

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 October 2025 at 10.00 am
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Committee Members: Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor James Denniston, Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren, Councillor Tim Harrison, Councillor Robert Leadenham, Councillor Habib Rahman, Councillor Lee Steptoe and Vacancy (Conservative)

Agenda

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

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

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

4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025** (Pages 3 - 14)
5. **Updates from the previous meeting** (Pages 15 - 16)
To receive updates on actions agreed at the previous meeting.
6. **Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service**
7. **Customer Service Update - Quarter 1 (2025/26)** (Pages 17 - 22)
The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Quarter 1 during 2025/26
8. **Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update** (Pages 23 - 52)
The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the support issued as part of Household Support Fund during Q1 2025/26, and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities.
9. **Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 - Action Plan** (Pages 53 - 92)
To introduce the Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 and subsequent action plan which will be presented to this committee every 6 months to ensure a commitment to supporting the delivery of the customer charter, priorities, and approach to customer experience across Council services.
10. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement 2024** (Pages 93 - 110)
The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the requirements placed upon the Council in relation to the publication of equality information and to offer Members the opportunity to consider the draft 2024 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement.
11. **Corporate Enforcement Policy** (Pages 111 - 157)
To provide a new draft Corporate Enforcement Policy for consideration.
12. **Work Programme 2025 - 2026** (Pages 159 - 162)
To receive the Work Programme for 2025 – 2026
13. **Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent**

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
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COUNCIL

Wednesday, 9 July 2025, 10.00 am

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor James Denniston

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Richard Cleaver (Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement)
Councillor Phil Dilks (Cabinet Member for Planning)
Councillor Philip Knowles (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing)
Councillor Virginia Moran (Cabinet Member for Housing)

Officers

Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director – Culture, Leisure and Place)
Claire Moses (Head of Service – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)
Carol Drury (Community Engagement Manager)
Nicola Moore (Customer Services Manager)
Beth Goodman (Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead)
Charles James (Policy Officer)
Debbie Nicholls (Armed Forces Covenant Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

Paul Drury (Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer)

1. Public Speaking

There were none.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robert Leadenham and Steven Cunnington.

Councillors James Denniston substituted for Counillor Steven Cunningham.

3. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

4. Minutes of the meeting held 12 March 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record.

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

There were none.

6. Armed Forces Update

The Cabinet Member for Planning presented the report. The report outlined the commitment to support those who had served in the Armed Forces.

The role of the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer was introduced in 2024 as a 2-year fixed contract. The post was currently funded by the seven district council's of Lincolnshire and the NHS. Across the partnership, it had been agreed to continue the funding for the post for a further 2 years at which time Lincolnshire County Council would also contribute to the post.

An annual report on the Council's compliance within the Armed Forces Covenant in relation to engagement and advocacy was presented annually in December of each year.

A presentation was given to the Committee by the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer. The presentation provided an overview of the work undertaken which complemented the provision in the District. The Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer role added value to expansive work undertaken in support of the Armed Forces families and individuals of both those serving currently or who had served previously.

- A query was raised regarding the progress of the veterans welcome pack and when this was due to be rolled out.
- A question was asked how success would be measured and what targets the Armed Forces Officer had.

It was hoped the veteran welcome packs would be rolled out by September 2025.

Annually, the work of officers was monitored and measured by the Covenant Partnership. Regular updates would also be brought to this Committee for scrutiny. The Armed Forces Covenant was under review. Currently the Covenant places a

legal duties on public bodies (local authorities and the NHS) in relation to healthcare, housing and education.

Going forward, Government plans to extend the scope of the legal duty to include central government and devolved administrations. This means more public bodies will be legally required to consider the Covenant when making decisions.

- Operation Valour had been announced in May 2025, and the pilot had been running in the North of England. It was queried as to what arrangements and strategies were in place with all local authorities across Lincolnshire to be prepared for the operation in possibly rolling out in 2026.

The Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer was liaising with the Office of Veteran Affairs at present and had requested Lincolnshire be considered as the second pilot. Work was being undertaken to identify key areas and people within Lincolnshire to establish a forum.

To provide an update on the work of the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer by means of a presentation to Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing presented the report.

The Corporate Plan 2024-2027 was adopted by Council in January 2024 and subsequently, 9 targets were monitored for this Committee.

7 of the actions were rated green overall and were on or above target as planned. 1 action was rated amber, which meant it was currently below the planned target. There were no actions rated red. An action to implement the Safer Streets Programme had been marked as completed, which had been funded nationally.

One Member noted the Safer Streets funding had finished, it was queried how the legacy would be continued.

It was highlighted that the Officers and the Home Office were working on exploring ways in which the programme could still provide safer streets in Grantham.

The Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Place clarified some UKSPF funding had been secured for Safer Streets.

ACTION: For the Head of Service – Public Protection to provide a funding update on the Safer Streets Programme.

A target for Licensing was rated amber due to staffing challenges, it was questioned whether this had been addressed.

ACTION: For the Licensing Team to provide an update on staffing challenges faced.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing had confirmed an administrative member of staff had been employed. However, there had been long term sickness amongst other members of staff.

A suggestion was made to remove the Safer Streets KPI and focus on other elements of possible funding or other areas of concern.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** to remove the Safer Streets KPI and focus on other elements of possible funding or other areas of concern.

That the Committee:

1. Notes and scrutinises the performance against the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-27.

8. South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan & Age Friendly Communities Update

The Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement presented the report which provided an overview of the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

In December 2023, Members of the Committee endorsed the Lincolnshire Districts Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and agreed to receive six monthly updates on progress.

The delivery period for actions had come to an end. Officers were working on refreshing the actions over the next 12 months, details could be found in appendix 2 of the report.

The report also provided an overview on the progress of Age Friendly Communities work within South Kesteven. The Committee had previously agreed in February 2025 to receive six monthly progress reports.

In April 2025, SKDC were accepted into the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities which demonstrated the hard work of Officers by achieving this milestone.

Officers would continue to gather data information to create a baseline profile on people's opinion of living, working and ageing within South Kesteven which would be finalised by March 2025.

Officers were thanked for all their hard work on this project.

It was noted the NHS 10-year plan was recently published. The plan included a major shift from hospital to community and from cure to prevention meaning a greater role for Local Government would be seen in future for community health and wellbeing.

A query was raised on the homeless sector and how the Council were prioritising which empty homes would be brought back into use. It was further questioned whether any targets could be implemented on the number of homes aimed to be brought back into use.

