

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Wednesday, 12 March 2025 at 10.00 am
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Committee Members: Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Steven Cunningham (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pam Byrd, Councillor James Denniston, Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren, Councillor Robert Leadenham, Councillor Habibur Rahman, Councillor Vanessa Smith and Councillor Peter Stephens

Agenda

This meeting can be watched as a live stream, or at a later date, [via the SKDC Public-I Channel](#)

1. **Public Speaking**
The Council welcomes engagement from members of the public. To speak at this meeting please register no later than 24 hours prior to the date of the meeting via democracy@southkesteven.gov.uk
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Disclosure of Interest**
Members are asked to disclose any interest in matters for consideration at the meeting.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2025** (Pages 3 - 12)

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☎ 01476 406080

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
www.southkesteven.gov.uk

5. **Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 9 December 2024** (Pages 13 - 20)
6. **Updates from the previous meeting** (Page 21)
To receive updates on actions agreed at the previous meeting.
7. **Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service**
8. **Crime Disorder, Local Partnership Working and CCTV Update (Presentation)**
9. **Cost of Living Team update** (Pages 23 - 34)
The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding Household Support Fund, and the wrap around support provided by the Cost of Living team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities.
10. **Customer Service Update Q3 2024/25** (Pages 35 - 41)
The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Q3 2024/25 and call handling up to 31 December 2024.
11. **Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation** (Pages 43 - 64)
The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the review of the existing Customer Experience Strategy and launch of public consultation.
12. **Work Programme 2024 - 2025** (Pages 65 - 66)
To receive the Work Programme for 2024 – 2025.
13. **Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**Thursday, 13 February 2025, 10.00
am**

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Peter Stephens

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing
and Projects
James Welbourn, Democratic Services
Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Claire Moses, Head of Service
(Revenues, Benefits Customer and
Community)
Carol Drury, Community Engagement &
Manager
Bethany Goodman, Physical Activity and
Wellbeing Lead
Debbie Nicholls, Armed Forces Covenant
Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Officer

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Paul Stokes

Other Members present

Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Tim Harrison

Others present

Steve Batchelor, Lincolnshire Road
Safety Partner
Paul Drury, Armed Forces Officer for
Lincolnshire

109. Public Speaking

There were none.

110. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Dennison, substituted by Councillor Charmaine Morgan.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Cunnington, substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vanessa Smith and Councillor Richard Cleaver in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement.

111. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

112. Minutes from the meeting held on 12 December 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 12 December 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED as an accurate record.

113. Updates from the previous meeting

The Chairman noted that they had been waiting for the 2025-26 budget to be approved before completing the action of writing a letter of support to the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police.

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

There were none.

115. Road Safety & Speeding in Communities Presentation

The Road Safety & Speeding in Communities Presentation was presented by the representative from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.

The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership consisted of the following agencies:

- Lincolnshire Police
- Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)
- Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Service
- National Highways.

The presentation encapsulated the following information:

- 433 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) in Lincolnshire in 2024. Casualties were more likely to be male and the highest risk motorists were young drivers, mature drivers or two-wheeled motor drivers.
- The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership facilitated a scheme named 'Operation Snap' where members of the public could send digital footage of dangerous or illegal instances on public roads. It was confirmed that 2105 submissions were received during 2024. 909 offences were processed and on 601 occasions drivers were sent warning letters with still images of the footage.
- The presentation outlined the instances in which mobile speed cameras could be installed.
- The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership also ran a scheme named the Community Speed Watch. This consisted of 288 current members and 1382 trained volunteers.
- The presentation concluded by outlining the aim of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership to be to 'create a new, ambitious, collaborative Road Safety Strategy for Lincolnshire that commits everyone in the road safety system to preventing death and serious injury on the roads beyond 2025.'

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- How to secure electronic vehicle-activated speed alert signs in high risk areas of SKDC. The representative from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership clarified that the funding model for this needed to be reviewed as it had previously fallen to Parish Councils to fund. The representative agreed to speak to the relevant Member outside of the meeting.
- Whether support could be offered to LCC with imposing urban 20mph zones and enforcing zig-zag line no-stop zones outside schools. The representative confirmed that they were working with LCC to try and enforce some zig-zag line zones and that the imposition of 20mph zones needed to be targeted rather than a blanket policy. However, the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership supported LCC in pursuing this.
- Whether preventative measures could be undertaken at locations where there had been accidents, but nobody had been killed or seriously injured. The representative confirmed that the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership's limited resources had to be focused on areas at the highest level of danger.
- A Member informed the Committee that they were in the process of establishing a Road Safety Partnership for South Kesteven. This was to be a non-political body that was open to all members and officers and had been backed by the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership. The Member clarified that six individuals had signed up so far and a minimum of three people were needed per-team, per-session. An email

was to be sent to all members, and the request was made that the Town Council was included.

- The issue was identified of driver's frustration when driving behind slow-moving vehicles. This was noted to be a matter of driver education.
- It was noted that during the 2024 Forbidden Forest event, 7920 vehicles were recorded as travelling through Denton, 56 of which were exceeding the speed limit.
- It was queried whether the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership was consulted on planning applications and whether their advice was reviewed retrospectively when the physical impact of new developments was known. The representative confirmed that the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership were not always consulted in the planning process. It was only in cases where the Highways Agency had specifically requested the involvement of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.

Councillor Graham Jeal entered the Chamber.

116. South Kesteven Agricultural Sector

The South Kesteven Agricultural Sector report was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The report sought to inform the Committee on the sector's value to the local economy, the challenges facing the sector and the policy context for state support.

As of June 2021 (latest release), there were 452 holdings in South Kesteven, farming a total area of 71,920 hectares. This equated to 12.93% of the total holdings and 14.71% of the total farmed area in Lincolnshire. Both the number of holdings and farmed land was in decline. Holdings had fallen by 4% since 2013 and 8.5% since 2021. 9.27% less land was farmed compared to 2016. These trends were mirrored regionally.

55,357 hectares, or 76% of the total South Kesteven farmed area (excluding horticultural crops) was used for arable crops (including cereals).

Only small proportions of the total farmed livestock were located in South Kesteven. Within Lincolnshire, the district was home to 11.54% of the county's cattle and 23.74% of sheep. South Kesteven's total herds and flocks were typically smaller than neighbouring districts.

Overall, the estimated total value for the agricultural sector within South Kesteven was £146.64 million (2023 prices). Of this, £108.64 million were contributed by crops and £38 million by livestock. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Primary Industries estimate was £176.24 million. That figure included agriculture, mining, energy, water and waste.

As of 2021, the sector employed 1426 people within SKDC.

The report outlined the challenges currently faced within the agricultural sector. Food production was vulnerable to a range of factors including: changes in climate and extreme weather events, prices offered by purchasers, high energy costs, international supply chains, labour shortages, biodiversity, soil and water quality, and biosecurity and animal health.

Since 2020, farming had come under particular pressure from the inflationary and supply chains crisis initially caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, then intensified by the onset of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022. Input prices for fuel, fertiliser, pesticides and feed reached near record levels, ameliorated partially by a rise in output prices.

Individuals in the agricultural sector were also at an elevated risk of developing physical and mental health issues. Citing the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) Big Farming Survey, the review noted that:

- Over a third of the farming community suffered depression and a further 30-36% of the community have notably low mental wellbeing.
- Working age 16-64-year-olds suffered from significantly lower levels of mental wellbeing and higher levels of anxiety within the farming community. This was strongly linked with not taking a break or leaving the farm, with 49% reporting that they were not taking a holiday and 20% never leaving the farm itself for any leisure purpose.
- Over 52% of the farming community were recorded as experiencing pain and discomfort every day.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members noted the valuable role played by the farming community within SKDC.
- Given the sensitive information included within subsection 3.5 of the report that individuals in the agricultural sector were at an elevated risk of developing physical or mental health issues, a Member proposed further work to be undertaken to see how best SKDC could offer appropriate support. Such support in line with intervention seen by the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network Programme delivered between LCC and Melton Borough Council. It was AGREED to add this to the Work Programme.

The Committee noted the South Kesteven Agricultural Sector report.

117. Age Friendly Communities

The Age Friendly Communities report was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The Leader confirmed that SKDC needed to submit an application to the Centre for Ageing Better by 28 March 2025, demonstrating that a cross-council operational group had been established. Should the application be successful, production of the baseline profile would commence within the following 12 months.

The result of which was that the report recommended that the Committee vote in favour of receiving a biannual progress report under the guise of the scheduled South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Following a proposal, it was seconded and AGREED to receive six-monthly progress reports as part of the scheduled South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan update and to note the progression of the application to become part of the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities.

