

# Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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Tuesday, 10 June 2025 at 2.00 pm  
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,  
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

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**Committee Members:** Councillor Elvis Stooke (Chairman)  
Councillor Emma Baker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor James Denniston, Councillor Barry Dobson, Councillor Gloria Johnson,  
Councillor Nikki Manterfield, Councillor Paul Martin, Councillor Max Sawyer and  
Councillor Sarah Trotter

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## 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](mailto:democracy@southkesteven.gov.uk)
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Disclosure of Interests**  
Members are asked to disclose any interests in matters for consideration at the meeting.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held 18 March 2025** (Pages 3 - 8)
5. **Updates from the previous meeting** (Page 9)  
To consider actions agreed at the meeting held on 18 March 2025.

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☎ 01476 406080

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive  
[www.southkesteven.gov.uk](http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk)

6. **Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service**
7. **Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25** (Pages 11 - 19)  
To present the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for quarter 4 2024/25.
8. **Restructure of Waste Collection Rounds** (Pages 21 - 29)  
This report outlines the planned restructure of the waste collection rounds. The current rounds are inefficient and the proposed changes will improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the service without reducing the current levels of service provided.
9. **Update on draft tree management policies** (Pages 31 - 82)  
To provide the committee with an update on the new tree management policies.
10. **Work Programme 2025 - 2026** (Pages 83 - 84)  
To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2025 – 2026.
11. **Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

## Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 18 March 2025, 10.00 am



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

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### Committee Members present

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

### Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter  
Councillor Rhys Baker

### Officers

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

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## 60. Public Speaking

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

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

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

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

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

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

**61. Apologies for absence**

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor Steven Cunningham.

**62. Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

**63. Minutes of the meeting held 10 February 2025**

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

**64. Updates from the previous meeting**

There were no comments on the outstanding action.

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

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

**66. Q&A for Agencies involved in Flood Response**

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

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

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

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The meeting adjourned at 11.25 and resumed at 11.35.*

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

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

A Climate Change Reserve was put in place from in 2023/24 to both help respond to the budgetary pressures driven by the increasing cost of energy, and the Council's stated ambition of carbon reduction across the Council's property portfolio. South Kesteven District Council made significant progress in addressing carbon emissions from its own operations. Some of these major achievements with a major impact on the Council's carbon emissions include:

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

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

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

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

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

**69. Work Programme 2024 - 2025**

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

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

There was none.

*The Chairman concluded the meeting at 12.03 PM.*



# Action Sheet

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Actions from meeting of 18 March 2025

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
54	FLOODING Q&A	Chase LCC for an update regarding the cleaning of drainage systems within SKDC.	Kayleigh Boasman		
66	Q&A FOR AGENCIES INVOLVED IN FLOOD RESPONSE	It was requested that Members receive a copy of the letters sent to local Parish Councils offering advice and support by the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum.	Phil Swinton	<b>COMPLETED – 20/03/25</b>	

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**SOUTH  
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## **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Tuesday 10 June 2025

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

## **Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25**

### **Report Author**

Charles James, Policy Officer

✉ Charles.James@southkesteven.gov.uk

### **Purpose of Report**

To present the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the purview of this Committee for Quarter Four 2024/25.

### **Recommendations**

#### **That the Committee**

- 1. Scrutinises the performance against the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-27.**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Sustainable South Kesteven
Which wards are impacted?	All

## 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 significant financial implications arising from this report, which is for noting.

*Completed by: David Scott, Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy s151 officer)*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 Regular monitoring of service area performance is to be welcomed and represents good governance. This report is for noting and there are no significant governance implications arising from the report.

*Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager*

## 2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2024-2027 was adopted by Council on 25 January 2024. It was proposed actions, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets would be developed by the relevant Member led Committees, which would retain oversight of the performance management arrangements at a strategic level.
- 2.2 The actions within the purview of this Committee with accompanying measures were presented to and agreed by the Committee on 19 March 2024.

### **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1 This report is the second of the new reporting cycle, and covers the period January to March 2025 (Quarter 4 2024/25).
- 3.2 Appendix A provides the overall performance against the twelve actions being presented in this session. Commentary by the responsible officer is provided for each action. Performance is summarised using a RAG system as follows:
- 3.3 Eleven of the actions are rated Green. These are actions which are on or above target as planned.
- 3.4 Zero actions are rated as Amber, these are those off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement is delayed but with resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.
- 3.5 Zero actions are rated as Red. These are actions that are significantly below target.
- 3.6 One action is rated as N/A. These are actions for which work has not yet meaningfully commenced e.g. being sequenced on the completion of other items, or where data unavailable.
- 3.7 The KPIs have been developed in close consultation with the relevant Officers for each service. It is expected that the KPI suite will experience a degree of evolution over the next four years. This improvement will be prompted by the needs of decision makers and the Committees, and further consideration of how to best meet those needs by Officers.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 As Council has agreed the Committees will lead monitoring performance, there are no viable alternatives. An absence of performance arrangements would mean the delivery of the Corporate Plan is unmonitored and prevent continuous improvement. A purely internal KPI suite would prevent effective and transparent scrutiny and accountability.

### **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1 This is a regular report where Members are invited to scrutinise and comment on performance.

### **6. Appendices**

Appendix A – Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI Report: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee End-Year (Q4) 2024/25



South Kesteven District Council - Appendix A – Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI Report: Environment OSC End-Year (Q4) 2024/25

Corporate Plan 2024-27: KPI Summary Report 2024/25 – Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee							
Index	Priority	Action	Owner	2024/25 Quarterly Overall Status			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ENVIRO1	Sustainable South Kesteven	Deliver the Climate Change Action Strategy programme.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO2	Sustainable South Kesteven	Continue to reduce operational emissions to achieve the target of a 30% reduction on 2019 by 2030 and develop modelling to set a target of achieving Net Zero operations as soon as viable.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO3	Sustainable South Kesteven	Review and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities across the corporate estate, such as solar panels and EV chargers.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO7	Sustainable South Kesteven	Adopt a Tree and Woodland Strategy and deliver the accompanying action plan.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO8	Sustainable South Kesteven	Ensure that biodiversity net gain is embedded through corporate projects and operations	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO9	Sustainable South Kesteven	Continue to tackle waste related crimes, including fly tipping with support from the Environmental Crime Partnership	Head of Service (Public Protection)	N/A	N/A	Below Target	On Target
ENVIRO10	Sustainable South Kesteven	Manage a smooth implementation of twin stream recycling to improve the recycling rate and reduce contamination.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO11	Sustainable South Kesteven	Develop and implement an effective process for the collection of food waste. (Food waste collection mandatory from 31st March 2026)	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ENVIRO12	Sustainable South Kesteven	Deliver a range of schemes to improve the recycling rate.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	N/A	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO13	Sustainable South Kesteven	Manage the construction and transition to a new depot, that is fit for purpose, and explore options for the old depot	Head of Service (Property and ICT)	Below Target	Below Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO14	Sustainable South Kesteven	Develop and deliver the Fleet Management strategy and accompanying action plan.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	On Target	On Target	On Target	On Target
ENVIRO15	Sustainable South Kesteven	Review and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities within private properties in the district.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Below Target	Below Target	On Target	On Target

Corporate Plan 2024-27: KPI Summary Report Q4 2024/25 – Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee							
Index	Priority	Action	Owner	Target/s	Q4 Value	Q4 Status	Manager Commentary
ENVIRO1	Sustainable South Kesteven	Deliver the Climate Change Action Strategy programme.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Development & Approval of Action Plan	Climate Action Plan under development	On Target	The Climate Action Plan is under development, the focus of the team in 2024/25 was operational delivery. Projects utilising the Climate Reserve Fund in 2024/25 included new solar PV for The Picture House, battery powered grounds maintenance equipment and further energy efficiency projects targeting the leisure centres including upgrade of existing floodlighting to LED and proposals to upgrade pool pumps. Bid development for standalone projects has been ongoing. Several projects have been completed in line with the Climate Action Strategy themes. Online climate training has been developed and added to the learning packages of all new officers that join the Council. The draft Climate Action Plan is expected to be brought to Environment OSC in Autumn 2025.
ENVIRO2	Sustainable South Kesteven	Continue to reduce operational emissions to achieve the target of a 30% reduction on 2019 by 2030 and develop modelling to set a target of achieving Net Zero operations as soon as viable.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Reduction in SKDC carbon emissions.	A reduction of 25.6% has been reported for the 2023/24 financial year.	On Target	A downward trend in emissions can be observed since the carbon baseline of 2018/19. SKDC is on track to meet the target of reduction of at least 30% by 2030. SKDC is currently projected to achieve the emissions target during the 2026/27 financial year based on the latest information.
ENVIRO3	Sustainable South Kesteven	Review and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities across the corporate estate, such as solar panels and EV chargers.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Charging Point Utilisation Percentage (15%)	18.84%	On Target	Usage of chargers is steadily increasing, particularly in Stamford. As part of the new Cattlemarket car park project, the inclusion of new electric vehicle (EV) chargers is being investigated. This will increase the number of charging points in Stamford - the Councils most popular area for people with EVs.



South Kesteven District Council - Appendix A – Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI Report: Environment OSC End-Year (Q4) 2024/25

Index	Priority	Action	Owner	Target/s	Q4 Value	Q4 Status	Manager Commentary
ENVIRO7	Sustainable South Kesteven	Adopt a Tree and Woodland Strategy and deliver the accompanying action plan.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	% delivery of actions included in the Tree and Woodlands Action Plan	Priority actions under review with new Tree Projects Officer.	On Target	A Tree and Woodland Strategy Work Programme was presented to Environment OSC in December 2024, outlining how the main actions of the Tree and Woodland Strategy for South Kesteven will be delivered over the next two years. Short term workstreams include reviewing the SKDC [tree management] guidelines, introducing a new tree record management system, obtaining baseline data for tree canopy cover and species diversity, assessing planting opportunities on SKDC land, expanding the planting programme, and establishing an SKDC tree board. A review of the Tree Policy is underway for presentation to Environment OSC in September 2025.
ENVIRO8	Sustainable South Kesteven	Ensure that biodiversity net gain is embedded through corporate projects and operations	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Develop and deliver a Biodiversity Action Plan.	Biodiversity Action Plan under development	On Target	The Biodiversity Action Plan is on track to be developed and published in 2025, in line with expectations of the Environment Act. The Make Space for Nature scheme for town/parish councils has funded nine new biodiversity projects, as well as an additional project at Wyndham Park to establish a biodiversity dog paddock. Consultation is planned for summer 2025 to gauge public feedback on current and potential future projects.
ENVIRO9	Sustainable South Kesteven	Continue to tackle waste related crimes, including fly tipping with support from the Environmental Crime Partnership	Head of Service (Public Protection)	Number of enforcement actions undertaken when evidence of an offence is available.	No. of fly tips with evidence in Q4 is 23. Of those investigations 5 Community Protection Warning Notices were issued and 2 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued.	On Target	A new environmental crime process and mechanism for data capture has been developed and is being implemented. In Q3 the data was reported for the first time and identifies that 14.3% of cases in Q3 have had an enforcement outcome, this increased to 33% in Q4. Open investigations are continuing and some cases are being prepared for prosecution. It is important to note that an investigation can take a considerable amount of time and many are not concluded within a quarter. While evidence is obtained from flytips it does not always lead to the perpetrator meaning the case would not have a positive outcome in terms of enforcement action.