ACTION: For an Officer from Housing to provide how the Council were prioritising which empty homes would be brought back into use and whether any targets could be implemented on the number of homes aimed to be brought back into use.

The Cabinet Member for Housing highlighted additional work was ongoing at present to review long term voids. There had been a concentration on empty homes which could be turned around quickly. If properties were beyond economical repair, they were sold.

The target on void properties for the end of 2025 was 80, and this target had already been achieved. It was hoped the number of voids by the end of 2025 could reach 60.

It was noted that £15,000 of funding had been spent on food support. It was queried whether Council had plans to replenish the funding or build a more sustainable solution.

The £15,000 budget had been established as part of the budget setting process. The funding was offered to all of the foodbanks, community larders and pantries. The funding was not always accepted by these community services.

Central Government had introduced a trial programme on community restaurants for people struggling to feed their families. It was suggested whether the Council could look into the programme and explore options.

The Community Engagement Manager highlighted that cafes within the District offered a 'pay what you can' service.

The economic inclusion part of the strategy referred to supporting low paid workers. It was questioned how low paid workers would be identified.

Economic inclusion actions were due to be reviewed once the new Head of Economic Development had started their role towards the end of 2025, and would be brought to a future meeting.

ACTION: For the Economic inclusion actions be brought back to Committee once the new Head of Economic Development had started their role.

One Member queried when the survey would be rolled out to all residents or those residents of a certain age.

The organisation survey was due to be rolled out on 21 July 2025 and would last for 4 weeks. Following the closure of the survey, a review period will take place and feedback of data would form the questions due to be asked to residents. This would be sent to all residents in October 2025, but with a focus on residents over the age of 50 years old.

It was suggested that Parish and Town Council's be involved and encouraged in making their areas more age friendly.

To provide an update on the progress and delivery of the South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, and the progress of South Kesteven District Council becoming part of the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities

9. Customer Service Update - Outturn 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing presented the report.

This report detailed the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and the priorities high contact service areas strive to deliver.

A telephone and call handling report was presented to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2025. The report focused on the position regarding call handling.

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

It was noted that over 1000 feedback comments were received from the website, it was queried what common issues were raised and how they were actioned or resolved.

ACTION: For the Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service) to provide figures on common issues raised on digital feedback forms and how they were actioned or resolved.

Staff members were enjoying the space in the new Customer Service Centre and felt as if it had a positive atmosphere.

It was queried whether staff were coping with a major increase in phone calls or whether any new staff had been recruited due to the increase in activity.

It was highlighted that 79% of calls were answered and 21% of calls were rerouted to a particular department, meaning 100% of calls were answered. A query was raised on abandoned calls as they had not been recorded. It was questioned how many rings a call would have before being answered.

The digital increase in activity was due to the improvements on the website and customer portals that had been launched. There was not an increase of staffing levels within the team, at present the increase in volumes were manageable.

It was clarified that 21% of calls were abandoned and not answered at first point of contact. However, the increase in digital and other contacts showed that people were moving into using this form of contact.

Complaints and feedback received regarding the ability to contact the Council had not increased which indicated calls were being re-routed to a different type of contact channel.

The Council had an aim to answer calls within 8 rings, however, if this wasn't possible, callers were advised to use other methods of contact. The caller also had an option for a voicemail and callback facility.

It was queried whether terminated calls were distinguished separately to dropped calls.

The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service) confirmed that if a call ended, it was unknown whether the call dropped, or the call was terminated by a customer. Members were requested to encourage residents to inform the Council of any issues with phone calls, which could be tracked via time, date etc.

It was queried what the Council could do to assist vulnerable elderly people who cannot access the internet, website or landline phone.

The Customer Services Manager confirmed the Council had face-to-face customer service centres in the North and South of the District. A service of appointments, drop-ins and advice was available in all offices.

One Member raised that residents had provided good feedback on the new customer service centre.

A suggestion was made on whether SKDC's Customer Services could compare customer service levels with other local councils.

It was requested that any future reports include details on resolution rates.

The Council worked alongside other customer service teams across Lincolnshire and met with them quarterly to compare different services and how they are delivered.

It was highlighted that resolution rate information was received from a variety of ways. The Council did not have a customer management system that all services could feed into, making resolution rates difficult to obtain. Anecdotally, resolution rates could be seen through feedback from customers through complaints.

As part of the Customer Experience Strategy, an action plan would come to the Committee in October 2025. A theme within the action plan is technology which could explore how this could assist in gathering information to enable improvement of services going forward.

A query was raised on whether the team had a sufficient tracking and monitoring IT system for checking resolution rates.

Within the action plan, options around resources and budget would be brought forward. Workshops had taken place with other service areas to emphasise the service standards set across the Council.

The Committee:

1. Noted the report and provided feedback on the information contained in the report

10. Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report that provided an update on the Household Support Fund Scheme 2025/26.

One of the main responsibilities of the Cost of Living Team was to administer and distribute the fund.

The funding was provided by the Department for Working Pensions and distributed by Lincolnshire County Council, who then shared the funding between District Councils.

Lincolnshire's allocation for 2025/26 was £9.66 million and the figure for South Kesteven was £458,452.

The Council were encouraged to emphasise more on proactive working rather than reactive.

The delivery plan for the scheme was detailed within the report and appendices.

The largest proportion of support continues to be the issuing of voucher by referral, and as of recently the team had received 134 referrals.

Running parallel to the funding, the team also identify additional support for residents in the form of general budgeting advice and financial support.

Members were able to access leaflets to provide to residents who needed support. The Council would also put on 'pop-ups' around the District for residents to access the help in person.

It was queried whether Lincolnshire County Council were returning the money back to SKDC.

Up until 2024, the Council were receiving the money back the following month. This year, County Councillors had agreed for the money to be returned on a quarterly basis.

Concern was raised around not spending all the money and having to return it alongside spending the money and having to wait for a reimbursement from Lincolnshire County Council.

The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service) confirmed the first half of the funding had gone to Lincolnshire Community Foundation around £46,000, and the second half would be given to them in December 2025. The treasury team were aware of this prior to the financial year.

The vouchers were sent out via a third-party company who were endorsed by the Department for Work and Pensions and all other Districts across the county. This funding was issued at around £30,000 per requirement and funding was not handed out at one go.

The management of the money of Household Support Fund was positive and the Council had an excellent working relationship with Lincolnshire County Council and all other Districts. The Council's Welfare and Financial Advice Coordinator attended regular meetings on this matter.