118. SK Community Fund - Review of Eligibility Criteria 2025

The SK Community Fund - Review of Eligibility Criteria 2025 Report was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Deputy Leader outlined that SKDC was committed to supporting voluntary and community groups and introduced the SK Community Fund in 2015 to offer grants to constituted community groups, charities and social enterprise organisations. This scheme operated under three specific strands since that time:

- Small Grants Fund: Awards of up to £2,000 for eligible groups and projects, where 100% of required funding can be applied for. Fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for small community event applications.
- Main Grants Scheme covering:
 - o Community Projects: Capital funding only. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant.
 - o Community Events: Generally capital funding, but fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for community events. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant.

When the SK Community Fund was first established, grants were available to groups or organisations that required people to pay a membership fee in order

to participate, such as local sports clubs, scouts, guides etc. This eligibility was removed in 2019 on recommendation from the elected Members who held the delegation for decision making in regard to awarding grants through the SK Community Fund. Members at the time felt that sufficient revenue should be being made from membership fees to sustain the operation of the group/club.

The report outlined that the evidence from working directly with these types of groups subsequently disproved this. Whilst some groups/clubs could sustain their basic function, there was no space for development or growth without the means of attracting additional, external funding.

It was therefore proposed that membership groups that provide activities accessible to a wide community of people (i.e. not closed community groups such as residents' groups, patient participation groups etc) had eligibility to apply to the SK Community Fund re-instated.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members noted that they were aware of such community groups that were struggling financially, and that community groups were a particularly vital aspect of society at the current time.
- It was identified that reinstating this eligibility would not only offer financial support but would be a statement of support from SKDC.

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to recommend the approval of the changes proposed by the Deputy Leader.

119. Community Awards Working Group - Verbal Update

Building on the SK Community Awards 2024 report presented to the Committee at the 12 December 2024 meeting, the Community Engagement Manager delivered the verbal update on the Community Awards Working Group.

The group had been formed at the 12 December 2024 meeting in order to review the SK Community Awards, looking specifically at the categories, publicity, judging, launch date and the format/event.

Contrary to the suggestion made by a Member at the 12 December 2024 meeting, the Community Engagement Manager confirmed that the awards would continue with the current model of nominees rather than seeking a Community Champion per ward. This was due to financial constraints.

The Community Engagement Manager outlined the proposal that the launch date and event date be changed. Currently the Awards were launched in volunteers week (1 – 7 June) and the celebration event held in October/November. The suggestion put forward was that future awards be launched in October with the event being held in volunteers week. The

suggestion was also made that the full Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee should make up on the judging panel.

For the 2026 awards presentation, the Community Engagement Manager confirmed that they were exploring the opportunity to hold the event in a marquee in a public park. This was being considered as a measure to involve more members of the public and to raise awareness.

120. Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024

The Leader of the Council left the Chamber.

The Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024 was presented by the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Armed Forces Covenant Officer.

The report confirmed that there were 8693 military veterans residing within SKDC, constituting 7.37% of the population aged 16 or over. The Committee were reminded that SKDC were the only local authority to be a Gold Award holder in Lincolnshire under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer for Lincolnshire, Paul Drury, was present and was introduced to the Committee. The request was made for the Mr Drury to provide an update to the Committee at a future meeting.

As a Member of the Committee, the Lead Member for Armed Forces was present and thanked the officers involved for the production of a quality report document and their work to secure project funding of £150,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund to commemorate airborne forces presence in the district in 1944.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Whether officers had approached travel agents in Poland and the United States of America that had military links to SKDC. The Armed Forces Covenant Officer confirmed that officers would be attending the upcoming Travel & Tourism Show at the National Executive Centre (NEC) and had also been engaging with Visit Lincolnshire, an organisation with a significant U.S. market.
- It was noted that SKDC were engaging with the National Trust to hold an event at Grantham House for the upcoming Victory in Europe (VE) Day anniversary. SKDC were also considering options to host an event for Victory over Japan (VJ) Day.

The Committee noted the Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024 report.

121. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

The request was made to add an Age Friendly Communities Update to the Work Programme for the 12 March 2025 meeting (formally 20 March 2025).

It was noted that the following scheduled items would be moved to unscheduled due to the upcoming Purdah period:

- Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2028
- LCC Health Scrutiny Committee Update
- South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Update

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

There was none.

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Meeting of the Joint Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

**Monday, 9 December 2024, 10.00
am**

Committee Members present

Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Mark Whittington

Officers

Amy Bonfield, Planning Policy Officer
Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Shaza Brannon, Planning Policy
Manager
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of
Planning
James Welbourn, Democratic Services
Manager
Shaza Brannon, Planning Policy
Manager
Phil Jordan, Principal Planning Officer
Amy Bonfield, Planning Policy Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services
Officer

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Phil Dilks
James Welbourn

21. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED that Councillor Ian Selby would Chair the meeting.

22. Election of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED that Councillor Emma Baker would Vice-Chair the meeting.

23. Public Speaking

There were none.

24. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Vanessa Smith, substituted by Councillor Bridget Ley.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren, substituted by Councillor Sarah Trotter.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Nikki Manterfield.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Paul Wood.

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Steven Cunnington.

25. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

26. Background Presentation about Planning Policy/strategic planning

The Background Presentation about Planning Policy/Strategic Planning was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Planning and presented by the Planning Policy Manager.

It was outlined that Planning in England was policy led comprising of national policy and guidance, local policy, and neighbourhood policies. This framework requires a Statutory Development Plan consisting of the following four key components:

- Local Plan (2011-36),
- Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (LMWLP),
- Neighbourhood Planning,
- Supplementary Planning Documents.

With these fundamental components in mind, the presentation detailed the 2011-36 Local Plan which encapsulated the vision and framework for South Kesteven's future development until 2036. This Plan proposed locations for sustainable growth and investment, confirmed policies for individual development proposals, established key guiding principles, and protected key areas and open countryside from inappropriate development.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The impact that the national planning framework would have upon the open countryside within the district. It was confirmed that the development was steered towards the towns and larger villages within the Local Plan. However, additional land would need to be sourced within the scope of the Plan to meet the Local Plan's building targets. The Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that there were site assessments as part of the process for determining a development site but conceded that whilst developing rural areas was a difficult decision, development needed to go somewhere.
- It was confirmed that the Local Plan would take precedence over Neighbourhood Plans because it was the most recently updated document.
- A Member suggested engaging with Parish Councils during the planning process given their knowledge of the local areas.
- It was noted by a Member that they were receiving numerous approaches regarding development opportunities within their ward, both employment and residential. However, the residential development approach was regarding an area where planning permission was previously rejected due to being on a flood plain. It was noted by the Assistant Director of Planning that further planning approaches were likely to continue and possibly increase given the central government's proposed planning reform.
- Clarity was sought about the scope and process of enforcement in respect of developers. It was confirmed that enforcement notices were served as a draconian last resort following investigations. Between October 2023 – September 2024, 42% of all cases investigated found there to be no breaches, 27% received subsequent planning permissions and 17% were voluntarily resolved, highlighting the low proportion of enforcement notices served.
- It was noted that cash flow issues with developers could have a knock-on effect on SKDC's planning matters.
- It was queried whether the garden villages proposed outside of Grantham would be classified as being independent from Grantham.. This raised the question of whether the houses would count towards the housebuilding targets for villages or for Grantham. It was confirmed that the Vistry site did not fit within the special strategy that SKDC Planning needed to adhere to as it was not under the Grantham housing allocation.
- Given that the Local Plan covered the provisions of both employment and residential allocations, it was queried whether it contained provisions for matters such as green spaces, sports fields or solar farms. It was confirmed that the Local Plan did not contain exclusive provisions for the examples given but there was an open space provision within the Local Plan in the context of developments.

- It was confirmed that Members would be updated regarding National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes in the New Year once SKDC had liaised with external consultants.

The Committee noted the background presentation about Planning Policy/Strategic Planning.

27. Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (2023-2024) and Section 106 Update (as of November 2024)

The Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (2023-2024) and Section 106 Update (as of November 2024) was presented by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The report clarified that planning objections were to be legal agreements between developers and Local Authorities, used to mitigate the impacts of a proposed development where it was not possible to do so by condition. Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) set out three legal tests that must be complied with when entering a planning obligation. Essentially, any obligation must be:

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms,
- Directly related to the development,
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The NPPF reiterated these tests and confirmed planning obligations should only be used where it was not possible to address unacceptable impacts through conditions.

The report confirmed the commencement of an Infrastructure Delivery Officer (IDO) in 2023-24. This role involved monitoring and recording obligations, liaising with stakeholders, and robustly monitoring all receipts and expenditure of contributions.

Planning obligations were also pivotal in the provision of affordable housing, with the Infrastructure Funding Statement confirming that, in 2023/24, a closing balance of £2,167,647.24 was spent on the provision of affordable dwellings.