# South Kesteven District Council - Appendix A – Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI Report: Environment OSC End-Year (Q4) 2024/25

Index	Priority	Action	Owner	Target/s	Q4 Value	Q4 Status	Manager Commentary
ENVIRO10	Sustainable South Kesteven	Manage a smooth implementation of twin stream recycling to improve the recycling rate and reduce contamination.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	% of households with access to the twin stream recycling service. (1% quarterly growth on baseline 88%)	90%	On Target	The twin stream recycling scheme is now fully implemented and has been very successful. The implementation process throughout the summer of 2024/25 has yielded success and fewer bins have been rejected. In Q4 0.61% of household collections were rejected (0.15% for paper & card). The rejection rate had stood at 6.39% in Q3.  In addition, the proportion of paper and card collected has increased and the quality is high. The scheme has had a clear positive impact on the contamination rate. The Council will continue to monitor this and take action if required using a data driven approach.
				% of households rejected for non-target waste within the recycling stream.	0.61%	On Target	
				Proportion of total recycling waste collected which is paper and card. (35%)	43% (Q1 29.62%)	On Target	
ENVIRO11	Sustainable South Kesteven	Develop and implement an effective process for the collection of food waste. (Food waste collection mandatory from 31st March 2026)	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	Work with relevant stakeholders to establish a project group and Action Plan for implementation	N/A	N/A	Mandatory weekly food waste collections are due to start in April 2026. SKDC is currently working with the Lincolnshire Waste partnership to develop a service delivery plan. Indicative funding estimates from government are due in November 2024 and this will enable the Council to understand the potential unfounded costs and progress the plan.
ENVIRO12	Sustainable South Kesteven	Deliver a range of schemes to improve the recycling rate.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	Domestic waste recycled per household (KG)	41kg	On Target	The quality of recycling waste collected has improved over the year, due to the tireless work of the service staff and successful delivery of the behavioural change programme. At the beginning of the year, contaminated recycling stood at 30%. This has been reduced to 4.73%.
				Increase uptake of the garden waste recycling service. (Target 1% growth)	6.9% growth	On Target	
				% of non-recyclable materials in the recycling stream. (15%)	4.73%	On Target	

South Kesteven District Council - Appendix A – Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI Report: Environment OSC End-Year (Q4) 2024/25

Index	Priority	Action	Owner	Target/s	Q4 Value	Q4 Status	Manager Commentary
ENVIRO13	Sustainable South Kesteven	Manage the construction and transition to a new depot, that is fit for purpose, and explore options for the old depot	Head of Service (Property and ICT)	Construction Completion (November 2025)	Construction Commenced completion expected for October 2025	On Target	Works commenced on the new depot site at Turnpike Close on 28th October 2024. Construction works have progressed on site with ground works to the main building foundation and drainage installed. Steel works have been erected for the main building. The project is currently around halfway through construction with construction completion scheduled for 7th October 2025. This will be followed by a 4 week mobilisation period with the view to go live in November 2025. The project is anticipated to be delivered on time and within the Councils approved budget envelope of £8.8m. The options appraisal for Alexandra Road has been commissioned for the initial viability reporting, and a secondary report is being prepared following discussions with Lincolnshire County Council as to a potential partnership scheme who have now withdrawn from the negotiations. An options appraisal for the Mowbeck Way site has continued to be progressed and should be available in June 2025.
ENVIRO14	Sustainable South Kesteven	Develop and deliver the Fleet Management strategy and accompanying action plan.	Head of Waste Management & Market Services	Develop and adopt Strategy	Adopted	On Target	The Green Fleet Strategy 2025-28 was adopted by Cabinet in January 2025. The Strategy will commence from 1st April 2025.
ENVIRO15	Sustainable South Kesteven	Review and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities within private properties in the district.	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Number of properties improved	90	On Target	At the end of December 2024, 292 homes had signed up to the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) energy efficiency funding scheme across the Lincolnshire partnership. New referrals to the scheme have now been paused, in order to approve and allocate all installations by 31st March 2025. Despite a challenging start, the scheme has performed reasonably within the terms of the funding upgrading 123 properties across the partnership as of end of March 2025. 90 of the completions were in South Kesteven.

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**SOUTH  
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## **Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Report of Councillor Rhys Baker  
Cabinet Member for Environment and  
Waste

## **Restructure of Waste Collection Rounds**

### **Report Author**

Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management and Market Services

✉ [kayleigh.boasman@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:kayleigh.boasman@southkesteven.gov.uk)

### **Purpose of Report**

This report outlines the planned restructure of the waste collection rounds. The current rounds are inefficient, and the proposed changes will improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the service without reducing the current levels of service provided.

### **Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. Note the contents of the report**

### **Decision Information**

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Sustainable South Kesteven 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 proposed restructure has the potential to reduce the resource requirement by two vehicles and crews; this is a saving of around £250,000 per vehicle (capital costs) and £100,000 per crew (revenue costs). However, with the upcoming weekly food waste roll out due in April 2026, it is anticipated that these resources will be redirected to help deliver this service.

*Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 There are no legal or governance implications arising from the report.

*Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager*

### ***Climate Change***

- 1.3 The proposed changes would improve the efficiency of the rounds and reduce the vehicles required to deliver the service by two. This would have a positive impact on the fuel consumption and associated carbon emission totals for this service area.

*Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager*

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1. In 2022 a full review of the waste services at South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) was undertaken and it was highlighted that a route review had not been undertaken in recent years. As a result, the rounds were unbalanced, and collections were geographically sporadic. This made the rounds inefficient, at risk of failing to complete regularly and meant that returning for missed bins / additional work could not be organised in the most efficient way.
- 2.2. In waste collection it is good practice to rebalance the collection rounds annually; usually it is a small project with minimal impact. The rebalance looks at new developments, problem areas and the weight balance across the week with the aim of ensuring work is spread equally across the week and resources. Unfortunately, SKDC has not undertaken a round review since 2012 and therefore many issues have been identified within the current operational set up.
- 2.3. Based on this review, Webaspx were commissioned by SKDC in August 2022 to undertake a full review of the current waste collection rounds. Webaspx are a specialist in providing route review services and software to Local Authorities.

## **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1. When restructuring rounds there are several considerations to make. These include work zoning, work balancing and any unique local issues. This section contains information on each of these areas of consideration; these are the issues which have been taken into account to support the selection of the preferred scenario for change.

### **Zoning of Work**

- 3.2. Collection rounds are typically organised into zones (geographical areas which are close together), each day of collections has its own zone and the work for the day is located together within the zone. This means that resources are deployed to a specific area on each day, they work closely with each other so if there is an issue (e.g. a vehicle breakdown, or an accident) the other vehicles can use their spare capacity to pick up the work.
- 3.3. The zoning of the work also minimises the issues that come with a 'task and finish' approach to waste collection. Crews work together to complete the work within the zone and are incentivised to work together to complete the day's work. They are no longer incentivised to complete their own work as quickly as possible so they can leave.
- 3.4. A further benefit of zoning is that the work is collected with the depot and tipping points considered; most authorities choose one of two possible options:
  1. Collect from properties furthest away from the depot at the start of the week and finish close to the depot on the final day,

2. Collect from properties closest to the depot at the start of the week and finish the week at the furthest point.
- 3.5. The option chosen usually depends on where the tipping points are located but both options facilitate the efficient collection of missed bins as it means operatives aren't having to travel to a random spread of bins across an entire district to pick them up when they are missed.

### **Balancing of Work**

- 3.6. Collection rounds are usually set up to spread the weight evenly across the week. This ensures that the teams do not have a round which is disproportionately bigger than others. The benefit of this is resilience, when new developments are constructed, a balanced operation should be able to absorb them within the current set-up. If rounds are not balanced, new developments will have to be absorbed by whichever round has the capacity and this can mean utilising resources which are in another part of the district. This reduces efficiency and increases the risk of round failure.
- 3.7. Ideally, re-balancing of rounds should take place annually or bi-annually (at most) to 'tweak' the rounds and ensure the workload remains spread across the rounds equally.

### **Local Issues**

- 3.8. Alongside the general reasons for rebalancing and restructuring rounds, there are also the following reasons which are specific to SKDC:
  - South Kesteven's rurality, the prevalence of villages and rural collections,
  - Growth in the urban conurbations, notably in Bourne,
  - The garden waste rounds have no geographical logic,
  - The current set up makes picking up missed bins from different waste streams difficult, and
  - Collections are organised sporadically meaning that crews must travel large distances between collection locations at times, wasting time on travel which can result in missed bins if there are delays e.g. bad traffic.
- 3.9. Due to the sporadic nature of the current rounds and high resource requirement to collect the bins, the 2022 waste review suggested that a round restructure was the best way forward.

### **Options Considered**

- 3.10. When considering the best way forward for SKDC, all the outlined areas were considered and discussed in-depth with Webapsx. The section outlines the options which were considered and explains why the preferred scenario has been selected.



3.11. Webaspx were given the following requirements:

- Rebalance the refuse and garden waste collections,
- Split the recycling into Mixed Dry Recycling (MDR) and paper/card collections,
- Day changes are to be considered,
- Refuse and recycling rounds to be exact mirrors, and
- Garden waste does not need to be the same collection day as refuse and recycling.

3.12. Based on these requirements, Webaspx suggested the following scenarios (Appendix 1):

1. **Scenario 1** – a general optimisation of the ‘as is’ rounds, collection days would not change, and this scenario did not include a separate paper/card collection.
2. **Scenario 2** – general optimisation but with no restriction on day changes, this option included the separate paper/card collections.

3.13. Scenario 1 was ruled out because it would require the same number of rounds. Although it did optimise the collections and reduce the working time within the rounds, because the collection days weren’t changed there were no efficiencies to be made. This also meant that the spread of work between days remained unbalanced and the areas where development was taking place (notably Bourne) were at risk of reaching capacity.

3.14. Scenario 2 was the best scenario because it met most of the requirements. This scenario reduced the number of rounds (vehicle + crew) required by 1 per service e.g. in Scenario 1 16 vehicles were required to complete each day’s work, in Scenario 2 only 15 were required. This scenario rebalanced the rounds for all the waste streams, meaning that work was more evenly distributed across collection days, and it created capacity for expansion in key areas due to the geographical zoning of the work. Based on this, Scenario 2 has been selected.

3.15. Appendix 1 contains an in-depth breakdown of the key statistics for each scenario separated by waste stream.

## Timelines

3.16. Currently, it is anticipated that the roll out of the new collection schedules will take place in September 2025. The proposed high-level key dates for the roll out are:

- August 2025 – Communications campaign through social media to inform residents of the round restructure taking place and what the benefits are. This includes a web page dedicated to the round restructure including FAQs available on SKDC website, tied into social media comms.

- WC 18<sup>th</sup> August – letters to all residents confirming their new collection schedules, including a calendar and a Right Thing Right Bin leaflet. Letters to be delivered in batches of 5,000, South to North.
- New collections begin WC 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## **Summary**

- 3.17. This report provides an overview of the round restructure project and information on why it was decided that changing collection days was the best option for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the collection rounds.

## **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. As outlined in paragraph 3.12. there were two scenarios considered. Scenario 1 involved a general optimisation of the rounds within the current collection days. This option was rejected because it didn't address the multiple issues outlined in Section 3 of this report. A full restructure is required to improve the service and achieve the savings outlined in Appendix 1.

## **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1. It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report; this report provides an overview of the proposed restructure of the waste collection service and explains why a full overhaul of the current system is required.
- 5.2. If the round restructure does not allow for changes to collection days, the savings would be minimal and there would be very limited capacity built in for future proofing the service against growth.