Lincolnshire County Council did keep an element of the funding for preschool meals.

From 2026, the Household Support Fund would be merged with Discretionary Housing Payments, and it would become a Crisis Resilience Fund. A meeting was due to take place between Government and Department for Work and Pensions to discuss this.

It was queried whether the Council undertook any direct reporting on veterans and access to funds for them alongside how many of those were accessing support funds.

The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service) clarified the correct wording for questions would be reviewed and could be included within the referral form to capture the information.

It was requested whether information on what impact the support was having and whether information on the number of households receiving support in 2024 to 2025 could be shared.

The following questions were collectively raised:

- Data on how many residents had been supported and had not required further intervention.
- Any evidence that the preventative and outreach work was reducing the need for the support over time.

The Household Support Fund had only recently launched, and the funding had been given to Lincolnshire Community Foundation and to the voucher providers. This figure of vouchers given out last year would be provided at the meeting in October 2025.

The amount of support was a low amount for an individual or a household and it was available to assist in an immediate situation. Unfortunately, residents seeking support tended to require it year-on-year.

Preventative measures was a new element to the scheme. The action plan would include all activities and would also be reported at the next meeting.

Concern was raised on the eligibility criteria for the Household Support Fund and what input the Council had on it.

The eligibility criteria was reviewed on a regular basis and was South Kesteven's own criteria. The household income of £50k was aligned to Department for Work and Pensions and other benefits

The Committee:

1. Noted the report and provided feedback on the information contained in the report.

11. Work Programme 2025 - 2026

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2025-26.

It was requested that the following item be added to the October meeting:

- Annual Position Statement on Equality and Diversity

It was requested that the following item be added to the December meeting:

- Q2 KPIs

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

There were none.

13. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:30.

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Action Sheet

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Actions from meeting of 9 July 2025

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
7	Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25	For the Head of Service – Public Protection to provide a funding update on the Safer Streets Programme.	Ayeisha Kirkham (Head of Service – Public Protection)	Email sent from Democracy on 21 July 2025	Complete
7	Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25	For the Licensing Team to provide an update on staffing challenges faced.	Ayeisha Kirkham (Head of Service – Public Protection)	Email sent from Democracy on 21 July 2025	Complete
8	South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan & Age Friendly Communities Update	For an Officer from Housing to provide how the Council were prioritising which empty homes (voids) would be brought back into use and whether any targets could be implemented on the number of homes aimed to be brought back into use.	Alison Hall-Wright (Director of Housing)	Update to be given at the October 16 th meeting	

Min no	Agenda item	Action	Assigned to	Comments/Status	Deadline
8	South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan & Age Friendly Communities Update	For the Economic inclusion actions be brought back to Committee once the new Head of Economic Development had started their role.	Head of Economic Development Emma Whittaker (Assistant Director of Planning and Growth)	Ongoing	
9	Customer Service Update - Outturn 2024/25	For the Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service) to provide figures on common issues raised on digital feedback forms and how they were actioned or resolved.	Claire Moses (Head of Service - Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service)	Update to be given at the October 16 th meeting	



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Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

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

Customer Service Update - Quarter 1 (2025/26)

Report Author

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

✉ Eclair.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Quarter 1 during 2025/26.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

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

Decision Information

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

1. Implications

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

Finance and Procurement

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

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

Legal and Governance

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

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to Connecting Communities and being an Effective Council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and high contact service areas strives to deliver these priorities.
- 2.2. A telephony and call handling report was presented to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 July 2025. The report focused on the customer interactions for 2024/25.
- 2.3. The Customer Service Team handle customer interactions in various ways for 17 high contact service areas, as well as general public enquiries. This report provides an update regarding customer interactions for these service areas for Quarter 1 2025/26.

Customer Interaction type

- 2.4. Tables 1 and 2 show the different methods and number of customer interactions received into the Customer Service Team during Q1 2024/25 and comparison to Q1 2025/26.

Table 1 – Telephone calls and face to face contact:

	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Virtual operator	N/A	29,481
IVR	N/A	12,055
Total	N/A	41,536

	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Customer Service calls	35,515	33,706
Switchboard calls	4,040	3,418
Other team calls	16,174	13,588
Total Calls	55,729	50,712
Grantham walk-in	1,242	1,225
Bourne walk-in	138	98
Bourne Library	6,982	7,107
Total Walk-in	8,362	8,430
Grantham appointment	79	248
Bourne appointment	48	97
Total Appointments	127	345

Total Interactions	61,866	59,487
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- 2.5. In comparison to 2024/25, the number of appointments in Grantham have increased by 169 (from 79 to 248). This is as a result of the relocation of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in October 2024. The CSC provides a friendly, open and spacious environment for customer appointments which are available from 9am to 1pm, taking place across five service desks and a dedicated secure interview room. Appointments are available for all enquiries across all service areas.

Table 2 – Digital Channels – Emails and Website:

	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Emails	5,513	4,336
Website (unique browser)	382,833	509,164
Total	388,346	513,530

- 2.6. In comparison to Q1 2024/25, email contact has reduced slightly but website contact has increased significantly by 126,331. This is as a result of the improved website interactions, increased online form and Council Tax portal.

- 2.7. There have been a total of 9,411 Council Tax portal interactions during Q1. In total since the portal officially launched in June 2024, there have been 85,638 interactions with 6,943 households registered on the portal, with 6,924 of those registered for e-billing (99.73%).
- 2.8. The Customer Service and Council Tax Teams continue to promote the portal and this is the most efficient way to contact the Council Tax team, with customers receiving updated Council Tax bills within 24 to 48 hours from point of contact.
- 2.9. It is important for the Council to provide a variety of methods of contact for its customers. It is appreciated one contact method may not be suitable for all. Therefore, the method for customer contact provided by South Kesteven will continue to include all methods as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Interaction comparisons:

	Q1 2024/25		Q1 2025/26	
	Volume	% of total contact (452,564)	Volume	% of total contact (573,017)
Telephone calls (table 1)	55,729	12.31%	50,712	8.85%
Face to face – walk in (table 1)	8,362	1.85%	8,430	1.47%
Face-to-face – appts (table 1)	127	0.03%	345	0.06%
Digital (table 2)	388,346	85.81%	513,530	89.62%
Total Contact	452,564		573,017	

Call answering – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025

- 2.10. During Q1 2025/26, 83% of calls were answered, with 17% of calls being 'abandoned' to other service channels. This is an improvement from Q1 2024/25, where these figures were 76% and 24% respectively.
- 2.11. An 'abandoned' call suggests the customer is terminating the call before being routed to an officer. Officers are unable to show a clear correlation between calls being abandoned and the increase in e-channel areas (digital contact has increased from 85.81% to 89.62%), however, analysis continues to show that there is minimal negative feedback received relating to calls being abandoned or not answered. Further analysis also shows the increase in e-channel contact via website, online forms and customer portals, which is a direct result of the promotion of our e-channel access and the numerous information messages for the customer whilst

they are in the call queue, advising of other contact methods such as online, and the option to request a call back from the service area.