At the time of the report's publication, SKDC's Local Plan was undergoing a review with a draft plan anticipated to be submitted for examination in the Summer of 2025. In the meantime, up-to-date evidence and information could be used to justify planning obligations and this was to be carried out on a case-by-case basis.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The process for which Section 106 funding from development schemes could be used on local infrastructure. An example was given of Section 106 funding from the Poplar Farm Scheme being used to enhance the local leisure centre within the vicinity of the development. Addressing the specific example given, the Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that the next stage of the Poplar Farm development was to include sports pitches. To address the wider question, the Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that Section 106 funds cannot be diverted after the declaration of their initial use. If the initial use were to be declared for an institution such as a leisure centre, then this would have to be to increase the capacity.
- The process for dealing with remaining or disused Section 106 funds. It was confirmed that these funds had to be returned were they not required.
- A Member noted their view that some developers were retrospectively submitting Section 73 requests to attempt to mitigate prior agreements and conditions under Section 106. The Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that any Section 73 requests received were robustly investigated by an independent third-party. However, they were satisfied that with the work being carried out by Planning Officers to liaise with stakeholders to ensure relevant mitigations.
- Given the impact of developments upon those residents living in the immediate vicinity, it was the view of several Members that Town Council's should be involved in the process.
- A Member suggested codifying a wish list of Section 106 agreements within the Local Plan or relevant Neighbourhood Plans. It was the view of the Assistant Director of Planning that this wish list should be a living document rather than being codified. It was noted that SKDC's Supplementary Planning Document was also to be updated following the adoption of the upcoming Local Plan.
- The term 'health services' was queried within the context of the report. This was confirmed to be any NHS services.
- Clarification was sought about protectionary measures against inflation for Section 106 funding. It was confirmed that there were indexation clauses within the funding agreement, usually provided through BCIS Ltd.
- The nature of the interest secured on the funding was queried. It was confirmed that the returns of the interest have been favourable and more detailed updates were provided to Full Council.

The Committee noted the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (2023-2024) and Section 106 Update (as of November 2024).

28. Revisions and Amendments to Planning Applications and Extensions of Time Procedure for Planning Applications

The Revisions and Amendments to Planning Applications and Extensions of Time Procedure for Planning Applications was presented by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Statutory time limits for applications for planning permission were set out in Article 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). There were different time limits for different types of application, however the most common were 13 weeks for major applications (unless an application is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, in which case a 16-week limit applies) and 8 weeks for most other types of applications.

Where a planning application took longer than the statutory period to decide the Council was able to agree a new deadline through an Extension of Time (EoT) agreed with the applicant.

Where an application takes longer than the statutory time limits and no EoT was agreed, an applicant could lodge an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate against non-determination.

In comparison with other neighbouring authorities, the percentage of South Kesteven's 2023-24 decisions that required an EoT was 67%, significantly higher than the CIPFA Peers Average of 47%. The report notes that the average EoT across Lincolnshire authorities was 43%.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The number of Planning Officers at SKDC compared to other Local Authorities was queried. It was confirmed that the level of staffing was deemed to be similar at the last national review.
- A Member noted that they had read an article written by the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in which the Member inferred the article to suggest that it was the government's position to reduce the input by Councillors during the planning process.
- Regarding the disparity between the level of applications that required an EoT at SKDC compared to other authorities, it was queried whether this was because the quality of applications was higher in other districts, or whether more pre-applications were used. It was confirmed that both may have contributed.
- The level of charge for pre-applications was queried. It was confirmed that charges depended on the type of application, however they started from £80.

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to review the proposed Revisions and Amendments to Planning Applications and Extensions of Time Procedure, and recommend to Cabinet that the procedure is adopted.

29. 2023/2024 Authority Monitoring Report

The 2023/2024 Authority Monitoring Report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The report included information on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme, the Local Plan Review, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Plans, and information relating to co-operation under the Duty to Cooperate.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) was of particular prevalence, establishing the timetable for the production of new or revised development plan documents required to form SKDC's Local Development Plan. In accordance with the LDS published in May 2023, a Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan was published for consultation in February 2024 for a period of 8 weeks.

At the time of the report's publication, SKDC was continuing to progress with the Local Plan Review, with the next consultation on the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan planned for Winter 2024/2025.

Regarding housing delivery, a total of 575 new homes (net) were completed between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, against an annual requirement of 650 homes. Completions in the four market towns (Bourne, Grantham, Stamford, and The Deepings) accounted for 71% of all completions. Grantham accounted for 16% of all completions.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Measures in place for the protection of Grantham in the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan was queried. It was confirmed that there were provisions within the Local Plan to protect the area and that the Charter Trustees could initiate the process of a Neighbourhood Plan should they wish to do so in their Councillor capacity.
- It was queried whether the boundaries for Grantham could be reviewed and amended to reflect the developments encroaching on the surrounding villages. It was noted that this was not within the scope of the Committee.
- The Cabinet Member for Planning invited Members to attend a Design Officer Workshop being held later that week.

The Committee noted and endorsed the 2023/2024 Authority Monitoring Report.

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

Councillor Sarah Trotter provided an update as a representative from the Lincolnshire Police & Crime Panel.

The update informed the Committee that Lincolnshire Police has been put into special measures, resulting in an extraordinary meeting of the Lincolnshire Police & Crime Panel being called to sit on 10 January 2025. Whilst there were several factors contributing to this, Councillor Trotter cited a lack of funding as a significant factor and suggested that the funding formula be reviewed.

The Chief Executive noted that the working relationship between SKDC and Lincolnshire Police had improved in the previous four years, with direct meetings held between the Chief Executive and the Chief Inspector held every other month.

The meeting concluded at 12:13 PM.

Action Sheet

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Actions from meeting of 13 February 2025

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
108	AOB	Supporting letter sent to Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police on behalf of the Rural OSC	Cllr N Manterfield as the Chairman.	COMPLETED	

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**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee


Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran
Cabinet Member for Housing

Cost of Living Team update

Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)

 claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the Household Support Fund, and the wrap around support provided by the Cost of Living team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities.

In addition, the report also provides an update regarding the future of the team from 1 April 2025.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the report and the Committee is asked to raise any matters arising from the report.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The report sets out the specific schemes that are being implemented to support residents with the cost of living – both statutory and national initiatives.
- 1.2 The majority of the schemes identified in the report are not directly funded by the Council. For the administration of some schemes, new burdens funding is provided by central Government.
- 1.3 Those funded by the Council are the Council Tax Support Scheme and Discretionary Council Tax Payments.
- 1.4 The Cost of Living Co-ordinator is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to 31 March 2025. From 1 April 2025, following a successful budget bid, the two roles will be permanent.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.5 There are no specific legal implications connected with this report. Decision-making associated with financial support schemes should follow an agreed process and strong governance arrangements to support their implementation.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer)

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.6 Cost of living information is available in a variety of formats to ensure inclusivity. The Team ensures any engagement activity takes place within fully accessible venues. All reasonable adjustments continue to be made to meet the needs of residents who require support. Further diversity and inclusion considerations will be identified during the preparation of the action plan and complied with as each project/funding stream is accessed.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- 1.7 The increasing cost of living is having a big impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing, and support in this area will therefore form a big part of the cost of living strategy. There will be links to the Mental Health Working Group, and these will be picked up as part of the actions for the new team from 1 April 2025.

Completed by: Sam Fitt, Senior HR Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2020-2023 to ensuring healthy and strong communities and being a high performing council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Cost of Living Team strives to deliver these priorities.

Household Support Fund – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

- 2.2. One of the main responsibilities of the Cost of Living Team is to administer and distribute the Household Support Fund (HSF). It was first announced by Government in October 2021 with funding covering the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Local Authorities had discretion on exactly how this funding was to be used (the scope set out in the national guidance and the accompanying grant determination). The expectation was that it should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy, and water bills.
- 2.3. It was confirmed the funding would be awarded directly to Tier 1 authorities, this being Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), acting as the LA Single Point of Contact (LA SPOC). It was agreed LCC and Lincolnshire District Councils would form a Lincolnshire Working Group to discuss and agree a way forward for the distribution of the funding across the County. The Lincolnshire Working Group has continued to meet regularly since October 2021.
- 2.4. Since October 2021, there have been further HSF schemes announced and implemented. This report provides an update on the two schemes for 2024/25 (HSF5 and HSF6).
- 2.5. Both schemes may be delivered through a variety of routes including proactive support, application-based support or by issuing grants to Third Party Organisations to provide support. Every Authority must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis throughout the duration of the HSF, either consistently over the period or at regular intervals throughout the scheme.

- 2.6. Councils have flexibility and can use discretion to identify and support those most in need. Individual awards can be whatever type and amount is deemed appropriate bearing in mind the overall scheme criteria. There is no requirement to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Authority's local eligibility criteria. However, in relation to Housing costs, Authorities must establish whether other forms of support are available to the household such as Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 2.7. There must be a clear rationale outlining the approach including eligibility and how households access the HSF. The support must be clearly advertised, inclusive and accessible.