## **6. Appendices**

- 6.1. Appendix 1: Key statistics for each scenario by waste stream

## Appendix 1: Key statistics for each scenario by waste stream

Key for Tables 1 – 3:

- AsIs – current model
- Tac S1 – Scenario 1 (no change to collection days)
- Tac S2 – Scenario 2 (collection days changed)

**Table 1: Residual Waste**

Overall Refuse AsIs vs Tact S1 vs Tact S2			
	AsIs	Tac S1	Tac S2
<b>Rounds</b>	80	80	75
<b>Vehicles</b>	16	16	15
<b>Crew Days</b>	220	220	205
<b>Min Time</b>	4.3	3.5	3.1
<b>Max Time</b>	8.3	7.9	7.1
<b>Avg Time</b>	6.0	6.2	6.5
<b>Total Time</b>	481	493	485
<b>Min Miles</b>	23.1	24.9	10.5
<b>Max Miles</b>	128.8	134.0	135.5
<b>Avg Miles</b>	69.5	75.3	76.0
<b>Total Miles</b>	5,563	6,026	5,699
<b>Min Locations</b>	81	81	95
<b>Max Locations</b>	1,222	1,516	1,478
<b>Avg Locations</b>	830	830	885
<b>Total Locations</b>	66,374	66,374	66,374
<b>Min Bins</b>	81	81	95
<b>Max Bins</b>	1,324	1,620	1,637
<b>Avg Bins</b>	864	864	922
<b>Total Bins</b>	69,117	69,117	69,117
<b>Min Yield</b>	1.3	1.3	1.6
<b>Max Yield</b>	24.6	30.4	31.5
<b>Avg Yield</b>	12.6	12.6	13.4
<b>Total Yield</b>	1,005	1,005	1,005
<b>Min Tips</b>	1	1	1
<b>Max Tips</b>	3	3	3
<b>Avg Tips</b>	1.8	1.7	1.8
<b>Total Tips</b>	143	136	137

Table 2: Recycling

Overall Recycling AsIs vs Tact S1 vs Tact S2				
	AsIs	Tac S1	Tac S2 MDR	Tac S2 P&C
<b>Rounds</b>	80	80	75	75
<b>Vehicles</b>	16	16	15	15
<b>Crew Days</b>	220	220	205	205
<b>Min Time</b>	4.4	3.5	2.6	2.6
<b>Max Time</b>	8.4	7.9	7.8	7.2
<b>Avg Time</b>	6.1	5.8	6.4	5.6
<b>Total Time</b>	487	462	478	423
<b>Min Miles</b>	18.9	19.6	17.3	10.7
<b>Max Miles</b>	92.2	123.9	114.2	107.2
<b>Avg Miles</b>	61.8	60.8	64.3	52.9
<b>Total Miles</b>	4,947	4,862	4,824	3,966
<b>Min Locations</b>	81	81	95	95
<b>Max Locations</b>	1,222	1,536	1,478	1,478
<b>Avg Locations</b>	830	830	885	885
<b>Total Locations</b>	66,376	66,376	66,376	66,376
<b>Min Bins</b>	81	81	95	95
<b>Max Bins</b>	1,224	1,536	1,478	1,478
<b>Avg Bins</b>	835	835	891	891
<b>Total Bins</b>	66,811	66,811	66,811	66,811
<b>Min Yield</b>	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.4
<b>Max Yield</b>	14.3	12.1	17.2	6.7
<b>Avg Yield</b>	6.4	6.4	9.9	3.8
<b>Total Yield</b>	516	516	742	289
<b>Min Tips</b>	1	1	1	1
<b>Max Tips</b>	2	2	3	2
<b>Avg Tips</b>	1.2	1.3	2.0	1.0
<b>Total Tips</b>	99	103	148	77

Note - When the rounds were designed paper and card were still being collected comingled in the silver bin. Tac S2 includes separating the waste stream and optimising the rounds.

Table 3: Garden Waste

Overall Garden Asls vs Tact S1 vs Tact S2			
	Asls	Tac S1	Tac S2
Rounds	50	50	40
Vehicles	5	5	4
Crew Days	150	150	120
Min Time	3.8	4.3	5.1
Max Time	7.0	6.3	6.8
Avg Time	5.2	5.4	6.0
Total Time	261	268	242
Min Miles	31.5	31.5	39.5
Max Miles	91.1	91.0	85.7
Avg Miles	56.8	60.7	59.9
Total Miles	2,841	3,033	2,394
Min Locations	316	145	388
Max Locations	1,171	1,032	1,096
Avg Locations	596	596	745
Total Locations	29,795	29,795	29,795
Min Bins	341	210	516
Max Bins	1,341	1,153	1,149
Avg Bins	698	698	872
Total Bins	34,879	34,879	34,879
Min Yield	3.8	3.3	6.3
Max Yield	13.4	11.2	11.4
Avg Yield	7.6	7.6	9.5
Total Yield	379	379	379
Min Tips	1	1	1
Max Tips	2	2	2
Avg Tips	1.1	1.0	1.1
Total Tips	53	52	45

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SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

## Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 10 June 2025

Report of Councillor Rhys Baker,  
Cabinet Member for Environment and  
Waste

## Update on draft tree management policies

### Report Author

Andrew Igoea, Tree Project Officer

✉ andrew.igoea@southkesteven.gov.uk

### Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an update on the new tree management policies.

### Recommendations

**The Committee is recommended to provide brief feedback on non-operational elements of the draft policies, and note the pathway to approval of the draft policies.**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	N
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Sustainable South Kesteven Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All

## **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 is an allocated budget for tree maintenance which is predominantly used for any reactive works that are needed on trees either identified from surveys or from complaints raised about the tree stock.
- 1.2 There are a number of workstreams that the draft tree Policy will impact therefore it is recommended that the Committee note the direction of travel with the work of the policy and more financial information be presented to the Committee prior to the final draft policies being formally approved.

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

### ***Procurement***

- 1.3 Tree survey services are currently provided by North Kesteven District Council via a historic service level agreement, it is recommended that a new specification is drawn up and that a tender exercise is undertaken to align to the draft policy. This will deliver better value for money for the council.

*Completed by: Helen Baldwin, Procurement Lead*

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.3 There are no significant legal or governance issues.

*Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager*

### ***Risk and Mitigation***

- 1.4 The new policy document contains a comprehensive tree risk management strategy that aims to reduce the likelihood of harm and damage to property from council owned/managed trees, and the likelihood of successful claims against the council if injury and/or damage does occur.

*Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer*



## ***Climate Change***

- 1.5 While no replacement for directly reducing carbon emissions, effective management of the Council's existing stock of trees provides valuable ecosystem services such as climate change regulation, carbon sequestration, filtering of pollution and in some cases flood prevention. The draft tree management policies set out a pathway towards pro-active management which will better secure the various benefits provided by a healthy population of trees.

*Completed by: Serena Brown Sustainability and Climate Change Manager*

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1. SKDC adopted a Tree and Woodland Strategy in 2024. Through the adoption of this strategy the council has committed to:
- Increasing tree canopy cover across the district
  - Enhancing protection for trees
  - Proactive management of trees in accordance with best practice standards
  - Increasing climate resilience
  - Increased community engagement and partnership working in tree initiatives
  - Invest in trees (a key priority)
- 2.2. Once fully developed it is proposed that the draft policies attached at appendix A will replace the existing 'Tree Guidelines' document that was adopted in 2019, reflecting the ambition expressed through the adoption of the tree and woodland strategy.
- 2.3. The draft policies presented cover the management of trees on SKDC land, or trees under our management (e.g. in closed church yards). The scope of this draft policy does not cover trees on land outside of the Council's control, including TPO policy, tree protection on development policy, Miscellaneous Provisions (dangerous trees) or high hedges.

## **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1. The existing Tree Guidelines document does not contain a comprehensive risk management strategy to prevent harm or damage from the failure of a tree or tree

part. Without a strategy based on zoning, and evidence of the allocation of resources based on risk factors such as occupancy and target value, in the event of injury or damage being caused because of failure of a council owned tree, there is an increased chance of prosecution (HSE) and/or litigation.

- 3.2. SKDC is responsible for trees on housing land, trees in parks and amenity spaces, and trees in churchyards. The existing Tree Guidelines document does not account for these different management contexts.
- 3.3. Some of the existing policies use wording that is open to interpretation, and do not provide enough clarity for officers dealing with trees issues, or tenants and members of the public looking for resolution of a tree related issue.
- 3.4. Where the existing Tree Guidelines document provides greater clarity, for example on nuisance issues relating to shade, it often presents an open-and-shut case where in reality nuance exists. This approach is unlikely to foster good relationships between people and trees.

#### **4. Information on new content**

- 4.1. The draft new policy document has a clearer four-part structure as detailed below but does not cover any planning relating topics relating to trees outside of Council ownership/management (e.g. TPO policy, tree protection on development sites, Misc provisions or high hedges).

##### **PART 1: Pruning and removal of council managed trees**

- Defines council's position on overhanging branches, nuisance issues, shading and other common complaints

##### **PART 2: Trees on tenanted property**

- Defines responsibilities of SKDC and the tenant. In summary, the council will be responsible for specialist work or work at height, and tenants will continue to be responsible for general maintenance.
- The policy does not commit the council to regularly inspecting trees in private tenanted gardens and the onus is on the tenant to report suspected issues.

##### **PART 3: Trees in closed churchyards**

- Acts as a form of service level agreement for churches/church wardens

##### **PART 4: Risk Management**

- Introduces the concept of 'zoning' and defines a survey and record keeping protocol.

- 4.2. Throughout the new draft document there is greater clarity on managing wildlife constraints and, in accordance with the adopted Tree & Woodland Strategy, an increased scope for proactive management.

- 4.3 The draft management policies define SKDC's policy position in respect of various issues, but the document recognises that these policy positions are aspirational and that resources may not always be available to carry out the work required.
- 4.4 The new draft tree management policies offer clear guidance for officers, tenants, and the public. By addressing different management contexts and the impacts of unmanaged tree nuisances, they aim to improve relationships between people and trees, building future support for tree initiatives.
- 4.5 The introduction of a risk management strategy will have several significant implications which are summarised in the table below:

Implication	Justification/Supporting Evidence
Reduces the risk of harm to people and damage to assets, therefore reducing the risk of HSE enforcement and/or litigation due to any injury caused by a council owned tree.	Industry guidance (e.g. <a href="#">Common Sense Risk Management of Trees</a> , National Tree Safety Guidance, 2024) recommends zoning according to targets and levels of occupancy. Where harm has occurred, landowners (including councils) have been found liable due to their failure to base inspection frequencies on a zoning assessment (e.g. <a href="#">Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh</a> )
Implementation will require SKDC to review its existing tree survey service agreement with North Kesteven District Council	Survey timings and protocols need to be updated and are unlikely to be incompatible with the current service agreement. For example, under the current arrangement all trees are surveyed every three years, whilst under the new policy the survey frequency may range from 18-54 months depending on the risk profile.
Implementation will require SKDC to procure its own tree record management system	All the council's tree records are currently held in software that it does not own a licence for. This leaves the council exposed to an information governance risk (i.e. the data may be lost due to factors outside of our control). The software currently used to store our data has limited features for presenting, analysing and exporting data.

Whilst 'zoning' may decrease inspection frequencies in some areas, it will also increase them in others, and the extent of tree work required may also increase accordingly	Increased inspection frequencies are likely to be required in some areas to comply with current best practice guidance and, in relation to tree risk management (See above), legal precedent. Under the current arrangement all trees are surveyed every three years (36 months). In high occupancy areas this could increase to 18 months.
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- 4.6 The new draft policies provide a framework for assigning a broader scale of priority ratings than the current binary system (Essential/Desirable). This will enable better resource allocation and, when combined with improved record keeping, will allow the council to monitor its performance and make long term financial planning more realistic. The draft policy currently describes 3 priority ratings for safety critical work and 5 sub-categories of general management works.
- 4.7 The financial implications of adopting these policies are not yet fully understood. Officers are seeking clarity on costs but wanted to provide the committee with an update regarding the trajectory of travel with the new policy. A further paper will be brought to a following Environment OSC meeting outlining the research undertaken regarding the cost implications of recommending this policy to Cabinet for approval. This is likely to include costs associated with software and surveying.

## 5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The draft policies are presented here for noting at this stage. The proposed pathway to approval, adoption and implementation is shown in Figure 2 below. Individual committee members are welcome to submit comments and questions outside of the Committee by contacting [climatechange@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@southkesteven.gov.uk). This report is to note the progress and trajectory of the work to date.