- 2.12. Call handling statistics are produced and issued by the Performance and Change Improvement Lead on a monthly basis to the Council's Corporate Management Team and service areas. The information includes number of calls offered, answered, abandoned and average speed of answer.
- 2.13. Performance clinics with service areas are continuing on a monthly basis which enable both the Customer Service Team and service area to analyse call handling performance and for the service area to advise of changes in service activity and any upcoming activities which may impact on the number or nature of customer interactions.
- 2.14. Customer feedback via the Council's corporate feedback process is monitored, specifically where the customer has indicated an issue regarding the "ability to contact the Council". All feedback continues to be reviewed and actioned appropriately.

Website – feedback and improvements

- 2.15. Each page on the Council's website has a 'was this page useful' function. A customer can choose 'yes' or 'no' by clicking on the relevant 'happy or sad face' icon at the bottom of the page. In doing this, the customer is given the option to provide and submit their comments, along with their name and email address.
- 2.16. A report is produced each month by the Performance and Customer Improvement Lead. For the purpose of this report, the information provided is from October 2023 to August 2025.
- 2.17. During this period, there have been a total of 1,849 individual 'was this page useful' interactions and this is broken down as follows:

	Was this page useful				
	Yes	No	Total	% Yes	% No
Total interactions	577	1,272	1,849	31%	69%

- 2.18. Customers are also able to provide comments regarding their feedback and can leave their contact details which enables officers to provide a response as to the actions taken. Of the 1,272 respondents which advised the page was not useful, 1,045 provided comments.
- 2.19. All comments are reviewed and actions taken where required. Of the 1,045 comments received, 67 (6%) resulted in actions being taken. The common areas for feedback and reasons for changes not being taken are:

- Customer did not provide enough details for action to be taken

- Information requested is already on the website
- Customer had a service enquiry, not a comment on the page

2.20. Officers will provide a detailed update to this Committee for Q2 2025/26. The update will detail the above information, along with the individual actions undertaken where changes have been made.

3. Key Considerations

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



**SOUTH
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Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – Q1 2025/26

Report Author

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

✉ claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the support issued as part of Household Support Fund during Q1 2025/26, and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

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

Decision Information

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

1. Implications

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

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The report sets out the specific schemes that are being implemented to support residents with the cost of living – both statutory and national initiatives. The Household Support Fund scheme identified in the report is not directly funded by the Council. The Welfare and Financial Advice team was added to the permanent staffing structure from 1 April 2025 and the work priorities will reflect both local and national issues that are facing the community.

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

Legal and Governance

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

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

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

Completed by: (insert name and job title)

Human Resources

- 1.4 The increasing impacts of low economic activity is having a big impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing, and support in this area will therefore form a big part of the Welfare and Financial Advice Team workplan. There will be links to the

Mental Health Working Group, and these are being picked up internally as part of the actions for the new Welfare and Financial Advice Team.

Completed by: (insert name and job title)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to ensuring healthy and strong communities and being a high performing council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Welfare and Financial Advice Team strives to deliver these priorities.
- 2.2. The first Welfare and Financial Advice report was presented to this committee on 9 July 2025, which can be found here at item 10: [Agenda for Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 9th July, 2025, 10.00 am | South Kesteven District Council](#)
- 2.3. Previous Cost of Living reports being present prior to this date. These reports have provided background regarding the responsibilities of the team, the allocation of Household Support Fund (HSF) funding across the county and the development of the Household Support Fund.

Household Support Fund – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025

- 2.4. The initial amount of funding for SKDC is £458,452. This could be subject to change as the year progresses if other districts within Lincolnshire are unable to allocate their funding. If this occurs, there will be a re-distribution to the remaining districts by Lincolnshire County Council.

District area	% of District allocation	Approx Allocation (£)
East Lindsey	24%	£785,917
Boston	10%	£327,465
South Holland	12%	£392,958
Lincoln	16%	£204,379
North Kesteven	11%	£360,212
South Kesteven	14%	£458,452
West Lindsey	13%	£425,705
Total	100%	£9,631,345

Delivery plan and funding distribution for SKDC Residents

2.5. The delivery plan and funding distribution as of 30 June 2025 is detailed below.

Method	Amount	% of fund	Distributing organisation	Purpose	Q1 Update	Q1 value awarded (£)
1	£9,000	2%	Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Contribution towards Warm Packs for 2025 – as part of county-wide ‘Warm welcome’ working group This will be removed at source with LCC making payment direct to LCF	Funding has been retained by LCC and warm pack distribution will begin November 2025 County communications will be developed in readiness for distribution	£9,000 On track
2	£22,922	5%	SKDC Administration + Preventative Measures	Various administration costs of the scheme – such as printing and posting of vouchers + costs towards Preventative measures workshops.	This is ongoing with various spend throughout the administration of HSF April 2025 to March 2026	£5,731 On track
3	£45,845	10%	3 rd party Referrers	This will be set aside for referrals that have come from 3 rd party organisations distributed throughout the year.	We will continue to receive and process referrals during the period of HSF closure (October to December)	£0.00 Referrals did not open until 4 August
4	£59,598	13%	Outreach Work/ Pensioners	Vouchers will be distributed as an outcome of outreach visits depending on the needs.	To start October to December 2025	

Method	Amount	% of fund	Distributing organisation	Purpose	Q1 Update	Q1 value awarded (£)
				Priority will be given to pensioners.		
5	£91,690	20%	HSF7 Vouchers – Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)	Support for residents not in receipt of an income related Benefit that are struggling financially. The payment will be made in two instalments in July and December.	Round 1 funding has been issued to LCF (£45,845) Referrals opened 4 August and will close on 26 September Second round funding (£45,845) to be issued for January to March 2026 referrals	£0.00 Referrals did not open until 4 August
6	£229,236	50%	SKDC HSF7 Vouchers – Welfare & Financial Advice Team	Support for those specifically in receipt of an income related benefit that are struggling. This will be split over 2 intensive periods.	Target for distribution from 4 August to 26 September 2025 (Round 1) is £114,618 Target for distribution from January to March 2026 (Round 2) is £114,618	£0.00 Referrals did not open until 4 August

- 2.6. Although this is a Quarter 1 report, as the HSF referral process did not open until 4 August 2025, officers would like to assure the Committee that Household Support Fund referrals are being received and financial support is being provided.
- 2.7. A total of **683 vouchers** have been issued during the 7 week period from 4 August 2025 to 22 September 2025, to the **value of £94,898**. The details for distribution methods 3, 5 and 6 above are as follows.