Household Support Fund (HSF5) – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

- 2.8. In the spring budget on 6 March 2024, Government confirmed the extension of the Household Support Fund from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, with the distribution of £421m to Local Authorities in England to help households to meet their immediate needs and help those who were struggling to afford household essentials.

Household Support Fund – current scheme 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025

- 2.9. On 2 September 2024, Government confirmed the extension of the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025, with the distribution of a further £421m to Local Authorities in England to help households to meet their immediate needs and help those who were most vulnerable and struggling to afford household essentials.

Distribution of HSF funding across Lincolnshire (HSF5 and HSF6)

- 2.10. Lincolnshire's allocation of £10,929,370.40 was distributed evenly across both schemes, at a value of £5,464,685.20 per scheme. This was to support residents as set out within the guidance. The first grant period was from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 (HSF5) and the second grant period is from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 (HSF6).
- 2.11. Lincolnshire's approach to the distribution of the funding for both schemes has been:
- 64% of the total funding was utilised by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) to proactively target children via schools and early years providers, based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

Early Years Pupil Premium, (EYPP) and families with a 2-year-old eligible for Early Years Entitlement (EYE). It was anticipated that this would be transferred via a single payment to providers to be distributed in the best way to meet local needs. In most cases this would be a voucher or cash. LCC worked with strategic partners to direct

- 34% would be made available to the seven District Councils to distribute under local arrangements, providing broad support across the county. This had to include an application-based process, in line with grant conditions, to meet the needs of local populations. Where an individual District Council did not fully utilise its allocation, it was intended that any remainder be redistributed across The Fund
- 1% of the funding to care leavers in supported living accommodation
- 1% of funding for local authority administration costs to support the differing delivery mechanisms. Districts were able to utilise a portion of their allocation to support associated administrative costs.

2.12. The level of funding distributed to each District is detailed in the table below:

District Area	% allocation of funding		Allocation (£)	
	HSF5	HSF6	HSF5	HSF6
Boston	10%	10%	TBC	£185,539.13
City of Lincoln	16%	16%	TBC	£296,862.61
East Lindsey	24%	24%	TBC	£445,293.91
North Kesteven	11%	11%	TBC	£204,093.04
South Holland	12%	12%	TBC	£222,646.96
South Kesteven	14%	14%	£223,371	£259,754.78
West Lindsey	13%	13%	TBC	£241,200.87
Total	100%	100%	TBC	£1,855,391.30

Delivery plan for SKDC residents

2.13. The criteria and distribution method was the same as previous years:

Criteria	Distribution
The allocation of HSF6 will be 100% application based	Residents can contact the Council directly by speaking to the Customer Services Team or being referred by an approved 3 rd party (front facing SKDC teams, SKDC Elected Members and Citizens Advice).

Criteria	Distribution
Eligibility criteria	Any household that is struggling financially within the district with a household income of less than £50k will be eligible to apply.
	Priority will be given to residents that are going through a crisis or have a low income.
70% of SKDC allocated funding will be distributed by the Cost-of-Living Team	These will be for residents in receipt of a benefit. The resident will be able to speak to the cost-of-living team for additional advice and support.
	Supermarket / Energy /Cash vouchers will be issued to the applicant.
	<p>HSF is not designed to be an emergency payment – other financial assistance is available for this – such as Foodbank referrals and support from third sector organisations.</p> <p>These will be purchased from Charis Grants (trusted administrator for many essential funds and grants) and awarded as either a single voucher or as a combination of vouchers up to the allotted value per household.</p>
	<p>Awarded at a value of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £150 for single households • £250 for couples and families
30% of SKDC allocated funding will be distributed on behalf of SKDC by Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF).	They will be reaching households that are not in receipt of an income related benefit and are in need due to financial crisis.
	LCF are well placed to undertake financial assessments for these residents and identify other support that would benefit them – this could be a mix of financial support, financial management mentoring, supporting with budgets and supporting with job seeking activities.

Criteria	Distribution
	Supermarket and energy vouchers will be issued
	Awarded at a value of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £150 for single households £250 for couples and families

Household Support Fund (HSF5) – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 - £223,371

2.14. Total funding available for HSF5 was £223,371 and £220,471 was utilised during the HSF5 period – which is detailed as follows:

Available	Distribution	Purpose	Distributed up to 30 September 2024	
			Recipients	Value (£)
£9,000	Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Contribution towards Warm Packs for 2025 – as part of county-wide 'Warm Welcome' working group	£9,000 funding issued to LCF with Grantham Jubilee Centre distributing	
£13,000	SKDC Administration	Various administration costs of the scheme – such as printing and posting of vouchers, admin costs associated with Charis vouchers and printing of resource material for staff and residents.	Not applicable – this is administration funding	
£80,000	HSF Vouchers – Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Support for residents not in receipt of an income related Benefit that are struggling financially Priority 1 Priority 2 (income over £40-£50k)	270	£77,100 Underspend transferred to SKDC to issue payments
£121,371	SKDC HSF Vouchers – Cost of Living referral Team	Support for those specifically in receipt of an income related benefit that are struggling	596	£121,371

Available	Distribution	Purpose	Distributed up to 30 September 2024	
			Recipients	Value (£)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £200 for households with up to 2 residents £300 for households with 3 or more residents 		

Household Support Fund – current scheme 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025

2.15. Total funding available for HSF 6 is £259,755 and £127,181.80 has been utilised up to 21 February 2025 (£132,573.20 remaining) – which is detailed as follows:

Amount	Distribution	Purpose	Distributed as of 21 February 2025	
			Recipients	Value (£)
£9,000	Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Contribution towards Warm Packs for Autumn/Winter 2025 – as part of county-wide 'Warm Welcome' working group	Not yet distributed The warm pack project is part of the county-wide Warm Welcome Spaces Working Group, with North Kesteven District Council taking the lead for Warm Spaces and Warm Packs	
£13,000	SKDC Administration	Various administration costs of the scheme – such as printing and posting of vouchers, admin costs associated with Charis vouchers and printing of resource material for staff and residents.	Not applicable – this is administration funding	
£70,000	HSF Vouchers – Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Support for residents not in receipt of an income related Benefit that are struggling financially Priority 1	86	£27,300

Amount	Distribution	Purpose	Distributed as of 21 February 2025	
			Recipients	Value (£)
		Priority 2 (income over £40-£50k)		
£167,755	SKDC HSF Vouchers – Cost of Living referral Team	Support for those specifically in receipt of an income related benefit that are struggling £150 for household up to 2 £250 for household 3 or more	425	£86,881.80

Cost of Living Support (Advice and Referral Process)

- 2.16. The aim of the Cost of Living Team is to enable the Council's most vulnerable residents, who cannot access any other income, to sustain their home, health, family, and security. The Cost of Living Team is very aware of how important this support is to residents, and this is why the Council has had such a team in place since June 2023. One of the key activities for the team was to review the existing referral process from previous HSF schemes and to refine this process to ensure the best possible outcomes for the Council's residents.
- 2.17. An internal online form has been produced for SK Officers and Elected Members to complete, to refer a resident into the Cost of Living team for support. This support can take the form of general advice, referral to third sectors and assessment for a HSF voucher.
- 2.18. Each referral requires an initial 20 to 30 minute appointment with the resident to discuss their personal and household financial circumstances, to determine whether they are receiving all support available to them. The officer will discuss Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit, Foodbank vouchers, top-ups for shortfall in rent / council tax, tenancy support (if SKDC tenant – will be referred in to Tenancy Support Team) and other wider support such as referrals into Citizens Advice. The support provided is in-depth as the team has to make an assessment as to what is needed. The team –cannot offer a blanket response to all residents as their circumstances are on an individual needs basis.
- 2.19. Once the referral has been completed and the triage discussion has been undertaken with the resident, details are then passed to the HSF Officer (within the

Cost of Living Team) who will process the HSF voucher. The voucher is issued the same day it is processed.

Additional Financial Support (£118,791)

2.20. Of the residents who have been supported via the referral and HSF process, a total of £118,791 of additional wrap-around financial support has been identified by the team.

2.21. As a result, the residents have received additional financial support through a variety of avenues such as Discretionary Housing Payment, Foodbank vouchers, reduction in council tax, funding towards the purchasing of goods (through referral to third party), reduction in utility bills.

Additional community outreach and collaboration projects

2.22. In addition to the activities above, the team also ensures it is available to support residents across the district by:

- Attending SKDC Sheltered Housing Schemes
 - Between August 2024 and December 2024 the team has visited 11 Sheltered Housing Schemes and have an additional 10 in the diary to attend in the coming weeks
 - These allowed the team to be able to discuss topical issues which were affecting residents – such as additional financial support, and take up of other benefits which were not in payment
- Pension credit clinics (September 2024 to December 2024)
 - Visits to pensioners to undertake benefit checks and complete applications to ensure as many pensioners as possible met the deadline for the winter fuel payments
 - Posters distributed to doctors surgeries, libraries, cafes and other public locations.
- Talks / Visits to discuss the objective of the team and 'spread the word' regarding the financial support that can be provided to residents. This included:
 - NHS Neighbourhood teams
 - Jobs 22
 - Veterans Open day - Jubilee Church
- Applications for vulnerable residents to 3rd party organisations for household items such as Len Pick Trust, Bourne United Charities, BBC Children in Need.