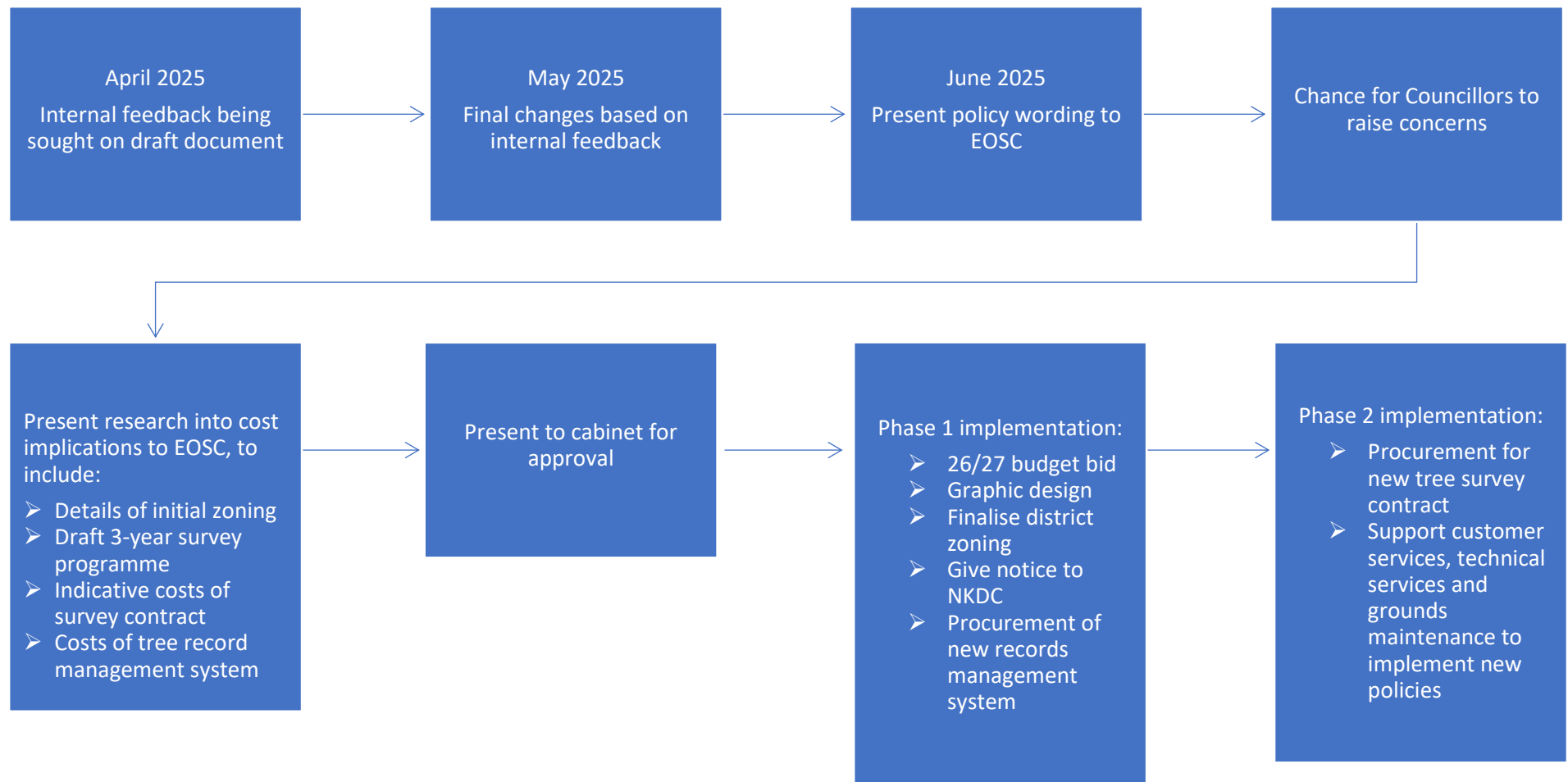


Figure 1. A diagram illustrating the proposed pathway to approval, adoption and implementation of the new policies.

## **6. Appendices**

### **6.1. SKDC Tree Management Policies (DRAFT)**



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

## Tree Management Policies

[MONTH] 2025

v1.0

## Executive Summary

This Tree Management Policy provides a structured approach to managing trees on council-owned land. It aims to balance public safety, ecological sustainability, and community interests while ensuring the responsible use of resources. The policy aligns with SKDC's Tree and Woodland Strategy, supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, and public well-being.

These policies apply to trees owned or managed by SKDC in public spaces, parks, highways, communal areas, and tenanted properties. Clear guidelines are set for tree pruning and removal requests relating to amenity and nuisance issues, risk management, the respective responsibilities of tenants and the council regarding trees on tenanted property, wildlife conservation considerations. The policy does not cover privately owned trees, which remain the responsibility of landowners, or councils' obligations to protect trees under planning legislation.

Tree management decisions will consider long-term environmental benefits, aligning with national and local climate policies to enhance urban greenery and wildlife habitats. By setting clear guidelines for pruning and removal requests relating to amenity and nuisance issues, and by clarifying responsibilities for tenants, these policies aim to promote harmonious relationships between people and trees and foster enthusiasm for the various objectives of the adopted Tree and Woodland Strategy.

Regardless of the management context, all tree work will be prioritised based on risk, ensuring public safety while preventing unnecessary interventions that could reduce tree health and canopy cover. This ensures that council resources focus on essential tree works (e.g., safety-related pruning) first, rather than minor nuisances such as seasonal leaf fall.

Regarding risk management, a zoning system ensures inspection frequency aligns with occupancy, providing a balance between resources allocation and legal obligations.

This policy ensures that SKDC meets its duty of care, maintains a healthy urban tree population, and upholds best practices in arboriculture. It enables efficient decision-making that reflects public interest, legal obligations, and environmental stewardship.



# Tree Management Quick Reference Guide

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following quick reference guide has been written with the public and the Council's social housing tenants in mind. The Council's commercial tenants should note that the answers provided below for social housing tenants may not apply to their situation, and they are advised to consult the main body of text and their lease agreement for answers to tree-related queries.

---

### Ownership and responsibilities:

**Q: I have an enquiry or concern about a tree, but I don't know who the owner is and who to contact about it.**

A: Land and tree ownership is a complex subject. SKDC is responsible for several public open spaces across the district, but many are also managed by parish/town councils or private entities. SKDC has a stock of social housing, but this is not always easily identifiable. Contact details for SKDC are provided below.

Trees located on highway verges and within streets are likely to be the responsibility of the highway's authority. Lincolnshire County Council can be contacted by phone or via its website: [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk).

Trees located on embankments or disused railway tracks are the responsibility of Network Rail or may be in private ownership.

**See paragraph i(c) for further details.**

**Q: I have an enquiry or concern about a tree on private land. Can SKDC help?**

A: SKDC will not normally get involved with privately owned trees. If you are concerned about the condition of a privately owned tree, you should contact the owner to make them aware. Discretionary powers are provided to the council under section 23 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Please contact our customer services team if you are concerned about the safety of a tree in your neighbourhood ([customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk), 01476 406080, out of hours/emergency: 01476 406040)

**See paragraph i(c) for further details.**

**Q: SKDC have placed a Tree Preservation Order on a tree I am concerned about. Who is now responsible for this tree?**

A: A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) does not change ownership or responsibility for a tree. The landowner remains responsible for the tree's maintenance and any associated risks. However, any works on the tree, including pruning or removal, require formal

consent from SKDC. This policy document does not cover planning (i.e. TPO) related issues.

---

## Tree Pruning & Overhanging Branches:

**Q: Will the council prune a tree because its branches overhang my property?**

A: The council will only prune trees under its ownership or management and will only prune overhanging branches if they create a significant risk, such as obstructing access, street lighting, or are causing property damage. Otherwise, you may trim branches back to your boundary if the tree is not protected (e.g., by a Tree Preservation Order or within a Conservation Area). All tree work will be prioritised, so if budgets are limited and higher-priority issues remain outstanding, your request may not be addressed immediately – even if it aligns with policy.

**Q: Can I request tree pruning for general nuisance (leaves, sap, blossom, etc.)?**

A: No, seasonal issues like falling leaves, sap, or bird droppings are considered natural and not a reason for pruning and this policy document does not support pruning for these reasons. Regular garden maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner.

**Q: Can I request tree pruning for interference with a TV or satellite signal?**

A: No, whilst pruning may improve reception temporarily, trees are likely to regrow to their original size, making this an unsustainable long-term solution. This policy document does not support pruning for this reason.

**See Part 1 for further details.**

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## Shading & Loss of Light:

**Q: A council tree is blocking sunlight to my property. Will it be pruned?**

A: The council will only consider pruning in the following cases:

- The tree is taller than 12m and less than 5m from the nearest habitable room.
- The tree is shorter than 12m but is closer than half its height to a habitable room.
- An independent survey confirms severe shading as per Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines.

Trees will not be pruned to improve sunlight for solar panels. All tree work will be prioritised, so if budgets are limited and higher-priority issues remain outstanding, your request may not be addressed immediately – even if it aligns with policy.

**Q: Are hedges causing shade issues covered by this policy?**

A: Yes, if they are owned and managed by SKDC. Where a privately owned evergreen hedge more than 2metres in height is the cause of the issue the council may have powers under the Anti-social Behaviours Act 2003 to require appropriate action by the hedge owner, but the application and assessment process is not covered by this policy. For further information regarding complaints about privately owned hedges please refer to the SKDC's [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#) (2023) or the [planning enforcement web page](#).

**See Part 1, paragraph 1.3 for further details.**

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## Tree Roots & Damage

**Q: What if tree roots from a council tree are damaging my property?**

A: If you believe tree roots are causing structural damage, a professional report from a qualified structural engineer or arboricultural consultant is required before the council can investigate.

**Q: Can I cut tree roots that extend onto my property?**

A: Yes, if the tree is not protected, you may prune roots within your boundary. However, improper pruning can affect tree stability, so professional advice is recommended.

**See Part 1, paragraph 1.8 for further details.**

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## Wildlife & Conservation

**Q: Does the council consider wildlife when pruning or removing trees?**

A: Yes. Non-essential tree work is scheduled outside of bird nesting season (March–August). For tree work that is considered essential, checks for nesting birds will take place prior to the work commencing and specialist ecological advice will be sought where necessary. Trees will be checked for potential bat roost features prior to work commencing.

**See paragraphs 1.9, 2.7 and 4.13 for further details.**

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## Trees on Tenanted Property

### Q: Who is responsible for trees in SKDC tenanted properties?

A:

- **SKDC is responsible** for work at height, tree health and safety, and major pruning/removal.
- **Tenants are responsible** for routine maintenance like clearing leaves and trimming small branches.

### Q: Can I plant a tree in my SKDC tenancy garden?

A: Written permission is required before planting a tree to ensure it is suitable for the location.

**See Part 2 for further details.**

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## Reporting Tree Issues

If you need to report a tree issue, you can contact SKDC via:

- **Website:** [www.southkesteven.gov.uk/feedback](http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/feedback)
- **Email:** [customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk)
- **Phone:** 01476 406080 (office hours) / 01476 406040 (out of hours emergencies)

For more detailed policies, visit our website or request a full copy of the Tree Management Policy.

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## i. Introduction

### a. Context

This policy document has been created in the context of the South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) Tree and Woodland Strategy. The vision of this strategy is defined as follows:

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*Healthy Trees, Healthy South Kesteven: Strengthening our tree assets through protection, enhancement, and growth, ensuring resilience and vitality in perpetuity*

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### b. Scope

This document describes how South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) will manage trees on land under its ownership or management; it does not cover trees which grow on land which is not owned or managed by SKDC (this includes private land, and land owned/managed by other district councils, Lincolnshire County Council or parish/town councils located within the South Kesteven District).

Trees that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or which grow within Conservation Areas are dealt with by the relevant legislation and administered by the Development Control Service of SKDC.

SKDC's policies and processes relating to the tree-related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Order Act (2003) and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 are covered in a separate policy document.

The four management contexts covered by this policy are:

1. Trees under SKDC management (impacts to the public)
2. Tree on SKDC tenanted property
3. Trees in closed churchyards/graveyards
4. Management of tree related risk

The Policy refers exclusively to trees and hedges and does not include shrubs or other vegetation. For the purpose of this policy, a 'tree' is a woody perennial plant, typically (in its natural form, without management as coppice stool or low pollard) having a stem or trunk which can attain a height of 6m or more, and bearing lateral branches at some distance from the ground.

Low-level domestic hedges are outside of the scope of this policy. A hedge – a managed feature consisting of woody perennials that forms a continuous screen – will only be covered by the policies in this document if any part is over 2m high and 1m wide.

### c. Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for the management of our trees are derived from relevant aspects of the Tree and Woodland Strategy and can be summarised as follows:

#### 1. **Resilience**

Ensure that all decisions regarding tree management prioritize long-term sustainability, fostering resilience to climate change, diseases, and pests. Tree planting, maintenance, and removal must align with broader ecological goals, promoting species diversity and longevity.

#### 2. **Biodiversity Enhancement**

Encourage the management of diverse tree species that support a wide range of wildlife.

#### 3. **Social Cohesion**

SKDC will manage its trees in a way that fosters a positive relationship between people and their local environment. We aim to increase public appreciation for the benefits that trees bring, while actively working to minimize any disbenefits, such as shading, leaf fall, or root-related issues.

#### 4. **Public Safety and Risk Management**

Maintain a proactive tree inspection and maintenance regime to manage risks posed by dead, dying, or hazardous trees. Ensure that public safety is a priority in urban areas and spaces frequently used by the community.