- 2.8. **Method 3:** Third Party Organisations have requested the following vouchers which have been administered by SKDCs Welfare and Financial Advice Team.

Category	Number	Value
Food	49	£5,900
Energy	0	£0
Wider Household Essentials	0	£0
Total	49	£5,900

- 2.9. **Method 5:** Lincolnshire Community Foundation have issued the following vouchers.

Category	Number	Value
Food	158	£23,000
Energy	0	£0
Wider Household Essentials	0	£0
Total	158	£23,000

- 2.10. **Method 6:** SKDCs Welfare and Financial Advice Team have issued the following vouchers.

Category	Number	Value
Food	457	£64,250
Energy	3	£198
Wider Household Essentials	16	£1,550
Total	476	£65,998

Timeline for voucher distribution

- 2.11. The timeline for voucher distribution continues as follows:

- October 2025 to December 2025 - open for third party referrals from support agencies and low-income pensioners.
- January 2026 to March 2026 - open to public application until funding ends. Assistance will be predominantly by supermarket vouchers and Energy Vouchers.

Welfare and Financial Advice Team – additional wrap around support (Q1) - £123,305

- 2.12. The team received **394 referrals** during Q1 (390 were processed).
- 2.13. The total value of financial support identified and **awarded was £123,305.**
- 2.14. Each referral requires an initial 30 to 60 minute appointment with the resident to discuss their personal and household financial circumstances, to determine whether they are receiving all support available to them.
- 2.15. Following this, the officer will undertake further appointments and identify the wrap around support which is available – this can take the form of:
- Charity grants
 - Council Tax Support
 - Discretionary Council Tax Payments
 - Discretionary Housing Payments
 - Foodbank vouchers
 - White Goods
- 2.16. The team will also liaise with tenancy support (if SKDC tenant – will be referred in to Tenancy Support Team) and other wider support such as referrals into Citizens Advice. The support provided is in-depth and is always tailored to the individual's needs.
- 2.17. Once the referral has been completed and the triage discussion has been undertaken with the resident, details are then passed to the HSF Officer (within the Welfare and Financial Advice Team) who will process the HSF voucher. The vouchers are processed in bulk and issued on a weekly basis (unless urgent need has been established).

Action plan – 2025/26

- 2.18. The action plan for additional activities to be undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26 is detailed in **Appendix One.**
- 2.19. The plan will be monitored throughout 2025/26, and a further update as to the progress and outcome of the activities will be provided to this committee at the next meeting in October 2025.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.
- 3.2. It is recommended to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Welfare and Financial Advice Team continue to review the financial impacts of cost of living and implement activities within the action plan to support residents of South Kesteven.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 This report is for information only.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The recommendation will ensure residents of South Kesteven will have access to the support they need, with the Welfare and Financial Advice Team being able to monitor progress against the action plan.

6. Appendices

- 6.1. Appendix One – Welfare and Financial Advice Team action plan.

Welfare and Financial Advice Team (W&FA Team) – Action Plan

This action plan shows the activities to be undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26. It is made up of key areas of activity

Action 1	Administration
Action 2	Awareness
Action 3	Proactive – internal & external
Action 4	Proactive Support
Action 5	Preventative

Activity 1: Administration		
1a) Case Management	Purpose: Ensure Case management is up to date and provides clear outcomes – such as number of residents supported, value of support	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed case management to be available on all financial support provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap-around support Household Support Fund (HSF) – administered by SKDC Household Support Fund (HSF) – administered by Lincolnshire Community Foundation <p>22 September position:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of 683 HSF vouchers have been issued during the 7 week period from 4 August 2025 to 22 September 2025, to the value of £94,898 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administered by SKDC = £71,898 Administered by Lincolnshire Community Foundation = £23,000 Wrap-around support = £123,305 	Ongoing

Activity 2: Awareness		
2a) Website update	Purpose: Ensure the website is up to date, referencing the Welfare and Financial Advice Team	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Update all "Cost of Living pages" Existing pages can be found here: Cost of Living help and support South Kesteven District Council	Complete 30 June 2025
	Remove reference to old schemes	Complete 30 June 2025
	Include Food Support leaflets: Help and Support South Kesteven District Council	30 June 2025
2b) Co-Ordinate responses to government support initiatives	Purpose: Ensure awareness of announcements and initiatives, understanding the impact for the Council and residents	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Continue to attend Lincolnshire Working Group to collaborate with County and District colleagues September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings are taking place – recent discussions regarding Criss Resilience Fun where one attendee is part of the national working group. Further updates are expected between now and December 2025 	Ongoing

Activity 2: Awareness		
	Promotion and launch of Household Support Fund (HSF) from April 2025 to March 2026	Complete 30 May 2025
	Use of Emergency Fund - £71k September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been fully utilised, awarding to those referrals received between 1 April and 3 August 2025 (prior to the start of Household Support Fund on 4 August 2025) 	Ongoing
	Overview: Winter Fuel Payment: Overview - GOV.UK For winter 2025 to 2026, a Winter Fuel Payment is available to people born on or before September 21, 1959, who lived in England or Wales during the qualifying week of September 15-21, 2025. Value of payments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not get Pension Credit or another qualifying benefit, the payment is £100. If a person does get Pension Credit, the payment is £200 or £300 depending on their age (and if they live with others). Payments are made to households, but if a person's income is above £35,000, the payment will be clawed back by HMRC through their tax. When and how payment will be made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most eligible people will receive an automatic payment in their usual bank account in November or December 2025. They should receive a letter in October or November 2025 confirming the amount they will get and how it will be paid. 	Immediate (deadline 31 March 2026) Awareness for all staff supporting residents of qualifying age