2.23. The team also ensures it actively networks with external organisations. Meetings which the team have attended are:

- Lincolnshire Financial Partnership - quarterly meetings and receive the emails with additional support that the group provides
- Grantham Partnership - monthly meeting where they interact and maintain links with 3rd Party Organisations to which they refer the Council's residents.

Household Support Fund (HSF7) – 2025/26

- 2.24. On 30 October 2024, as part of the Autumn Budget, Government confirmed additional funding of £1bn to extend both the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payment Fund (DHP) from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The extension of HSF will continue to help households facing the greatest hardship and financial crisis, including supporting them with the cost of essentials such as food, energy and water.
- 2.25. . Full guidance relating to this funding has not yet been issued. Once guidance has been issued, the Lincolnshire County Working Group will review and discuss the development and implementation of HSF7.

The team and actions from 1 April 2025 onwards

- 2.26. Following a successful budget bid, it is extremely pleasing to report that the current Cost of Living Team will be funded as a permanent team from 1 April 2025.
- 2.27. The team will continue to be part of the Deputy Chief Executive Directorate and will report to Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community).
- 2.28. The two existing officers have completed an Expression of Interest to continue in the roles, both of which have been successful. The two officers are Funmi Reilly and Stella Darker.
- 2.29. In preparation for the future work of the team and to ensure its aims and objectives continue and grow, from 1 April 2025, the team will be renamed and referred to as the **Welfare and Financial Advice Team**.
- 2.30. Over the next eight weeks, the team will develop an action plan, which will include activities relating to HSF7; the re-use of un-spend vouchers; the development of an internal working group and much more. This action plan will be presented to the Committee in July 2025.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.

- 3.2. It is recommended to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Welfare and Financial Support Team continues to review the impacts of cost of living and implements activities within the action plan to support businesses and residents of South Kesteven.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 There are no other options – this report is for information only.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The recommendation ensures Members continue to be aware of this support scheme and the team that administers it.



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Customer Service Update Q3 2024/25

Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)

✉ claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Q3 2024/25 and call handling up to 31 December 2024.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Review and provide feedback on the information contained in the report.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implication arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to Connecting Communities and being an Effective Council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and high contact service areas strives to deliver these priorities.

2.2. A telephony and call handling report was presented to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 October 2024. The report focused on the position regarding call handling.

2.3. The Customer Service Team handle customer interactions in various ways for 17 high contact service areas, as well as general public enquiries. This report provides an update regarding customer interactions for these service areas for Quarter 3 2024/25.

Customer Interaction type

2.4. Tables 1 and 2 show the different methods and number of customer interactions received into the Customer Service Team during 2023/24 and each quarter during 2024/25.

Table 1 – Telephone calls and face to face contact:

	2023/24	Q1 (2024)	Q2 (2024)	Q3 (2024)
Customer Service calls	129,415	35,515	31,892	27,342
Switchboard calls	30,394	4,040	4,129	3,011
Other service calls	44,345	16,174	14,037	13,130
Total Calls	204,154	55,729	50,058	43,483
Grantham walk-in	4,540	1,242	834	790
Bourne walk-in	601	138	106	59
Bourne Library	26,528	6,982	7,608	6,577
Total Walk-in	31,669	8,362	8,548	7,426
Grantham appt	384	79	142	176
Bourne appt	203	48	62	48
Total Appointments	587	127	204	81

Total Interactions	236,410	64,218	58,810	51,133
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- 2.5. Officers are currently undertaking work to be able to report on the number of online forms completed, which are issued to the relevant service area for response. Once available, this will be included in table 2 below.

Table 2 – Digital Channels – Emails and Website:

	2023/24	Q1 (2024)	Q2 (2024)	Q3 (2024)
Emails	25,302	5,513	4,901	3,474
Website (unique browser)	975,997	382,833	363,091	541,739
Total	1,001,299	388,346	367,922	545,213

- 2.6. Table 3 shows the comparison of the different interaction types as 31 December 2024.
- 2.7. It is important for the Council to provide a variety of methods of contact for its customers. It is appreciated one contact method may not be suitable for all. Therefore, the method for customer contact provided by South Kesteven will continue to include all methods as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Interaction comparisons

	Q1 to Q3 (2024)	% of all interactions
Telephone Calls	149,270	10.12%

Walk in	24,336	1.65%
Appointments	412	0.03%
Emails	13,888	0.94%
Website	1,287,663	87.26%
Total	1,475,569	100%

Call handling – April 2024 to December 2024

- 2.8. Currently, 83% of calls are handled (answered), with 17% of calls being 'abandoned'. This is a slight reduction from December 2023 of 84% handled and 16% abandoned.
- 2.9. An 'abandoned' call is where the call is received and is not connected to the Customer Service Team or Service Area. Call abandonment is monitored from 16 seconds into the call being connected to the call queue.
- 2.10. There are numerous information messages for the customer whilst they are in the call queue, advising of other contact methods such as online, and the option to request a call back.
- 2.11. Call handling statistics are produced and issued by the Performance and Change Improvement Lead on a monthly basis to the Councils Corporate Management Team and service areas. The information includes number of calls offered, handled, abandoned and average speed of answer.
- 2.12. Performance clinics with service areas are continuing on a monthly basis which enable both the Customer Service Team and service area to have a platform to be able to advise of pressure points and upcoming changes which may impact customer interactions.
- 2.13. Customer feedback via the Council's corporate feedback process is monitored, specifically where the customer has indicated an issue regarding the "ability to contact the council". Between July 2024 and December 2024, 19 feedback requests were received, of this 11 were comments, and the remaining were service request. None were reported as a complaint.
- 2.14. Analysis of abandonment rates continues to be undertaken by the Customer Service Management Team, with actions being considered where improvements can be made or channel shift can be considered.
- 2.15. Some assumptions do have to be made as to why customers abandon their calls – as the reason simply is not known. However, it is anticipated the Customer

Experience Strategy consultation may provide insight regarding this. This will launch in early March and is detailed in a separate report to this Committee.

Website – feedback and improvements

- 2.16. Each page on the Council's website has a 'was this page useful' function. A customer can choose 'yes' or 'no' by clicking on the relevant 'happy or sad face' icon at the bottom of the page. In doing this, the customer is then given the option to provide and submit their comments, along with their name and email address.
- 2.17. A report has been produced each month by the Performance and Customer Improvement Lead, for the period from the new website Go Live (October 2023) to 31 December 2024.
- 2.18. During this period, there have been a total of 1,076 individual feedback received. Officers meet regularly to review the feedback and agree actions to be taken; amendments to the website, liaison with service areas and feedback to the customer (where contact details have been provided).

Relocation of the Grantham Customer Service Centre (CSC)

- 2.19. The relocation of the Grantham CSC has been a positive experience for both customers and staff.
- 2.20. The CSC is a multi-functional space, supporting residents and tenants with face-to-face, telephone and online services. Customers are able to book an appointment, between 9am and 1pm to see a specific service area, or they can see a member of the Customer Service team anytime between 9am and 3pm. In addition, customers are able to use the self-serve computers, of which there are four. Customer Service staff are on hand to support the customer and help them as needed.
- 2.21. The CSC also provides a welcoming corporate waiting area and meeting room which can be used by all staff. The use of the meeting room has been positive and provides a functional space for internal and external meetings.
- 2.22. There is a meeting room which is available for all staff and customer appointments. This is a secure room which enables private and confidential discussions to take place.
- 2.23. During the first month of opening, staff who use the CSC were asked to provide feedback. The responses were positive and reflected the experience they had over

the first month with 72% of stating the comfort and functionality of the centre for customers and staff was excellent, with the remaining 28% stating it was good. In addition, 97% of staff agreed that the new centre achieves the Council's goal that every customer will be valued, listened to and supported.

- 2.24. General feedback from customers has also been positive, however, to fully understand their experience, exit polls will be undertaken with customers during the period the Customer Experience Strategy Consultation takes place (March 2025). The feedback will focus on asking customers about access, the environment, the service they received and improvements which they feel should be considered. The responses will be included as part of the consultation feedback.
- 2.25. Officers continue to review the use of the CSC, and this will develop further, aligning to the development and introduction of the Customer Experience Strategy later this year.