#### 5. **Ecosystem Services and Climate Change Mitigation**

Recognize, protect and, where possible, enhance the ecosystem services provided by our trees, such as carbon sequestration, air quality improvement, flood mitigation, and urban cooling.

#### 6. **Amenity and Landscape Value**

Preserve and enhance the aesthetic and cultural value of council-owned trees. Trees should contribute positively to the local landscape character, providing shade, beauty, and well-being benefits to residents and visitors alike.



## 7. Tree Health

Wherever possible, avoid (or reduce the frequency and/or extent) of works which the potential to have a detrimental impact on tree health, or which are likely to increase the risk from pests, diseases, and environmental stress.

## 8. Legal Compliance and Best Practice

Adhere to all legal requirements and follow best practices in arboriculture and woodland management. This includes compliance with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), conservation area guidelines, and health and safety regulations.

Management in accordance with these guiding principles generally requires a proactive approach to tree care. However budgetary constraints limit the financial resources available for the management of SKDC trees. As a result, the council must make strategic decisions on where and how funds are allocated, prioritising essential services and projects that deliver the greatest public benefit. This means balancing the council's aspirations for tree management with many other competing priorities.

Regardless of the management context or the policies set out in this document – which define SKDC's position on various tree related issues – work can only be carried out if appropriate resources can be allocated. All proposed tree work will therefore be assigned a priority rating. For example, safety-related work, such as the removal of dead or dangerous branches, will take precedence over non-essential interventions, such as pruning to address nuisance issues like leaf fall or shading. This approach ensures that the council addresses the most critical risks while managing resources efficiently.

To support transparency and continuous improvement, SKDC will monitor and report on its performance against each priority rating. This will enable the council to objectively demonstrate its commitment to managing trees in line with the principles set out in the T&W.

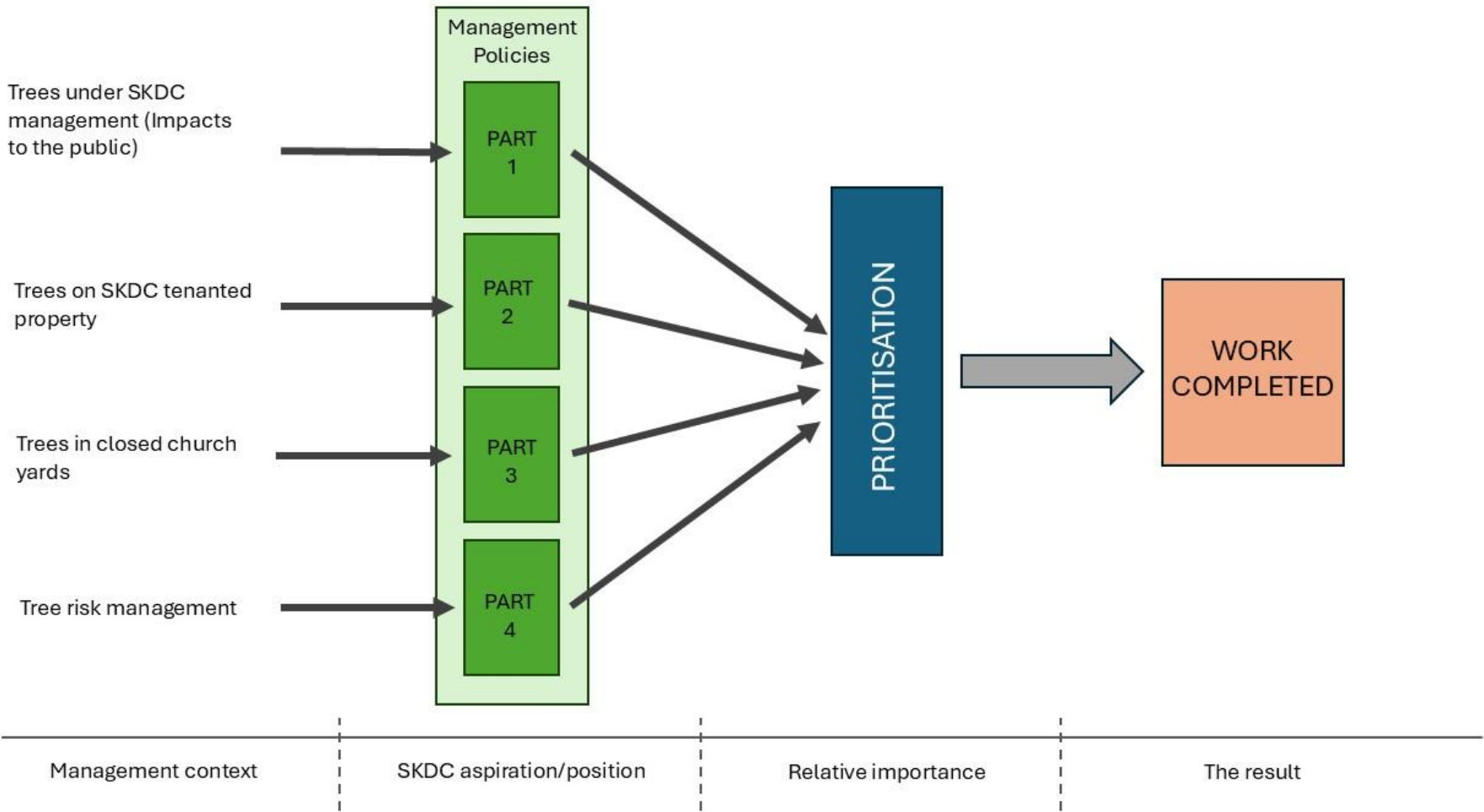


Figure 1. A diagram illustrating how tree work completed by SKDC results from the application of policies across different management contexts, followed by a unified prioritisation process that determines which work is undertaken

# PART 1: Policies for pruning and removing council managed trees (relating to amenity and nuisance issues)

## Introduction

Pruning of council managed trees can benefit our rate payers by reducing the number and extent of conflict issues which arise, such as overhanging branches, interference with property, or obstruction of light. As well as benefitting humans, properly managed pruning can also benefit trees and ecosystems, by extending their safe useful life expectancy and support their ecological benefits.

Decisions about pruning must consider the council's limited resources and the need to prioritise works that address public safety or structural stability. The policies in this section aim to balance the aesthetic and practical benefits of pruning with responsible stewardship of public funds and are focused on tree work required for reasons other than risk management. Policies relating to the council's duty of care in respect of trees will be addressed in Part 2 of this document.

Whenever the council undertakes pruning it should be assumed that the extent of work undertaken will be the minimum required to resolve the issue to the council's satisfaction (which may not always be to the complainant's satisfaction). All arboricultural operations undertaken on council managed trees will be done in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 recommendations wherever possible, to ensure the negative impacts to the tree(s) are minimised. The work will always be done in accordance with the Arboricultural Associations Industry Code of Practice for Arboriculture, to ensure that the work is undertaken using a safe system of work.

## 1.1. Overhanging Branches

When the branches of trees located on council managed land overhang a boundary, they can cause obstructions to access (e.g. on footpaths or highways), visibility (e.g. at junctions, or of road signs), or lighting (e.g. streetlights), create a risk of damage to property or simply encroach on somebody's private property.

### 1.1.1. Obstructions

Obstructions to access, visibility or lighting can create hazards. Where these hazards result in an unacceptable risk to people or property and remedial pruning would reduce the risk to an acceptable level, this will normally be acceptable, and the council will arrange (and pay) for this work to be completed.

### 1.1.2. Risk of Damage

If overhanging branches create a significant risk of damage to a property (e.g. if they touch walls, roofs, windows or gutters) this will normally be acceptable, and the council will arrange (and pay) for this work to be completed.

### 1.1.3. Substantial Nuisance Issues

Substantial nuisance refers to an issue that goes beyond minor inconveniences. For example, if regular gutter blockages caused subsequent water damage to a structure, or if seasonal debris was so extreme that it caused excessive maintenance burdens or attracted pests. In these situations, pruning will normally be acceptable, and the council will arrange (and pay) for this work to be completed. Please note that a moderate amount of leaves falling in autumn is natural and is not usually seen as actionable.

### 1.1.4. Encroachment

Where branches simply overhang a boundary and do not result in any of the issues described in 1.2.1 – 1.2.3, the council will not undertake any pruning.

Provided that the tree is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order or situated in a Conservation Area, adjacent landowners have a common law right to prune back overhanging tree branches to their boundary. This work should be arranged and paid for by the adjacent landowner. Any works should be carried out in accordance with good arboricultural practice.

## 1.2. General and Minor Nuisances

Trees can cause a variety of nuisance issues, whether they overhang the boundary or grow adjacent to it. The following are examples of minor nuisance issues that are considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees. In such cases, the council will not normally fell or prune trees to alleviate concerns raised by neighbouring properties.

- falling leaves, twigs, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings.
- insects associated with trees (spiders, wasps, flies etc).
- reduction or increase of moisture to gardens.
- suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens.
- leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs.

- the build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures.

Routine seasonal maintenance tasks such as clearing gutters and paths, weeding seedlings from garden borders, and cleaning surfaces affected by sap, blossom, or bird droppings are the responsibility of property owners and are considered part of normal property upkeep.

### 1.3. Shading and Loss of Light

While trees are often perceived to block light to nearby properties, the extent of pruning or tree removal needed to noticeably improve this would frequently lead to significant impacts to local amenity, biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services. Therefore, and as part of our commitment to protect trees, pruning work to improve light levels and reduce direct shading will not normally be considered. However, we will consider acting (pruning or felling) in the following circumstances:

- If the height of the tree is more than 12m and the distance between the base of the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 5metres.
- If the height of the tree is less than 12m and the distance between the base of the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than half the height of the tree ( or where the separation between the edge of the tree canopy and a vertical line through that window is less than 2 metres).
- If an objective assessment of shading undertaken by a chartered surveyor, based on the methodologies outlined in the Building Research Establishment Report 209 (Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A Guide to Good Practice), which included measurements of the vertical sky component and sun availability, and a sun path analysis, showed that pruning was justified.

A 'habitable room' is a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but not a WC, bathroom, utility room, landing or hallway. Where vulnerable people who spend a significant amount of time within their home are affected, there will be flexibility to look at some form of intervention. Where it can be established that the presence of trees is detrimental to the health of vulnerable people, further consideration will be given to the management approach. This assessment will take into account the quality and importance of the tree(s) in question, as well as the benefits and impact to the wider community.

The Council will not prune or fell a tree under its management to improve natural light to a solar panel. While we recognize the importance of renewable energy sources like solar panels, trees provide numerous environmental benefits, including carbon sequestration, improving air quality, supporting biodiversity, and mitigating the urban heat island effect. These benefits are vital in our collective efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Property owners are encouraged to consider the placement of solar

panels with respect to existing trees, as trees are an essential part of a sustainable environment.

#### 1.4. Loss of a view

Trees will not be pruned to improve private views. The Council will only undertake pruning to restore or maintain important public viewpoints, or where pruning would deliver a significant public benefit by enhancing the local street scene or landscape character.

Requests for such pruning will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the potential impact on local amenity, biodiversity, and the overall landscape value.

#### 1.5. Loss of reception

Trees can sometimes grow to interrupt reception to nearby television aerials and satellite dishes. Whilst pruning may improve reception temporarily, trees are likely to regrow to their original size, making this an unsustainable long-term solution. Repeated pruning operations not only place a strain on council resources but can also harm the health of the tree.

As such, the removal or pruning of trees to improve television or satellite reception will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where there is a compelling public interest or where no reasonable alternatives exist. Property owners are encouraged to explore other solutions such as repositioning their aerials or satellite dishes to avoid interference or switching to cable or internet-based services.

#### 1.6. Apprehension and overbearingness

Large trees adjacent to dwellings and private gardens can sometimes cause apprehension. Complaints that trees are ‘too big’ are common, but such concerns are often not supported by arboricultural evidence that the tree poses an unacceptable risk to people or property. A tree is not dangerous simply because somebody perceives it to be too large for its surroundings. Likewise, a tree swaying in the wind is not necessarily a hazard. The flexibility of a tree’s branches and structure is a natural mechanism to withstand wind and prevent breakage. The council will only undertake tree work where there is clear and objective evidence that the tree poses an unacceptable risk to people or property.