Activity 2: Awareness		
	<p>Those who need to claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a person does not get the State Pension or another DWP benefit, or if they have deferred their State Pension. • The deadline for claiming the 2025-26 payment is March 31, 2026. • The claim form is available at GOV.UK. 	
	<p>Crisis and Resilience Fund - replacing HSF and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Announcement during the Spending Review 2025 on 11 June 2025 ○ Para 3.21: Cost of living: the government is providing direct assistance to families most at risk of poverty through the Healthy Start scheme, and establishing a new Crisis and Resilience Fund supported by £1 billion a year (including Barnett impact) through the SR period to replace the Household Support Fund <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance is expected to be released by December 2025 	Ongoing
2c) Liaison with internal teams	Purpose: Ensure awareness of support and related	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<p>Provide updates regarding changes to the team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arrange attendance at team meetings ○ Updating on HSF stages – launch, referral period, award period ○ Referral process for HSF and general support ○ Presentation of Food Support leaflets 	Ongoing

Activity 2: Awareness		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overview of outreach activities and areas within the district these are taking place <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at team meetings have taken place with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council Tax ○ Income Recovery (SKDC Rent Team) ○ Repairs ○ Housing 	
	<p>Spotlight session to be organised</p> <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team will undertake a 'Team Spotlight' introducing themselves to all members of TeamSK, advising of their role and support available to residents. 	September 2025

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
3a) Single Point of Contact	Purpose: Be the Single Point of Contact for Welfare and Financial Advice enquiries via the Welfare and Financial Advice email address	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Welfare email box to be set up: welfare@southkesteven.gov.uk	Complete
	Online referral form for Household Support Fund (for internal referrals from SKDC Officers and Members)	Complete
	Inclusion of W&FA Team in SKToday (Autumn edition) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An article was included in the Summer edition of SKToday 	Summer 2025
	All SKDC staff are aware of W&FA Team and how to contact	Ongoing (See action 2c)
	External support organisations are aware of W&FA Team and how to contact	Ongoing
3b) Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Group	Purpose: Actively contribute to the Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Group	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend and contribute to the quarterly meetings. Share any information to appropriate SKDC teams. Assist the organisers with the arrangements for the upcoming Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership Conference. 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
3c) Foodbanks	Purpose: Develop and maintain a positive relationship with all foodbanks across SKDC	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Visits to Foodbank Coordinators within the district to share ideas on how best to help clients. September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals are being made and received from the foodbanks. The service is much in demand and the team have noticed the impact of DWP no longer issuing vouchers for parcels. Various SKDC staff have been trained on the use of the voucher system so they are able to support the W&FA Team The Deepings Foodbank is moving location and is closed for the first 2 weeks of September. Discussions taking place between the Head of Service and the Community Engagement Manager regarding Foodbank funding 	Ongoing
	Actively seek referrals for clients that have used foodbanks that may benefit from additional financial advice.	Ongoing
3d) Warm Spaces	Purpose: Actively contribute to the Welcome Warm Spaces Working Group	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Attend and contribute to the meetings for actions relating to the warm spaces for 2025/26	Autumn 2025
	Visit warm spaces to offer Welfare and Financial Advice as part of outreach	Winter 2025

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	Actively share ideas with the working group to improve the 2025/26 warm spaces	Autumn/winter 2025
3e) Information sharing	Purpose: Develop and manage information sharing protocol between SKDC and Support Organisations / advice agencies	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<p>Develop and maintain relationships with support organisations by attending events, seminars and providing Welfare and Financial Advice updates / talks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team have undertaken visits to the following locations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Annes Church Stamford Foodbank Bourne Foodbank Grantham Foodbank (not face to face) St Georges – Stamford – SHEP Project & Cristians Against Poverty National Grief Charity Bhive Grantham Don't Lose Hope Café Bourne Library and customer service area Grantham JobCentre 	Ongoing
	Sharing information and ideas to improve delivery of service to our residents within the legal guidelines	Ongoing
	Attend community engagement events in the form of Welfare and Financial Advice Clinics in Library's, Jobcentres, children's centres.	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team have attended the following community engagement events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grantham Partnership meeting (monthly) Volunteering Everywhere (Dysart Park) 	
3f) Liaison	Purpose: Liaison with partners and external support organisations	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Maintain relationship with those already established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHS Neighbourhood and Wellbeing Teams Grantham Mental Health Partnership NACRO officers Foodbanks Bourne United Charities Bread & Butter Thing Grantham College Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Services Lincolnshire District Councils – Warm Packs 	Ongoing
	Meet with partners during 2025/26 to understand future support and explore opportunities to work together September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning is underway for the Winter Warm Packs, which will include a 'Homeless Pack' this year 	Ongoing

Activity 3: Proactive – internal and external		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team will be planning visits to the Warm Welcome Spaces across the district, promoting the advice and support which is available The location of the Welcome Warm Spaces can be found here, clicking on “Find a space”: Warm Welcome Campaign 	
	<p>Meet regularly with local Job Centre and DWP colleagues to discuss emerging issues and agree a joint up approach for support and potential resolution</p> <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with DWP taking place in September 2025 	Ongoing

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support						
4a) Warm Spaces	Purpose: Increase the number of warm welcome spaces across the district					
	Activities to be undertaken			Status		
	Liaison with Members, Parish Clerks and potential warm welcome spaces venues			October 2025		
4b) Digital Inclusion	Purpose: To increase digital support and inclusion for vulnerable and elderly residents					
	Activities to be undertaken			Status		
	Assisting residents with digital forms such as pension credit checks and discretionary housing payments September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none">To be promoted as part of National Customer Service Week (6-10 October 2025)			Ongoing		
4c) Community Outreach	Purpose: To ensure support can be provided across all towns within the district and where possible, rural areas					
	Activities to be undertaken			Status		
	Arrange events within the community at libraries, warm spaces, Children centres, jobcentres to offer budgeting skills, benefit checks and basic financial education i.e. pension credit checks: Bourne: <table><tr><td>Bourne Foodbank</td><td>2 North Road, Bourne, PE10 9AP</td><td>One to one</td></tr></table>			Bourne Foodbank	2 North Road, Bourne, PE10 9AP	One to one
Bourne Foodbank	2 North Road, Bourne, PE10 9AP	One to one				

