Law and whether this could be incorporated within the Contaminated Land Strategy.

61. Apologies for absence

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor Steven Cunnington.

62. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

63. Minutes of the meeting held 10 February 2025

The minutes of the meeting held 10 February 2025 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

64. Updates from the previous meeting

There were no comments on the outstanding action.

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

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste announced that the route structure for waste collection around the district were being reviewed. This could subsequently result in some collection days changing.

66. Q&A for Agencies involved in Flood Response

Prior to the commencement of the item, a slideshow was displayed of images of the recent flooding across South Kesteven.

The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator, Ashley Myers, introduced himself and explained his role, particularly with regard to their key function of overseeing Section 19 reports.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste informed Members that apologies had been received from the Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- A key lesson should be better maintenance of dykes and ditches.
- It was queried whether the properties on Belton Lane were newer properties built on a floodplain. A resident in the room stated that the houses originated from the 1930s.
- It was confirmed that the impact of the shallowness of the weir would be considered within the Section 19 report.
- A Member expressed the view that the Section 19 reports took too long as it took 8 years for works to be completed in the Members ward. The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator confirmed that Section 19 reports worked to the timeframe of 6 months, which should be more achievable as the team had recently increased from 5 members to 12.
- It was confirmed that LCC's powers as the lead flood authority could not increase unless they were granted by central government.
- The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator explained that whilst enforcement officially sat with LCC, there was an agreement in place that the drainage boards would undertake the enforcement on LCC's behalf.
- A Member noted that previously unseen natural springs had reactivated in recent years. The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator acknowledged that ground water issues were the least understood phenomenon. However, research was currently being undertaken named Project Ground Water.
- With this in mind, a Member expressed concern about the effective management of water at new housing developments. The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator confirmed that the planning perspective sat with a different team at LCC, however they engaged with partner flood agencies in the planning process.
- It was queried and confirmed that East Mercia Rivers Trust were not a direct partner within the flood authority partnership but LCC were proactively engaged in locations across the county where the body was involved.
- Following the effects of fly tipping at Tennyson Avenue, it was confirmed that ditch clearance was underway with relevant repairs. SKDC was also in contact with the local farmer to clear their section of the dyke.
- Feedback from residents has been mixed with significant positive feedback, but officers were keen to learn from the negative feedback.
- It was requested that Members receive a copy of the letters sent to local Parish Councils offering advice and support by the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum. **ACTION**
- The Chairman suggested to Members the value of creating a working group to continue to learn from the recent flood response.

Following this, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to form a working group to be added to the Work Programme.

The LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator agreed to attend the Committee again when the relevant Section 19 reports had been published with a view to also discussing the impact of LGR on the function of the lead flood authority.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-ordinator and the Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Lead for their attendance.

The item concluded with a statement by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste encapsulating the following:

- Gratitude to the LCC Flood Risk Programme Co-Ordinator for their attendance and co-operation.
- Backing for both local and property level resilience.
- Encouragement for Members to follow the social media updates of the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum.
- Encouragement of a discussion regarding the funding model and prioritized areas regarding flooding.
- Acknowledged the necessity of lobbying MPs and Ministers. As a result the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste encouraged Members to support a letter proposed to be sent by the Climate Action Group.

The meeting adjourned at 11.25 and resumed at 11.35.

67. Update on South Kesteven District Council's Climate Action Plan

The Update on South Kesteven District Council's Climate Action Plan was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

A Climate Change Reserve was put in place from in 2023/24 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. South Kesteven District Council made significant progress in addressing carbon emissions from its own operations. Some of these major achievements with a major impact on the Council's carbon emissions include:

- Establishment of a £1m programme to upgrade all Council streetlights to energy efficient LEDs with dimming.
- Securing over £3.5m of funding via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (phase 3c) to install a new low-carbon heating system at Grantham Meres leisure centre.
- Installation of additional solar PV panels at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre as well as at the Council's main offices at The Picture House.

- Overall reduction in electricity consumption and associated carbon emissions across the Council's portfolio of buildings.
- Development of a new Green Fleet Strategy to agree a way forward to decarbonise the Council's vehicles.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Concern about the long-term ambitions outlined within section 2.1 of the report, given the uncertainty regarding the future existence of SKDC due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) taking place prior to 2030.
- Confirmation was given that any remaining funding in the Climate Change Reserve Fund would be spent rather than handed over to any new authority in the event of LGR. It was suggested that funds be alternatively be used as leverage.
- It was queried whether projects should be prioritised where the return on investment was evident before LGR was implemented. It was suggested by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste that the priority should be what was best for local residents regardless of the timeframe.
- It was confirmed that the ability to start any planned projects early would depend on factors such as the availability of contractors or planning permission.

The Update on South Kesteven District Council's Climate Action Plan was noted by the Committee.

68. Progress update on upgrade of District Council Streetlights to LED

Following deliberation by Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd June 2023, Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th July 2023, and discussion by Cabinet on 11th September 2023, Full Council agreed to approve an allocation of £1m to accelerate the replacement of Council operated streetlights with LED lamps.

Following project mobilisation, the latest year-to-year comparison for February 2025 showed electricity consumption has reduced by 56% through lamps upgraded to date. As of 25th February 2025, a total of 2,385 streetlights were successfully upgraded to LED. This equated to 61% of the council's total stock of streetlights.

Of the original £1m budget allocation to the project to upgrade streetlights, £800k had been committed to date for agreed upgrades, with a further £200k to be addressed later in 2025. It was expected that all upgrades will be completed by late 2025.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Whether any neighbouring Councils were undertaking any upgrade schemes. The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer noted that Lincolnshire County Council were undertaking a larger scale upgrade scheme.
- It was confirmed that the remaining funding should be sufficient to complete the scheme.

The Progress update on the upgrade of District Council Streetlights to LED report was noted by the Committee.

69. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

It was AGREED to add the Flooding Working Group to the Work Programme for updates at future meetings.

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

There was none.

The Chairman concluded the meeting at 12.03 PM.