In some cases, the size of a tree may be perceived as overbearing by nearby residents, even where there is no concern about risk of failure or injury. While the Council acknowledges that the presence of large trees can be concerning for some, tree work will not normally be undertaken solely because of a tree’s size or its perceived overbearing nature, unless there are other compelling reasons to intervene.

## 1.7. Medical Issues

A range of personal medical complaints, from allergies to mental health impacts, can be attributed (rightly or wrongly) to trees. We will not normally prune or remove council managed trees when the request is based on a personal medical complaint. However, if a medical professional provides documented evidence that the presence of a tree is causing a significant detriment to the health of a resident, the council will consider the management approach taken with the trees in question. This may include exploring alternative solutions to mitigate the impact on the resident's health before considering pruning or removal.

## 1.8. Tree Roots

Trees exist above and below ground, and so do the issues arising from them. Tree roots can grow far beyond the canopy spread of their parent tree and do not recognise lines on plans, which means that it is not uncommon for roots to grow across ownership boundaries.

### 1.8.1. Encroachment

The presence of roots is unlikely to be affected by pruning, or even by felling so the council will not undertake any tree work if the issue relates solely to encroachment.

As with branches that grow across ownership boundaries, landowners have a common law right to prune back tree roots to their boundary, providing that the tree in question is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or situated within a Conservation Area. Landowners are encouraged to seek professional advice when pruning roots, as improper pruning can harm the health or stability of the tree and may result in legal consequences if a protected tree is affected.

### 1.8.2. Direct Damage

Forces exerted by the outward (longitudinal) growth and thickening (radial growth) of roots are relatively weak. As a result, roots tend to grow around obstructions presented by manmade structures, rather than displace them. However, large structural roots located near the base of a mature trees can exert enough force to damage pavements or smaller structures.

It is unlikely that council managed trees will be located close enough to boundaries to cause this type of damage. If issues do arise, the council will assess the situation on a case-by-case basis and explore appropriate mitigation measures where necessary. Possible mitigation measures may



include the installation of root barriers, re-surfacing of pavements, or localized pruning of structural roots, if appropriate.

### 1.8.3. Indirect Damage (Subsidence)

Tree roots can cause damage to structures indirectly through problems associated with shrinking and swelling subsoils. If an allegation is made that a council managed tree has caused, or is likely to cause, damage to a third-party structure through subsidence, the council will only consider acting if the allegation is supported by a report produced by a professional in a relevant field (e.g. arboricultural consultants, structural engineers, geotechnical engineers). The report should reference relevant industry guidelines relating to foundation design, the investigation and monitoring of subsidence, and tree work recommendations (i.e. NHBC standards and BS3998:2010). In cases of suspected subsidence, evidence of ongoing monitoring, such as crack monitoring or soil testing, may be required to substantiate claims before any remedial action is considered.

## 1.9. Prioritisation

In accordance with the prioritisation principle discussed in section i) c) and illustrated in figure 1, work required as a result these scenarios will be assigned one of the category ratings described in Section 4.10, summarised below as follows:

	Priority category	e.g.
Safety related	Safety group 1	Imminent hazard with severe consequences likely
	Safety group 2	Probable hazard with moderate consequences likely
	Safety group 3	Probable hazard with moderate consequences likely
General Management	General Management group 1 – damage	Work required to prevent damage to a structure
	General Management group 2 – obstruction	Work required to maintain access
	General Management group 3 – visibility	Work required to maintain site lines and light splays
	General Management group 4 – nuisance	Work required to resolve a nuisance issue
	General Management group 5 – proactive management	Work required to deliver other social, environmental and economic benefits



## 1.10. Wildlife and Habitat Considerations

The Council recognizes the important role that trees play in supporting local wildlife and biodiversity. Many species of birds, bats, insects, and other wildlife rely on trees for shelter, food, and nesting. Pruning or removing trees can have a significant impact on these species, particularly during sensitive times of the year. As such, the Council is committed to ensuring that all tree management activities are carried out in accordance with relevant wildlife protection laws and best practice guidelines. For further details please refer to section 3.13.

## 1.11. Replacement trees

The Council is committed to increasing tree canopy cover across all towns and villages within the district so that rate payers may benefit from the ecosystem services, amenity and economic benefits that trees provide. In addition to our annual planting programme of new trees and woodlands, where it is appropriate, the Council will plant replacement trees for those it has removed.

## PART 2: Policies relating to trees on SKDC tenanted property

### 2.1. Introduction

#### 2.1.1. Purpose of the Policy

Trees on tenanted properties play a crucial role in enhancing the local environment, supporting biodiversity, and contributing to the overall wellbeing of local people. However, they must also be managed to ensure safety, mitigate risks, and maintain a harmonious relationship between tenants, neighbouring properties, and the wider community.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities and management approach for trees located on land rented by tenants of SKDC. These policies may be referenced in tenancy agreements and related guidance documents.

#### 2.1.2. Scope

This policy establishes the framework for how trees on tenanted properties will be managed, including:

- The respective responsibilities of SKDC and tenants regarding tree maintenance, protection, and care.
- Procedures for tenant requests regarding tree work, including pruning, removal, or planting.
- Guidance on the protection of trees during the start and end of tenancy agreements.
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and environmental goals, including wildlife protection and conservation.

This policy applies to all trees located within the boundaries of SKDC tenanted properties, and trees located within communal areas adjacent to tenanted properties which are managed by SKDC, or agents acting on its behalf.

In this section of the policy document the terms ‘tenants’ and ‘tenancy agreements’ (or similar) apply to both housing and commercial tenants, unless otherwise specified. Where a policy applies exclusively to one group, the terms ‘housing tenants’ or ‘commercial tenants’ will be used explicitly.

## 2.2. Responsibilities of SKDC

### 2.2.1. Maintenance of Council-Owned Trees

SKDC will be responsible for any tree located in a communal area or shared space.

For trees located within private areas of domestic tenanted properties, SKDC will only be responsible for tree maintenance or management that:

- Involves 'work at height' (as defined by HSE).
- Requires specialist equipment, the use of which usually requires proper training or certification (e.g. chainsaws).
- Carries significant risk to health or safety.
- Requires technical knowledge or training, such as applying specific pruning methods (e.g. crown reduction).

Examples of tree maintenance and management that SKDC will be responsible for include:

- Removing deadwood from upper branches (over 3m from ground level).
- Felling or dismantling a tree (over 5m tall, measured from ground level).
- Crown thinning, lifting, or reduction requiring work above 3m from ground level.
- Removing roots that threaten property structures.

Housing tenants will be informed of their responsibilities for tree maintenance within their property boundaries at the start of their tenancy by reference to this policy, and any exceptions or specific conditions will be clearly outlined in the tenancy agreement.

For tenants of commercial property, SKDC may place greater maintenance responsibilities on tenants than those described above.

SKDC retains the right to inspect and act on any tree within the boundary of tenanted land if it is deemed hazardous or poses a risk to public safety, or if the tree is (or is likely to) cause structural damage to the property.

### 2.2.2. Routine Inspections and Maintenance

Any tree(s) located on land owned or managed by SKDC that are outside of a tenanted property will be managed in accordance with the policies set out in Part 4 of this document.

Trees located within private areas of domestic tenanted properties (e.g. private back gardens) and within commercial property will not normally be formally inspected by the council. See paragraph 2.3.3 and part 4 for further detail.

### 2.2.3. New Tenancy Agreements

SKDC will strive to ensure that when tenants move into a property the outdoor space will be handed over in a condition that reflects the standard the Council expects tenants to maintain. Prior to the start of a new tenancy, SKDC will inspect and carry out any necessary work on trees to ensure they are safe, well-maintained, and free of any hazards. Tenants will be provided with guidance on their responsibilities for ongoing garden and tree maintenance, including any specific requirements related to the condition of trees. This ensures a clear understanding of maintenance expectations from the outset of the tenancy.

### 2.2.4. Support During Periods of Tenant Incapacity

SKDC recognises that housing tenants may become incapacitated due to illness, disability, or other circumstances that limit their ability to maintain their gardens or care for trees within their property boundaries. To support tenants during these times, SKDC may provide temporary maintenance assistance to tenants who are temporarily unable to maintain their trees due to health-related issues. This assistance will be available for tenants with medical documentation supporting their period of incapacity, and support will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For further information please refer to [Assisted Garden Maintenance Scheme web page](#).

SKDC will adopt a flexible approach, offering reasonable adjustments for tenants experiencing temporary incapacity. This may include temporarily relaxing enforcement of garden maintenance standards or extending timelines for addressing garden upkeep concerns.

### 2.2.5. Tree Work Requests

SKDC recognises that there may be instances where housing tenants want to request tree work that is beyond their ability or responsibility to

undertake. The Council will only consider requests for tree work that involves tasks that are not reasonable for tenants to perform due to the complexity, scale, or safety risks associated with the work. For example, if the work can be done with ordinary hand tools (i.e. the removal of branches/stems up to 100mm diameter) from ground level in the council's reasonable opinion, SKDC would expect this to be done by the tenant. Tenants are encouraged to make requests for tree work under the following circumstances:

- **Safety Concerns:** If a tree is dead, dying, or showing signs of serious disease, or shows visible signs of structural defects (cracks etc.) that could pose a risk to people or property, tenants should report it to SKDC. The Council will assess the tree's condition and determine whether pruning or removal is necessary.
- **Tree Size and Proximity:** If trees that have grown too large for tenants to reasonably manage (e.g. large branches at height or trees requiring specialist equipment for safe pruning) these can be assessed by SKDC, which may take responsibility for pruning or removing them. If the tree size/proximity has become an issue due to a lack of reasonable maintenance by the tenant, the cost of works undertaken by SKDC to resolve the issue may be recharged to the tenant.
- **Complex Tree Work:** Tenants can request tree work be undertaken by SKDC if it would require specialized equipment that tenants are not expected to have, such as chainsaws or high-reach tools for significant pruning or removal tasks, or if the task involving work at height, or if it involves trees in dangerous locations (e.g. near power lines).

Housing tenants should submit requests for tree work via SKDC's customer service channels: [www.southkesteven.gov.uk/feedback](http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/feedback); [customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk); 01476 406080. Each request will be reviewed to assess whether the work is necessary and falls outside the tenant's reasonable responsibilities. SKDC will communicate the outcome of the assessment and, if tree work is approved, arrange for a qualified contractor to carry out the necessary work.

Unless it is stated otherwise in their lease agreement, commercial tenants will be responsible for all tree related maintenance operations. It will be the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that any tree work is

undertaken safely and competently, in compliance with relevant legislation and regulations.

### 2.2.6. Trees Affecting Neighbouring Properties

For any tree(s) located on land owned or managed by SKDC that are outside of a tenanted property, complaints and concerns raised by neighbouring landowners will be dealt with by SKDC in all cases. These issues will be dealt with in accordance with the policies outlined in Part 1 of this document.

For trees in tenanted properties, complaints and concerns raised by neighbouring landowners should be directed to the tenant in the first instance. If the action necessary to resolve the issue falls outside of the tenants' responsibilities as described in paragraph 2.3 below or meets one of the criteria set out in paragraph 2.2.1 above, the tenant may submit a tree work request (see paragraph 2.2.5).

Only where the complainant can demonstrate that they have exhausted all reasonable means of resolving the issue directly with the tenant will SKDC consider reviewing the complaint.

## 2.3. Responsibilities of Tenants

### 2.3.1. Routine care and maintenance

The following tasks are considered routine maintenance and fall within the tenant's responsibility:

- Clearing leaves, twigs, and small branches.
- Pruning small, accessible branches that can be safely managed with household tools.

### 2.3.2. Prohibited Actions

Tenants are not permitted to fell or remove any tree(s) located on their tenanted property with a stem diameter greater than 8cm measured at 1.5m above ground level without prior written consent from SKDC.

Housing tenants are prohibited from undertaking significant pruning or tree work that requires working at height or involves large trees (>8m height). This includes the removal of large branches, canopy reduction, or any work that requires specialist equipment (e.g. chainsaws). Unless it is stated otherwise in their lease agreement, commercial tenants are not prohibited from undertaking this type of work

Where a tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or located within a Conservation Area, tenants must seek the necessary planning consent for the proposed work.

Tenants are prohibited from cutting, damaging, or interfering with tree roots, especially structural roots, without consent from SKDC. This includes actions such as digging near the base of trees, installing new hard landscaping, or excavating trenches.