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support						
		Don't Lose Hope	4 North Street, Bourne, Lincs. PE10 9EB.	One to one / preventative workshop		
		Bourne United Charity (AI Houses)	The Red Hall South Bourne	One to one		
		Len pick	5 Granby Court, Hereward Street, Bourne PE10 9AD	One to one		
		Salvation Army	5a Manning Road Bourne, PE01 9ET.	One to one / preventative workshop		
		Bread and Butter Thing	5a Manning Road Bourne, PE01 9ET.	One to one		
	Deepings:					
		Foodbank	63 Hereward Way, Deeping St James	One to one		
		The Green School Community Café	24 Church Street, Market Deeping, Lincolnshire, PE6 8DA,	One to one / preventative workshop		
		Bread and Butter Thing	Markt Deeping Scout and Guide Hall, Wellington Way, Deeping PE6 8LF.	One to one		

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

Open Door Baptist Church	5 Spalding Rd, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8NJ	One to one / preventative workshop
Community Centre	2 Douglas Rd, Peterborough PE6 8PA	One to one / preventative workshop
Deeping United Charity	38 Church Street, Deeping St. James, PE6 8HD	One to one
Age Concern	21 Tyghes Cl, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8NS	One to one
Odd Fellows	57 Church St, Market Deeping, Peterborough PE6 8AN	One to one
British Legion	The Goat Inn, Frognall, PE6 8SA	One to one

Grantham:

Jubilee Church	5 London Rd, Grantham NG31 6EY	One to one / preventative workshop
Alive Church	Castlegate, Grantham, NG31 6SQ	One to one / preventative workshop
Church Of Ascension	Harrowby Lane , Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support

		The Passage	Grantham Passage Resource Centre	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Bread and Butter	Harrowby United Football Club, 13 Dickens Road, Grantham, NG31 9QY	One to one	
		Bread and Butter	West Grantham Community Centre, Grantham	One to one	
		St Johns Church	Station Road East, Grantham	One to one	
		Job 22	High St Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Bhive	11a Finkin St, Grantham	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Grief Charity	The Malting , Warf Rd , Grantham	One to one	
	Stamford:				
		2nd Helping	Orion House, 11 Barn Hill, Stamford, PE9 2AE.	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Georges Hub -	St Augustine's School, Kesteven Road PE9 1SR	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Georges Hub -	Free church, Kesteven Road, Stamford, PE9 1SU	One to one / preventative workshop	

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support					
		Georges Hub -	Malcolm Sergeants School, Empingham Road, PE9 2SR	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Georges Hub -	St Georges School, Kesteven Road, Stamford, PE9 1SX	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Bread and Butter Thing	Christ Church, Green Lane, Stamford, PE9 1HE	One to one	
		SHEP	27-29 St George's Street, Stamford	One to one / preventative workshop	
		Stamford Market	Broad St, Stamford	One to one	
	Support the Housing Roadshow which will be taking place across the District September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27/08/25: Earlsfield Community Centre roadshow will be 10:00- 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 people attended None of them spoke to WFAT team One of the attendees Emma is following up with and will be advising about our team and the HSF 04/09/25: Manor Court Community Centre Bourne roadshow will be 10:00- 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 people attended The team spoke to one person – completed HB, CTS and HSF form 				Complete August & September 2025

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10/09/25: Edmonds Close Community Centre Stamford roadshow will be 10:00 -2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10 people attended ○ The team spoke to one person – completed HSF form and benefits calculator (with various actions arising from this) • 25/09/25: Deepings Community Centre Market Deeping roadshow will be 10:00 2:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Event has not taken place at the time of writing this report • 30/09/25: Greyfriars Community Centre Grantham roadshow will be 1:00-6:00 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Event has not taken place at the time of writing this report 	
4d) Furniture Aid	Purpose: Review ways to source assistance from other organisations to help residents in need of furniture	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	<p>Maintain relationships with charities and 3rd Party Organisations to continue to source grants to be able to assist help for residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percy Bilton • BBC Children in Need • Bourne United • Len Pick • Family Fund (advise only) <p>September 2025 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circa 30 grants of various levels of support have been • Action for next update: To provide a breakdown of the amount and type of support 	Ongoing

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
4e) New tenants	Purpose: To produce a new tenant Welfare and Financial Advice pack	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaise with Housing colleagues to ensure this complements the new tenant pack already given at sign up September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations have started to take place with Housing colleagues • The team are working on the Welfare & Financial Advice pack • This action will be extended to March 2026 	March 2026 (was September 2025)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting Advice / referrals to external organisations for new tenants (appropriate additional support to that being provided by SKDC Tenancy Services Team) • Tick list of key actions for new tenant / budgeting 	March 2026
4f) New residents	Purpose: To produce a new resident information pack (to include Welfare and Financial Advice)	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Include the same information as in the tenant pack	March 2026
	Welcome to SKDC information:	March 2026
4g) Leaflet of the support available	Purpose: Production of leaflets for each Town within the District to provide key food support information	

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Issue to Cabinet Member, Members and Parish Clerks for distribution	Completed
	Inclusion within Council Tax reminders September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the volume of reminders issued (between 600 and 1000 per month, it was felt the team may be overwhelmed with contact. • The decision was taken to review the information issued and reconsider either a targeted approach or issue general advice • This action has been amended to December 2025 	December 2025 (was July 2025)
	Inclusion within Council Tax summonses September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the volume of summonses issued (between 400 and 800 per month, it was felt the team may be overwhelmed with contact. • The decision was taken to review the information issued and reconsider either a targeted approach or issue general advice • This action has been amended to December 2025 	December 2025 (was July 2025)
	Inclusion within rent statements September 2025 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the volume of rent statements issued (up to 5,500 per quarter, it was felt the team may be overwhelmed with contact. • The decision was taken to review the information issued and reconsider either a targeted approach or issue general advice • This action has been amended to December 2025 	December 2025 (was July 2025)

Activity 4: Proactive – Resident Support		
	Inclusion on intranet and staff notice board	Ongoing
4h) Credits on rent accounts	Purpose: To be reviewed to maximise tenant income	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaise with Income Recovery Team Leader to ascertain those accounts with credit and contact the tenant to arrange refund or transfer	March 2026
4i) Credits on council tax accounts	Purpose: To be reviewed to maximise resident income	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Liaise with Business Rates and Council Tax Enforcement Team Leader to ascertain those accounts with credit and contact the resident to arrange refund or transfer	March 2026