Benchmarking performance

- 2.26. Benchmarking data is currently being gathered, with the Council issuing a Freedom Of Information (FOI) to forty Councils to inquire about Customer Service performance. Three comparator groups were identified and contacted:
- Geographic neighbours
 - CIPFA Peers
 - Authorities with a similar population size (assessed as within 5% boundaries of the total households (62,850) in South Kesteven.)
- 2.27. As of 31 January 2025, responses were received from twenty seven authorities. These included all SKDC's Lincolnshire neighbours, eight of SKDC's CIPFA Peers (total thirteen), and twelve responses from authorities with a similar sized population.
- 2.28. Follow-up questions were issued by SKDC to the councils requesting clarification regarding some responses and FTE information relating to specific questions.
- 2.29. Analysis of the FOI will be undertaken and linked to the development of the Customer Service Standards as part of the Experience

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. These are included throughout the report and members of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The report is for information only.

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**SOUTH
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COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation

Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)

✉ claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the review of the existing Customer Experience Strategy and launch of public consultation to develop a new Strategy that meets the current needs of the Council's customers.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the report and Members are invited to ask questions relating to the report.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to Connecting Communities and being an Effective Council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and high contact service areas strives to deliver these priorities.
- 2.2. Since the approval of the existing Customer Experience Strategy, the Council has undergone a period of transformation as a result of Covid, improvements in technology across various service areas, development of a new website and the relocation of the Grantham Customer Service Centre.
- 2.3. A vital part of the transformation is the development of a modern, and flexible customer experience which offers choice when delivering services. To do this, the Council must maximise the use of all channels available.
- 2.4. In addition, the Council needs to ensure that its services provide value for money and are sustainable. It is vital that it not only delivers 'business as usual' in a more modern environment but continues to enhance services in line with the customer expectations, evolving technologies and opportunities for customers, putting their needs at the heart of the organisation.

- 2.5. The Council's current Customer Experience Strategy sets out how the authority provide services to its customers. This includes services which provide more choice of access, with consistently good experience wherever and whenever the customer contacts the Council.
- 2.6. Various technologies are used to modernise the Council's telephony offer, improve the website, rationalise the face to face offering, increase self-service provision, improve online payments, as well as the integration of online forms and customer portals to back office systems to improve out hours of 24/7 accessibility.
- 2.7. In addition, the Corporate Plan 2024-2027 provides the framework for the delivery of services to residents and businesses and aims to make South Kesteven the best District to live in, work and visit. One of the ambitions and actions outlined in the Corporate Plan is to adopt a refreshed Customer Experience Strategy.

Consultation

- 2.8. During 2024, the Customer Service Management team undertook a series of workshops with officers from all service areas, to review the existing strategy and discuss what they knew about their customer. The workshops have helped to form the scope of the consultation to refresh the existing strategy for 2025 to 2029.
- 2.9. The public consultation will be undertaken for the period 10 March to 7 April 2025 and will be undertaken with a variety of stakeholders to understand how they interact or would choose to interact with the Council.
- 2.10. The purpose of the consultation will be to:
- Find out how people contact South Kesteven District Council (SKDC), why they contact the Council and how often
 - Establish what is important to people when contacting the Council
 - Understand what is most in need of improvement
 - Use this information to draw up SKDC's Service Standards, Customer Charter & Commitments and also what the Council expects from customers
 - Measure degree of support for strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes
- 2.11. The scope of the consultation ensures that the view of all users, including those who contact service areas directly (i.e. not solely through the Customer Service Team), are collected, as well as those who do not contact the Council (as they may be a customer in the future). The consultation will also reflect and be mindful of the recent significant investment in the Grantham Customer Service Centre.

2.12. The objectives of the consultation are to:

- Inform the content, approach and direction of the updated Customer Experience Strategy
- Underpin an action plan
- Identify the means of contact
- Find out why people contact the Council and which service area the enquiry relates to
- Understand what is important to people when contacting the Council
- Measure satisfaction with the experience
- Highlight where improvements are needed
- Establish what people like to see i.e. what they would like their customer experience to be
- Use this information to draw up the standards customers can expect from the Council and also to communicate the standards the Council expect from customers
- Measure degree of support for strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes

3. Key Considerations

3.1. Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 There are no other options – this report is for information only.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1. The recommendation will ensure businesses and residents of South Kesteven will have access to the support they need.

6. Consultation

6.1. The consultation process is as follows:

- 10 March 2025 to 7 April 2025 – Public Consultation
- 12 March 2025 – Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 7 May 2025 – Presentation of consultation analysis to Corporate Management Team
- 12 May 2025 to 23 May 2025 – Member workshop to present consultation analysis
- 4 June 2025 – Presentation of draft strategy and actions plan to Corporate Management Team

- 9 July 2025 – presentation of draft strategy and action plan to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 9 September 2025 – presentation of strategy and action plan for approval

7. Background papers

- 7.1. Customer Experience Strategy (2020 to 2024):
https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/Customer_Experience_Strategy2020_2024

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Customer Experience Strategy

2020-2024



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A bit of background info

The political vision for SKDC is ambitious, modern, and progressive with a clear number one priority to grow the local economy and make South Kesteven a better place in which to live, to work and to invest.

The vision is supported by a strategic investment programme across five broad categories: commercial, arts and heritage; leisure and the visitor economy, retail and markets; public realm and living; gateways and transport; and skills.

A vital part of our journey is creating a modernised customer experience offer providing choice and delivering convenience to all customers, businesses and visitors. The service must maximise the use of all channels available to improve our hours of accessibility (24/7) by promoting self-service for all transactions and making it easy to do business with SKDC whilst actively supporting those most vulnerable.

Our customers are traditionally those who have used our services, however, they are also others we have a 'transactional relationship' with. As a commercially-focussed local authority, our customers also include visitors, local, national and international businesses and partner organisations.

Whilst we undoubtedly face an organisational budget challenge, it is vital that we not only deliver 'business as usual' in a more modern environment but we continue to enhance our services in line with the customer expectations, evolving technologies and opportunities to put their needs at the heart of our business.

Customers now expect a modern council, offering a range of access options to quality services. We have seen a huge growth in the speed of the technological change across all access channels. This includes advancements in artificial intelligence, intelligent websites, social media, online accounts, virtual webchat/chatbots and apps.

We provide access to self-service and maintain the option of face to face and telephony services. We also aim to support customers and businesses to self-serve 24/7 through online interactions.

There are a number of contributing factors that dovetail with this strategy (ICT capability, retaining our best staff, our approach to digitisation, a new website and online forms) which must be considered to realise savings and to ensure delivery of a modern, consistent and reliable customer service experience.



Where we want to get to

The organisation is making a radical transition to develop new technologies to support the way its services will be delivered. Simultaneously, we are in the midst of radical reform nationally in the wake of Universal Credit which has introduced changes to welfare benefits including how they are paid and the move to the customer self-managing their payments and personal finances.

We'll be operating under a new model. We'll move even more of our customer interactions into our centralised customer service team. This will help to ensure consistency of service and also free up time in the back-office to focus on those tasks that often require a different set of skills. We'll do this by effectively blending people and technology together and triaging enquiries to make sure that they are responded to in the most efficient and effective way for both the customer and the council.

Ultimately, the strategy will see an improved service offer to our customers at a lower cost. It is backed by an action plan that will see ongoing investment into customer services to enable us to achieve greater levels of efficiency.

A vital part of the transformation of the council is the creation of a modern, flexible customer experience, offering choice and delivering convenience to all customers, businesses and visitors. To do this, services must maximise the use of all channels available. It is essential that the council improves its hours of accessibility by promoting self-service for all

transactions. This will make it easy to do business with SKDC whilst actively supporting those most vulnerable.

We need to ensure that our services are both affordable and sustainable. It is vital that we not only deliver 'business as usual' in a more modern environment but we continue to enhance our services.

Customers will increasingly expect to access services through a wide range of options. We will consider the appropriate application of modern technologies to support their interactions, whether that be through artificial intelligence, intelligent websites, social media, online accounts, webchat or chatbots and apps.

We will improve performance management across our customer interactions, making sure that we measure the right things and drive the improvements that our customers want to see. This will be supported by a range of new performance tools that will give us more insight into our customer behaviours and experiences than we've ever had before.

Our customers expect to easily access information and our staff need to have the right tools to make service delivery as easy and as seamless as possible. Ideally customers would like a joined-up service offer, with our channels providing consistent responses and connected signposting to partner

“

Customers will increasingly expect to access services through a wide range of options. We will consider the appropriate application of modern technologies to support their interactions

”

“ We will also maintain the option of face to face and telephony services for those most vulnerable, as well as supporting customers and businesses to self-serve 24/7, interact online and set up online accounts to meet current and future demand ”

organisations. To achieve this, we need to provide an ever-increasing depth and breadth of service that is efficiently delivered across all channels – modernising our services to be fit for the future, firmly putting the customer first.

It is vital that Customer Services offer access to self-service, first time - every time, and we make this easy and consistently good in delivery. We will also maintain the option of face to face and telephony services for those most vulnerable, as well as supporting customers and businesses to self-serve 24/7, interact online and set up online accounts to meet current and future demand.