Tenants are prohibited from applying any herbicides, pesticides, or other chemical treatments to trees without written permission from SKDC.

Tenants are prohibited from lighting fires or using fire pits close to trees, as this can damage the tree bark, roots, and surrounding soil.

Tenants must not intentionally damage trees (e.g. carving into tree trunks, breaking branches, or deliberately poisoning trees).

### 2.3.3. Reporting Concerns

Housing tenants are expected to take an active role in the safe management of trees within their tenanted properties by promptly reporting any concerns to SKDC. Timely reporting ensures that trees are properly maintained, and any risks to safety, property, or the environment are addressed. Tenants' responsibilities include reporting safety hazards (dangerous trees), signs of disease and/or pests (unusual leaf loss, fungal growth etc.) structural issues (e.g. signs of subsidence), and instances of unauthorised work.

Housing tenants are responsible for reporting tree concerns through SKDC customer services ([customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk); telephone – 01476 40 60 80; out of hours telephone – 01476 40 60 40). When reporting concerns, tenants should provide as much detail as possible, including details of the specific issue and the location of the tree within the property, and, if possible, provide photographs, to assist in the assessment.

Note: The responsibilities of housing tenants to report tree safety concerns means that trees located in private tenanted areas (e.g. private back gardens) will not normally be formally inspected by the council. In exceptional circumstances, however, where risk factors such as large tree size and high occupancy warrant it, some trees may be added to the council's schedule of regularly inspected trees. Where this is the case, council officers (or its appointed contractor) will require access to the area from time to time to carry out the inspections.

Unless it is stated otherwise in their lease agreement, commercial tenants will be responsible for all tree related maintenance operations, so would not normally need to report concerns in the same way as housing tenants.

## 2.4. Enforcement and Penalties

Tenants are responsible for maintaining their trees in accordance with the terms of their tenancy agreement. If the terms of the tenancy agreement are breached SKDC can apply to the Court for a possession order.

## 2.5. Appeals and Dispute Resolution

If you dissatisfied with a decision taken by SKDC about a tree related matter, the complaints process outlined in [SKDC's Customer Feedback Process](#) should be followed.

## 2.6. Tree Planting on Tenanted Property

Tenants are encouraged to contribute to the environmental and aesthetic value of their gardens by planting trees, but they must seek written permission from the Council prior to planting any tree. This ensures that the proposed species and location are suitable and do not interfere with existing structures, underground utilities, or future property maintenance.

The tenant is responsible for maintaining any trees they plant, ensuring they do not become a nuisance to neighbouring properties or pose safety risks. The Council reserves the right to request or undertake tree removal if the tree is not maintained or causes issues and may recharge any costs incurred to the tenant.

At the end of the tenancy, the tenant may be required to remove any trees they have planted if they are deemed unsuitable or if they may interfere with future occupancy.



## 2.7. Prioritisation

In accordance with the prioritisation principle discussed in section i) c) and illustrated in figure 1, work required as a result these scenarios will be assigned one of the category ratings described in Section 4.10, summarised below as follows:

	Priority category	e.g.
Safety related	Safety group 1	Imminent hazard with severe consequences likely
	Safety group 2	Probable hazard with moderate consequences likely
	Safety group 3	Probable hazard with moderate consequences likely
General Management	General Management group 1 – damage	Work required to prevent damage to a structure
	General Management group 2 – obstruction	Work required to maintain access
	General Management group 3 – visibility	Work required to maintain site lines and light splays
	General Management group 4 – nuisance	Work required to resolve a nuisance issue
	General Management group 5 – proactive management	Work required to deliver other social, environmental and economic benefits

## 2.8. Wildlife and Habitat Considerations

For trees under its management, the Council will consider habitat and wildlife protection as described in sections 1.9 and 3.13. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that any tree maintenance work they undertake complies with all relevant legislation, including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and any regulations related to the protection of nesting birds, bats, and other protected species. It is the tenant's duty to check for and avoid disturbing wildlife habitats during maintenance activities.

## PART 3: Policies relating to trees in closed churchyards

### 3.1. Introduction

The responsibility for the management of closed churchyards is set out in Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. This legislation states that if a churchyard has been closed for burials by an Order and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) formally notifies the local authority, the responsibility for its maintenance passes to the local authority. The legal ownership of a closed churchyard is not affected by the transfer of maintenance responsibility.

### 3.2. Duty of Care

In respect of trees, the duty of care will be managed as set by the policies in Section 4 of this document.

### 3.3. Service definition

SKDC will only undertake essential works. 'Essential' in this context means that either:

- Tree work is required to avoid damage to a built structure or boundary fence; or,
- Tree work is required to maintain access along established/formalised pedestrian and/or maintenance routes; or,
- Tree work that is required to avoid litigation.

Examples of scenarios relevant to the last point in above list are as follows:

- If SKDC was aware that a tree was likely to fail and there was a reasonable chance that failure would result in injury/damage, this would be considered essential, because if SKDC chose to do nothing a claim of negligence could be made against the council.
- If the encroachment of branches was causing material damage to a neighbouring property (rather than just inconvenience), this would be considered essential because it may lead to a claim of nuisance.

Although SKDC are responsible for the management of closed churchyards under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, the land, and the trees on it, remain in the ownership of the church. The church can therefore undertake additional non-essential work to achieve aesthetic (or other) objectives as it sees fit.

## PART 4: Policies relating to risk management

### 4.1. Introduction

Although trees provide many environmental, social and economic benefits, they can also pose risks to people and property. In general, the risk of harm from trees is very low, but it is a risk that must be actively managed.

SKDC manage and maintain a variety of amenity areas and communal gardens throughout the district, containing trees of different species, ages and conditions. These trees are found in diverse contexts, with some having minimal public access and others seeing regular vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Many trees are located adjacent to private property further emphasising the need for effective risk management.

### 4.2. Legal Obligations

SKDC has a legal obligation to manage the risk posed by trees which is referred to as a 'Duty of Care'. There are two key pieces of legislation that outline this responsibility:

- The Occupiers Liability Act (1957, 1964) places a duty on the occupier of land to take reasonable care to ensure that visitors are safe while on their property.
- The Health and Safety at Work, Etc., Act (1974) requires employers take reasonable steps, as far as is practicable, to ensure that non-employees (the public) are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

In addition to these statutory duties, SKDC also owes a duty of care at common law to all individuals who may be injured by a tree on land it owns, unless that duty has been discharged to another party through a legally binding agreement (e.g. a tenancy agreement). SKDC also owes the same duty of care for trees in their management which are not on council-owned land.

The duty of care involves **taking reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or damage to property.**

### 4.3. Industry Guidance

The following policies draw on guidance from several key documents which are currently accepted as best practice for managing the risk from trees:

- Common sense risk management of trees, National Tree Safety Group (NTSG), 2024
- Hazards from trees: A General Guide, Forestry Commission (Lonsdale), 2000
- Tree Surveys: A Guide to Good Practice, The Arboricultural Association (Fay, Dowson, Helliwell), 2005

- Tree Safety Management – Operational Guidance Booklet, Forestry Commission, 2007
- Sector Information Minute 01/2007/05 – Management of the risk from falling trees or branches, HSE, 2013.

#### 4.4. Scope

The following policies outline how the physiological and structural health of the trees under SKDC's control will be monitored to identify foreseeable and unacceptable risks posed to any person owed the duty of care. These policies provide a framework for conducting future tree surveys and inspections.

Additionally, the policies describe how SKDC will allocate its limited resources for tree management across the various sites under its jurisdiction, ensuring effective prioritization of resources within and between sites.

Appendix 1 is a list of sites that are covered by these policies (i.e. sites where SKDC have a responsibility to discharge the duty the care). Additionally, there are parcels of land that are owned by SKDC but where the duty of care is discharged by a tenant, agent or other third party. The responsibility to discharge the duty of care at these sites may be temporarily transferred back to SKDC from time to time when tenancies/contracts are terminated and will remain with SKDC until a new arrangement is formalised.

#### 4.5. Strategic Approach

An approach to the assessment and management of risk is needed that both achieves reasonable safety and the avoidance of disproportionate costs and unnecessary tree losses. Proportionality is pivotal and can only be achieved by considering the place of trees in a wider management context and people's relationship to that context.

Zoning will be used to define areas of land around trees according to levels of occupancy. The zoning will determine the inspection frequency and methodology.

SKDC's approach to managing the risk from trees includes reactive and proactive aspects.

Proactive elements will include formal inspections, undertaken by arboricultural specialists, and informal inspections ('routine checks') undertaken by non-specialists. The frequency of these inspections will be based on the zoning. Reactive inspections, resulting from reports/complaints from members of the public and/or staff, will supplement the proactive surveys.

## 4.6. Zoning Policy

Zoning is a means of defining areas of land around trees according to levels of occupancy. This practice focuses resources where they are most needed and contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection.

Each site that is managed by SKDC (Appendix 1) will be zoned, with land falling into one of the zone classes described in table 1 below.

*Table 1. Zone classes for land managed by SKDC*

Zone Class	Occupancy Characterisation
1	Trees growing in areas used by many people each day, such as busy roads, shopping centres, urban open spaces and car parks. Trees growing adjacent to static high value targets.
2	Trees growing in areas used by some people each day such as parks and cemeteries. Trees growing adjacent to static low value targets.
3	Trees growing in areas used by few people such as plantations and semi-rural areas. Trees without static targets.
99	n/a – no proactive formal inspections required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sites contains no trees with a stem diameter over 8cm measured at 1.5m above ground level</li> <li>Mitigating circumstances mean that proactive formal inspections will not be required (e.g. trees in private tenanted areas)</li> </ul>

Due to the responsibilities of tenants described in section 2.3.3 above, private tenanted land will normally be classified as zone 99, meaning that these trees will not normally receive proactive formal inspections. In exceptional circumstances, where risk factors such as large tree size and high occupancy warrant it, some areas may be classified into other zone categories.

## 4.7. Inspection Type and Frequency

Each site that is managed by SKDC (Appendix 1) will be covered by a scheduled formal proactive survey. Formal proactive surveys will include inspections of all trees with a stem diameter over 8cm, measured at 1.5m above ground level. The default method of inspection will be a Stage 1 Visual Tree Assessment (VTA), as defined by Mattheck and Breloer (1995). If the surveyor believes it is warranted, the inspection can be immediately escalated to a Stage 2 VTA. Stage 3 VTAs can be documented as recommended actions. For further details of VTA methodology, please refer to appendix 3.

The sites listed in Appendix 2 will receive additional informal proactive surveys, which will be walkover surveys and 'visual checks' intended to identify obvious and significant hazards that need to be escalated to additional formal inspections. Reactive inspections will also be visual checks.

The default number of months between surveys will be determined by the zone class, as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Default resurvey periods for defined zone classes.

Zone Class	Default resurvey period for each survey type	
	Formal	Informal (where applicable)
1	18 months	9 months
2	30 months	18 months
3	54 months	18 months
99	n/a (none)	n/a (none)

The frequency of the formal inspection for a particular tree or tree group can be increased beyond the default resurvey period for the wider zone, if it is recommended by the surveyor due to the structural or physiological condition of the tree(s).

## 4.8. Inspection Records

### 4.8.1. Formal Proactive Surveys

Records will be kept at two levels: the site and the survey. Each site will have records of all the surveys undertaken on it, and each survey will have records of all the inspections undertaken within it.

During a formal proactive survey, every tree that is inspected will be recorded.

All trees, even those that have no significant\* features, will have the following data recorded: species, age class, height class and stem diameter class (physiological and structural condition will be assumed to be 'good', and the reinspection interval will be the default for the zone).

For trees that have significant features that require ongoing monitoring, or require immediate remedial or proactive works, additional data fields will include physiological condition, structural condition, safe useful life expectancy, inspection limitations, targets (description), survey notes, recommendation(s), recommendation priority rating and reinspection interval.

\*Significant in this context means that the feature increases the likelihood of failure to such an extent that the overall risk rating for the tree is increased. What may constitute a significant feature is highly context specific, based on the species and age of the tree, the type of feature that is present, the location of the feature in the tree and the trees relationship to nearby targets. Based on the

minimum competency requirements for formal proactive surveys (see section 3.11), the classification of a feature as significant (or not) will be at the discretion of the surveyor.

The Council will document survey and inspection records created through formal proactive surveys using a proprietary tree management database system to ensure the secure and systematic storage, retrieval, and analysis of data, and the traceability of all decisions relating to risk management. The Council will periodically review the proprietary tree management system in use to ensure it meets organisational needs and complies with industry standards for tree record-keeping.

#### 4.8.2. Informal Proactive Surveys and Reactive Inspections

For each site that receives them (Appendix 2), informal proactive surveys will be recorded informally using the table provided in appendix 4 (they will not be recorded in a proprietary tree database management system). Reactive inspections will also be recorded in this way.

### 4.9. Inspection Recommendations

Recommendations for a given tree or group of trees resulting from a formal proactive survey can include:

- Escalation to a further stage of VTA inspection (as set out in appendix 1). For example, a ground-based Stage 3 assessment, or an aerial Stage 2/3 assessment.
- An increased inspection frequency beyond the default inspection frequency for the given zone. For example, if the default reinspection date for the area was 30 months, the surveyor may recommend an 18-month reinspection date for a particular tree due to concerns about its structural or physiological condition.
- Remedial action for the tree (e.g. pruning)
- Remedial action for the tree environment (e.g. target management, or treatments that improve the soil environment)
- Remedial action to facilitate future inspection (e.g. ivy removal).

Any recommendation resulting from a formal proactive survey will be given a priority rating (see section 3.10 for detail).

The only recommendation that can result from an informal proactive survey or a reactive inspection is a recommendation for a formal inspection to be undertaken by a suitably qualified arboricultural specialist.

## 4.10. Priority Ratings

If resources were not limited, all recommendations would be acted upon in the shortest possible timeframe. The limited resources available for tree work mean that the council must prioritise recommendations linked to scenarios which present the highest level of risk. Every recommendation resulting from a formal proactive survey will therefore be given a priority rating.

Priority ratings for safety critical recommendations will be a number from 1 to 3. The protocol for assigning priority ratings is as follows.

Firstly, the feature identified as a hazard will be assigned one of the hazard ratings described in table 3 below, based on the likelihood of failure:

*Table 3. Hazard ratings to be applied to features based on the likelihood of a failure occurring.*

Likelihood Rating	Example
Improbable	A tree with good vitality, good biomechanical structure, and limited external environmental stressors.
Possible	A tree with compromised vitality and/or biomechanical structure and/or a tree subject to moderately increased external environmental stressors.
Probable	Tree with major biomechanical defects, hazards, and/or physiological decline, and/or a tree with significantly increased external environmental stressors.
Imminent	Tree at imminent risk of collapse due to serious significant defects

Secondly, the identified hazard will be assigned one of the consequence ratings described in table 4 below, based on the context of its setting:



Table 4. Consequence ratings to be applied to identified hazards, based on the harm that may be caused if failure occurred.

Consequence Rating	Example
Negligible	Potential for injuries requiring only minor first aid
Minor	Potential for an injury requiring medical attention
Moderate	Potential for serious injury likely to cause on-going disability
Severe	Potential for serious life-threatening injury or fatality

Lastly, the hazard rating and consequence rating are cross referenced via the matrix shown in table 5 below, to produce a priority rating, as follows:

Table 5. A matrix to determine the priority rating based on the hazard and consequence rating.

Consequence Rating ↓	Priority Rating			
Negligible	2	3	n/a	n/a
Minor	2	3	3	n/a
Moderate	1	2	3	3
Severe	1	1	2	2
Hazard Rating →	Imminent	Probable	Possible	Improbable

The protocol for assigning priority ratings to safety critical recommendations is a basic form of risk assessment. The terms used are qualitative and broad but are sufficient for the intended purpose: to prioritise recommended works to ensure that limited resources are prioritised to scenarios which present the highest level of risk.

Recommendations for work which is not safety critical will be categorised as 'General Management' (GM) and be assigned to one of the subcategories described in table 6 below. In terms of their priority rating, all GM recommendations will be a lower priority rating than any safety critical recommendation. However, for logistical reasons some GM recommendations may be undertaken before safety critical recommendations, if they can be done at the same time as safety critical works being carried out in the same location at minimal additional cost.

Table 6. Subcategories of general management recommendation.

Sub-category code	Name	Example (e.g. ...)
GM-1	Damage prevention	Where work is required to prevent (further) damage to a structure or infrastructure
GM-2	Obstruction to access	Where work is required to maintain reasonable access along a highway or footpath.
GM-3	Visibility issues	Where work is required to maintain/restore visibility to a highway junction or amenity area or maintain/restore the effective functioning of street/security lighting.
GM-4	Nuisance issues and/or neighbour relations	Where work is required to prevent or abate a nuisance issue such as leaf litter, or to maintain good neighbouring relations by dealing with any situation causing a neighbouring landowner concern.
GM-5	Proactive management	Where work will deliver social, environmental, or economic benefits.

Alternative management options may be available for the issues encountered with some trees. To account for this, the surveyor will be able to record a secondary recommendation, which may or may not have a different priority rating to the primary recommendation. Each recommendation will receive its own priority rating, and the tree will receive an overall priority score based on the highest individual priority rating.

A recommendation resulting from an informal proactive survey or a reactive inspection (to escalate the issue to a formal survey) will not receive a priority rating, as this will always be assumed to be a high priority issue.

### 4.11. Surveyor Competency

Formal proactive surveys will be undertaken by a competent person who holds a RQF level 3 accreditation in arboriculture (or higher) OR a Lantra Professional Tree Inspection Qualification.

Informal proactive surveys and reactive surveys will be conducted by someone who holds a Lantra Basic Tree Inspection Qualification.

### 4.12. Private Neighbouring Trees

Where a privately-owned tree situated on neighbouring land is believed to pose an unacceptable risk to targets on council land, the landowner will be contacted in writing to be made aware of the issue. Access to the affected area may be restricted or prohibited until the risk has been addressed.

Section 23 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows SKDC to deal with trees on private land that pose an immediate danger to the people or property, however, it is beyond the scope of this policy to describe the accepted protocols for utilising these powers.

### 4.13. Wildlife and Habitat Considerations

The policies described above (3.1 to 3.12) are intended to manage the risk posed by council-owned trees. Whenever remedial tree work is required, there is the possibility that this could have an unintended negative impact on local wildlife and biodiversity. The main areas of concern are bats, birds and the loss of deadwood

#### 4.13.1. Bats

Bats are known to roost in several features commonly found in trees such as hollows, holes, cracks, loose bark and thick ivy. It will be the responsibility of SKDC's appointed contractors to undertake the necessary checks for bats prior to undertaking the specified tree work.

#### 4.13.2. Birds

Birds can nest in trees from March to August. No recommended tree work designated as 'general management' (refer to table 6) will be undertaken during this period. Tree work designated as 'safety critical' may be undertaken during the nesting period if suitable checks have determined that disturbance of nesting birds is unlikely or if the risk identified is immediate and significant and no other options are available to manage the situation.

#### 4.13.3. Deadwood

Deadwood habitats are vital for a wide range of plants, fungi, animals, and micro-organisms. Council-owned trees are often in urban locations where the retention of standing deadwood would create an unacceptable risk. If deadwood cannot be retained without posing an unacceptable risk, we will consider the risk posed could be adequately managed by shortening the dead branch/stem rather than completely removing it. If it is not feasible to retain any standing deadwood, we will consider whether it is possible to retain deadwood nearby on the ground (without causing an obstruction, nuisance issues, or introducing a new hazard).

## APPENDICES

DRAFT

## Appendix 1 – List of sites that will receive formal inspections

[TBC]

DRAFT

## Appendix 2 – List of sites which will receive additional informal inspections

[TBC]

DRAFT

## Appendix 3 – additional information the visual tree assessment methodology

The Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) method was developed by Claus Mattheck and is an internationally acknowledged method for tree inspection. It is a logical, systematic, and diagnostic approach which aims to identify trees with reasonably foreseeable defects, hazards, or features that may indicate dysfunction in the structural integrity or physiological vitality of the tree.

There are 3 stages to the inspection process:

- I. **Inspection** – conducted from ground level to identify features which may be a symptom of compromised structural or physiological condition. It is a visual assessment only.
- II. **Examination** – conducted from ground level or as an aerial inspection, as required, to confirm the presence or absence of a suspected defect. Only basic tools are involved such as a probe and sounding mallet.
- III. **Measurement** - conducted from ground level or as an aerial inspection, as required, to measure the extent of the defect and calculate/estimate the remaining strength of the affected part. It is likely to include the use of advanced tools such as resistance measuring drills or sound velocity measuring devices.

### Limitations of a Stage 1 VTA:

The majority of tree inspections undertaken will be Stage 1 VTAs. It is important that the limitations of this method are documented and understood.

- A3.1. Trees are living organisms and can decline in health rapidly due to biotic and abiotic influences. Therefore, failure of intact trees can never be ruled out due to the laws and forces of nature. An example being extreme wind speeds.
- A3.2. No invasive means of investigation are used at this stage. No detailed decay measurements shall be taken. No soil or foliage samples shall be taken. The requirement for any further investigation (Stage 2) or discussion shall be identified during the Stage 1 investigation and presented as a recommendation.



- A3.3. No soil profile assessment shall be made. For this reason, the failure of a tree because of ground failure, such as landslip, cannot be ruled out. Where the inspector identifies the potential for failure in such a manner, however, they shall make a recommendation for further investigation.
- A3.4. Recent excavation or ground works near a tree may have resulted in structural roots being damaged or severed, and that damage being hidden by deposited soil or a new structure. For this reason, the failure of a tree because of hidden root damage or dysfunction cannot be ruled out. Comments shall be made, however, for trees which have obviously and most likely been affected.
- A3.5. Only the trees within the areas indicated on the associated maps shall be assessed and presented in the reporting.
- A3.6. Although limitations shall exist within these investigations, it is believed that all reasonably practicable steps are being taken to identify and address unacceptable risk, and that the duty of care has been met by the author, the surveyor, the manager, and the tree owner.

## References

The body language of trees: A handbook for failure analysis. Mattheck, Breloer. TSO. 1994.

The Body Language of Trees: Encyclopaedia (sic) of Visual Tree Assessment. Mattheck, Bethge, Weber. KIT. 2015.

Appendix 4 – example table for recording informal proactive surveys and reactive inspections

Date	Name	Site	Area/Zone	Purpose of survey/ inspection (P/R)	Comments/Observations/Actions
				P = Proactive R = Reactive	

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26

WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT TITLE	LEAD OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMITTEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE/ PRIORITY
15 September 2025				
Update on carbon emissions for 2024/25	Louise Case (Sustainability Project Support Officer)	To provide an update on South Kesteven District Council's operational carbon emissions report, against the agreed reduction target of at least 30% by 2030.		Sustainable South Kesteven
Tree Management Policies Update	Andrew Igoea (Tree Officer)	Update on the new Tree Management Policies (replacing the SKDC Tree Guidelines).		Sustainable South Kesteven
10 November 2025				
8 January 2026				
Unscheduled future items				
Update on recently published Section 19 reports	Tom Amblin-Lightowler (Environmental Health Manager)	To review the recommendations to mitigate and prevent future flooding risks.	February 10 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Sustainable South Kesteven
Biodiversity Action Plan Update	Serena Brown (Sustainability & Climate Change Officer)	To update on the newly developed Biodiversity Action Plan.	December 2023	Clean and sustainable SK

REPORT TITLE	LEAD OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMITTEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE/ PRIORITY
<b>Tree Management Policies Update</b>	<b>Andrew Igoea (Tree Officer)</b>	Update on the new Tree Management Policies (replacing the SKDC Tree Guidelines).		Sustainable South Kesteven
<b>Quality of the District's Rivers and Canals</b>				
<b>National Hedge Laying Association</b>				

### The Committee's Remit

The remit of the Environment 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:

- Air quality
- Animal welfare licensing (Policy)
  - Commercial, industrial, and clinical waste collection and management
- Dog breeding and control orders
- Domestic waste and recycling management
- Energy efficiency
- Environment SK Ltd
- Environment SK Commercial Services Ltd
- Estate and grounds maintenance
- Flooding
- Food hygiene and safety
- Health and safety
- Noise
- Renewable energy
- Scrap metal dealers
- Green open space management