By investing in our staff and the tools we use to deliver our services, we will also become more productive. Gaining extra capacity gives us choice. We can improve and become more consistent in our service standards, redirect resources to priority areas, provide 'back office expertise' or reduce operating costs, all in a managed way.

The strategy will ensure that we have a sustainable organisation that meets customer expectations. This cannot be achieved by staying as we are.





How we currently operate

We currently have four customer services centres located across the district. Our staff are multi-skilled, so are able to respond to a range of service requests through any access channel. However, the experience the customer gets will vary depending on the channel chosen.

Only some of the customer service offices have self-service kiosks. Currently, Stamford and Market Deeping do not have a self-serve payment facility. However, in Bourne, customers have been supported to utilise the three kiosks which enable access to a range of services including balances and payments for rent and council tax.

At Stamford all customers liaise with the customer service team directly to complete their enquiries because no other options are available to them. Payments represent 36% of those interactions, all of which could be managed through a kiosk, via the telephone or online.

We use a wide range of IT systems to deliver our services. This means that our staff interpret information in a range of formats and often only get a

partial view of the customers circumstances. This limits the customer's overall experience. Not all of our systems can facilitate the type of interactions that we now see as commonplace, such as sending a text message update to a customer. We often have to join systems together to achieve the outcomes that the customer expects. This can be costly and time consuming.

However, we've got over 100 forms online which help customers to transact with us at any time of day or night. Some of these are joined to automated back-office processes which enable prompt processing of work, or responses to enquiries. Work is already underway to extend this further.

We still have some duplication of work. Whilst we've made some improvements, we often have to rekey information into back office systems, and some frequently accessed services still rely on face to face or telephone conversations to be delivered. Often, customers have to understand how we operate in order to access our services.

How many interactions do we have?

It's important to appreciate just how many interactions the council deals with each year. During 2018/19 we managed:



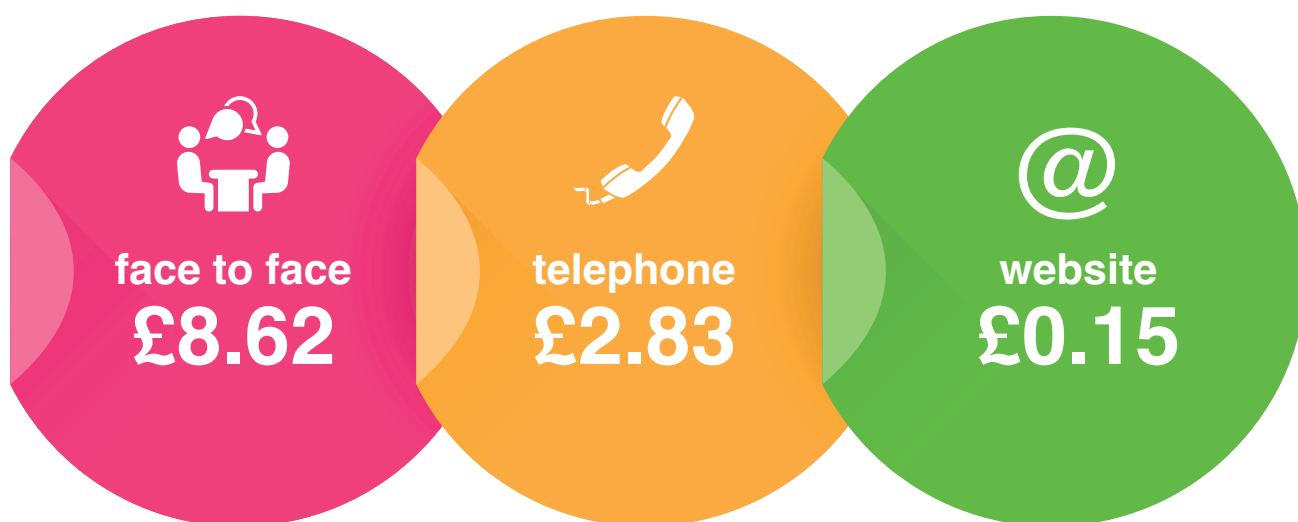
As the size of the district grows, demand for our services continues to increase. It is more important than ever that we take every opportunity to streamline our provision and ensure that each transaction is well designed and represents not only a good customer experience, but also value for money.

What does it cost?

It is recognised that different access channels create different cost pressures on the council. We've had some great success in moving customers to what are typically cheaper, online transactions. For example, over 80% of those accessing the garden waste service now choose to do so electronically, rather than through traditional channels.

This strategy sees the council continuing this work to not only reduce costs, but to increase choice.

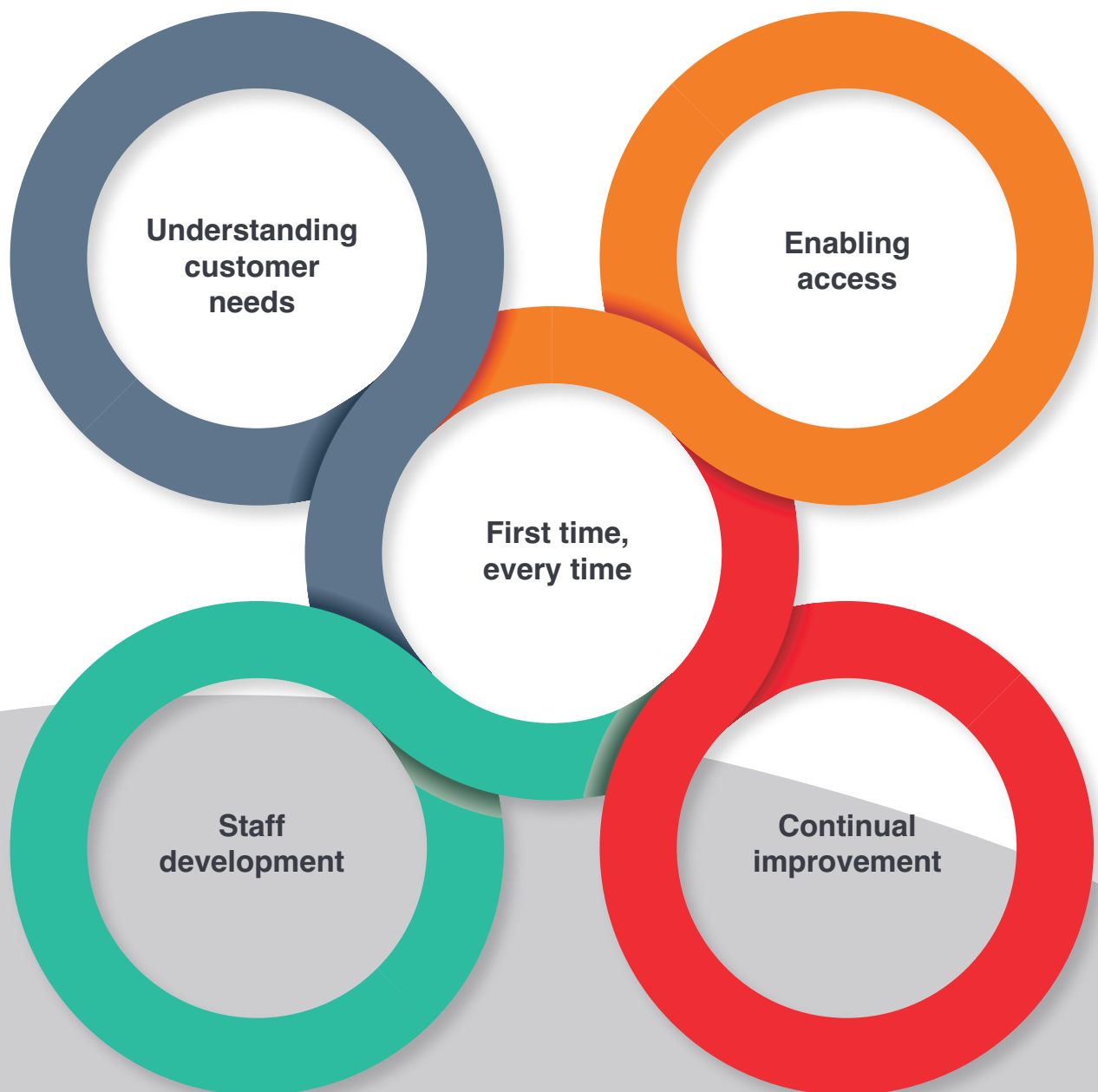
Latest industry benchmarks suggest that the average cost of a customer interaction is:



For South Kesteven District Council, simply switching 15% of our face to face demand to a web-based transaction could save us nearly £50,000 per year.

Our Customer Experience Vision

Our vision is split into a number of key themes which combined will improve customer experience as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. The themes are based on 5 key principles:



Theme 1: Operating model

Our target operating model recognises how humans and technology can work seamlessly together and both contribute in different ways. We know that technology is great at delivering high volume, repetitive rule-based tasks, whilst people are better where empathy or subjective judgement is required. We'll reconfigure our offer to effectively triage interactions and ensure that they are handled in the best possible way across all of our contact channels, including virtual assistants, phone, text, social media, mobile apps, online forms, post and email as well as face to face where it's really needed.

Our operating model is based on the principles of digital by design. This is where each of our processes are reviewed in detail, and where necessary, remodelled to support digital interactions in the future. The customer will get an improved outcome and will have greater choice in how to access a service. The council will see lower operating costs through greater levels of automation and a reduction in repeat contacts from customers.

This work will improve the number of ways customers contact us, not just closing channels down. If a customer wants to contact us through a traditional route, they still can. However, the onward journey for their transaction will still be utilising the new improved processes.

We'll involve customers throughout this process to ensure that we are building services that are in tune with the reality of how customers behave and wish to contact SKDC. Our model is based on three tiers of access.

Tiers one and two would typically be managed by our customer service team, with only those falling into tier three being referred to a back-office service. There is a requirement to upskill our staff and improve our knowledge-base as part of this shift.

Tier 1: typically managed by virtual workers, and where necessary, supported by multi-skilled officers to resolve the enquiry at the first point of contact. This would typically be interactions that involve sign posting, simple information provision, reporting of

faults or booking a service. It also includes making payments, requesting service provision, or seeking updates on progress.

Tier 2: more complicated enquires that require a specialist to respond. This could be where detailed advice is required, or where we need to respond to a complaint or customer feedback.

Tier 3: ongoing cases that are being managed by the back-office service. Typically, the most complicated of cases where detailed assessments are required to enable the service to be delivered.

Key activities include:

- data gathering – through tools like google analytics, contact centre monitoring reports, web analytics, reception demand and print / post volumes etc
- customer engagement and consultation to better understand current and future requirements and how proposed changes will affect them
- deployment of kiosk solutions for each of our market towns
- reviewing approach: identifying how successful our activities are at driving interactions or behaviours and seeking opportunities to do things differently in the future
- testing and launching new solutions: we will incrementally develop new solutions, utilising the latest agile development techniques. This will ensure that the customer receives regular improvements in service provision that is focussed on the things that matter the most to them

Theme 2: Technology

The implementation of the model will see new technologies introduced to help ensure that we make the best use of our resources – allocating the people with the right skills to the right tasks at the right time in the right place.

The Customer Experience Strategy dovetails with our emerging ICT strategy. We'll be focussing on utilising best in class technologies to better support our customers and simplifying the way that we go about doing business. We'll better leverage relationships with suppliers to implement solutions that improve our customers lives and remove many of the barriers and blockages that currently exist within our processes.

Technological advancements are moving faster than ever and have a significant impact on customer expectations. There is no such thing as standing still. If we don't invest then in reality our services will be going backwards and won't be moving at the pace our customers expect. We need to fundamentally review the type and configuration of technologies used to deliver services across each channel.

Key activities include:

- evaluate, procure and implement a new digital engagement / CRM platform
- enhance our website 'my account' functionality
- introduce a virtual operator solution
- deploy new booking solutions to provide greater customer choice, independence and automation
- commission a new council website
- develop our knowledge-base for use by customers, staff and virtual assistants
- deploy chat technologies, including chatbots in high volume, repetitive environments



Theme 3: Embedding a customer first ethos

We will create a network of customer champions, backed by senior management to drive the delivery of this strategy. We will ensure that the customer voice is central to our decision making when we look at how our services are designed in the future. We'll also share learning and best practice across the organisation.

The Customer Services management team will work with service areas on planning customer journey mapping and performance monitoring. They will also be responsible for agreeing and monitoring Customer Experience Business Charter Agreements with service areas to embed the transformed processes, service hand off points, customer feedback and performance.

The team will explain the need for change, and then work with the service teams themselves to agree and collectively own how that happens within the framework of the Customer Experience Strategy and guidelines that leadership and management provide.

We'll utilise our project governance methodologies to implement improvements to our customer service, with our customer champions ensuring that our initiatives are properly communicated both internally and externally to gain buy-in and the maximum positive impact.

Our HR plans place a focus on learning and development, seeking to increase the performance and potential of each of our employees. We will work with our managers to create individual learning plans for each employee, with tailored learning paths to support ongoing personal and professional development. This includes developing core customer service skills, recognising this as a specialism, as well as becoming more outward looking as an organisation and learning from what others are doing.

We'll also be working closely with colleagues in our communications team to make sure that our customers get the right messages, in the right place at the right time. We'll utilise feedback to improve the way we communicate and make better use of existing tools to market new opportunities to our residents, visitors and businesses as well as providing improved service updates that are targeted to individual's needs.

We'll also be looking at ways that we can better market some of the amazing things that the council does, and that goes on in our district. We want our residents to truly value the contribution that their council makes as well as help the district to thrive.

Key activities include:

- staff learning and development plans
- identifying and implementing service marketing plans
- reviewing existing customer accounts to enhance the breadth, depth and utilisation of this channel
- creation of customer champions with launch of the strategy
- commission market research to identify how the best in class organisations do things

Theme 4: Measurement and management

The council has already made great progress in improving the way it manages performance. We need to ensure that the customer voice is central to that. This voice needs to be heard across all areas of the council and truly understood and listened to.

Through consultation with our customers and service areas, we will better understand what matters the most to our customers. We will use their feedback to design and develop services, test solutions prior to implementation and re-evaluate how well we're doing.

We will work across local government and with the private sector to benchmark our performance and identify opportunity to improve further. We'll be looking at what others are doing, how and why they are doing it, and how this could help in the delivery of services at SKDC. Our customers don't just compare us with other parts of the public sector, so we need to look wider and develop new relationships if we are going to keep pace.

We will regularly talk and reflect on our customers experience and views of the services that we provide. We'll use this gift of information to identify ways that

we can improve. The improvements will be promoted and supported to engage customers and staff members to utilise new solutions.

Key activities include:

- consultation and engagement exercises
- creation of dashboards
- benchmarking with others – both in the public and private sector
- training and development plans to respond to feedback and improve our offer
- embedding the customer voice into our performance appraisals across the authority

High Level Action Plan

The Customer Experience Strategy is underpinned by an action plan that runs from 2020 until 2024. Each activity will progress through four phases: Discovery, Define, Develop, Deploy. Each deployment will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis through the performance framework and ongoing customer consultation and engagement to ensure it meets current needs and is developed further to accommodate future requirements.

Theme 1: Operating Model	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Data gathering	Ongoing activity			
Customer engagement and consultation	Ongoing activity			
Deployment of kiosk solutions	Completed			
Reviewing approach	Ongoing activity			
Testing and launching new solutions	Ongoing activity			

Theme 2: Technology	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Digital engagement / CRM platform	Scope and produce	Implement		
My account		Completed		
Virtual operator solution	Completed			
Booking solution	Completed			
New council website	Completed			
Develop our knowledge-base	Ongoing activity			
Chat technologies		Completed		

Theme 3: Embedding a Customer First Ethos	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Staff learning and development plans	Develop/Deploy	Ongoing activity		
Service marketing plans	Ongoing activity			
Customer account enhancements	Develop	Deploy		
Customer champions	Ongoing activity			
Market research	Ongoing activity			

Theme 4: Measurement and Management	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Consultation and engagement exercises	Ongoing activity			
Creation of dashboards	Completed	Ongoing reviews		
Benchmarking	Ongoing activity			
Training and development	Ongoing activity			
Embedding the customer voice	Ongoing activity			

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SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT TITLE	OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMIITEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE PRIORITY
2024-2025				

Unscheduled Items

Report title	Issue	Originated	Corporate Priority
Car Parking			
Impact of the Forbidden Forest Festival on South Kesteven’s rural communities			
Crime Disorder Meeting			
Parish and Town Council liaison	To provide a review of the Parish and Town Council Conference		Connecting Communities
South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Update	Bethany Goodman (Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead)	To provide an update on the progress and delivery of the South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.	

Age Friendly Communities Update	Bethany Goodman (Physical Activity & Wellbeing Lead)	To provide an update on the progress of SKDC becoming an Age Friendly Community.	
LCC Health Scrutiny Committee update		Update provided by Cllr Morgan	
Armed Forces Update	Paul Drury – Armed Forces Officer for Lincolnshire	Originated from the request of Members for Paul to lead a presentation from 13/02 meeting – Armed Forces Covenant item.	

The Committee's Remit

8 The remit of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be to work alongside Cabinet Members to assist with the development of policy and to scrutinise decisions in respect of, but not limited to:

- Allotments
- Anti-social behaviour, community safety and local policing
- Benefit claims
- Community engagement & cohesion
- Community funding and volunteering
- Community right to bid
- Community well-being
- Customer services
- Disabled facilities grant
- Equality and diversity
- Parish and town council liaison
- Public conveniences
- Safeguarding and individual wellbeing

- Shop front designs and funding
- Street furniture