Activity 5: Preventative		
5a) Consider the formation of a Welfare and Financial Advice Strategic Working Group	Purpose: To provide a collaborate cross-team approach to the welfare and financial issues facing our residents	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Invitations to be issued to relevant officers: W&FA Team, Communications, Community Engagement, Community Safety, Housing, Revenues & Benefits	December 2025
	To revisit the original key themes which were introduced by the original Cost of Living Strategic Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication ○ Food insecurity and poverty ○ Fuel & Energy Poverty ○ Financial – Benefits, Debt Support and Funding ○ Health & Wellbeing (inc Welcome Warm Spaces) ○ Prevention of homelessness ○ Skills, Employment & Businesses 	December 2025
	Produce a holistic action plan, with the inclusion of all relevant SKDC Teams	March 2026
5b) Consider budgeting workshops for residents	Purpose: Identify the specific financial challenges faced by attendees, such as debt, low income, or lack of financial literacy	
	Activities to be undertaken	Status
	Every day conversations with regards to general wrap around support, HSF application	Ongoing

Activity 5: Preventative		
	Liaison with relevant external organisations to discuss support in facilitating a budgeting workshop	March 2026
	Increase access to debt advice: Expand the reach of debt advice services to individuals facing financial difficulties, ensuring timely access to help and support	March 2026
	Emergency Assistance programmes: Provide financial assistance to those facing immediate financial hardship, such as food or housing support.	March 2026
	Welfare Benefit Support: Assist individuals in maximizing their welfare benefits and accessing other available support	March 2026



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

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

Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 - Action Plan

Report Author

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

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Purpose of Report

To introduce the Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 and subsequent action plan which will be presented to this committee every six months to ensure a commitment to supporting the delivery of the customer charter, priorities, and approach to customer experience across Council services.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

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

Decision Information

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

1. Implications

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

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are currently no direct budget implications associated in adopting this Strategy. Any future initiatives resulting in budgeting implications will be, in the first instance, managed within existing service area budgets. Where additional funding is required, this will be requested formally, taking the appropriate action.

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

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The implementation of the Strategy complies with all relevant regulations. Data protection measures will align with UK GDPR and Information Governance standards.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.3 The risk of the Strategy not driving change at a pace that matches the ambition of South Kesteven District Council will be mitigated through managed delivery and oversight of the Customer Experience Working Group, Senior Management and the Committee.
- 1.4 Digital inclusion – Digital literacy training via FAQs and help pages, accessible technology, and face to face support using self-serve desks in our Customer Service Centres.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.5 The Customer Experience Strategy has been developed to ensure services are provided equitably and the diversity of our customers is recognised, respected and valued.

- 1.6 The action plan will take a data driven approach to understand the needs of the Council's customers and equip employees with relevant training. The plan also sets out to better understand the various channels different groups need to access our services. The plan also explores where the Council can automate in some areas to allow more time for complex matters that require in person or telephone interaction with customer, so no one is digitally excluded.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

Human Resources

- 1.7 The strategy has been created in line with the People Strategy and has referenced several key areas where training and development will be needed. The HR team will work closely with the appropriate people to ensure any learning that is required and applicable in this Strategy will be carried out.

Completed by: Sam Fitt, Senior Human Resources Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The report presents the refreshed Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029 and associated action plan. The Council has made good progress over the last four years, since the implementation of the first Strategy, during which the Council faced challenges to customer contact as a result of Covid. The Council has invested significantly in a number of areas to improve its approach to customer service, such as with the development of the new website, the new Customer Service Centre in Grantham and online forms and portals.
- 2.2. The new Strategy was presented to Cabinet on 7 October 2025 and is included as **Appendix One**. The Strategy is intended to provide a framework for the continued development of the Council's customer focus in the coming years. The Strategy sets out the Council's plans to achieve its vision to improve the customer experience as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of its services. The Council will do this by providing excellent customer service, to all our customers (residents, businesses, partners, visitors and community groups), working with them to ensure that its services meet their needs and are inclusive and accessible for all.
- 2.3. The Strategy aligns with the Council commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to being an Effective Council. This report, and the adoption of the Customer Experience Strategy strives to deliver this priority. The Council ensures its services are digitally enabled and efficient to meet the expectations of this district's changing communities whilst not excluding those who are not yet digitally enabled. The

Strategy will also ensure that Council staff have the skills needed to drive the organisation forward to meet the changing expectations of our customers.

- 2.4. For the purpose of this Strategy, “customers” is used generically to describe residents, businesses, people who work in or visit the area, community groups, charities and partners working with the Council.

Customer Experience Steering Group

- 2.5. The Strategy has been developed with insight and support from all front-facing service areas, including IT (Digital Strategy) and HR (People Strategy). In Spring 2024, a Customer Experience Steering Group was established. This group consisted of a staff representative from each of the service areas.
- 2.6. The group was formed to ensure collaborative working on the Grantham Customer Service Centre, as well as the development of the Customer Experience consultation and subsequent Strategy.
- 2.7. The individuals in the group have now become Customer Experience champions for their service area. They will embed the Strategy within their teams, supporting the launch during National Customer Service Week (6 to 10 October 2025). They will ensure team members understand their responsibilities in delivering the actions within the customer charter, achieving the service standards and fulfilling the priorities – with the ultimate aim of ensuring the customer is at the heart of everything we do.

Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029

- 2.8. The Council and Customer Service Team believe our customers should be at the heart of all we do. Knowing our customers, getting feedback, taking this on board to improve services and moving forward with technology is vital in building a forward-looking Customer Experience Strategy.
- 2.9. Attached at Appendix A is the Strategy which provides a single corporate document that outlines the Council’s vision and ensures point of reference, accountability and governance to a Council-wide approach to customer experience.
- 2.10. The Strategy sets out the vision, priorities and approach for delivering an efficient and effective customer experience across the Council, working together to ensure consistency.
- 2.11. In implementing this Strategy, **our core priorities** are as follows (these are expanded on within the full Strategy document):

- Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos
 - Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels
 - Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion
 - Priority 4: Regular staff training
 - Priority 5: Technology
- 2.12. The Strategy also sets out the **Customer Charter** which defines the Council's responsibility to our customers, as well as what we would like from our customers. These responsibilities are linked to the priorities. The charter has been developed as a direct result of the consultation and they set out the Council's promise as to how we will deliver high quality services whilst enabling us to meet our customers' expectations.
- 2.13. **Service Standards** featured within the feedback to the consultation, with customers asking the Council to introduce these – for the corporate contact centre and each of its service areas. The Strategy includes both operational standards and performance indicators.
- 2.14. This Strategy enables the Council to move away from 'customer services' being seen as the responsibility of a single team or department. Instead, it recognises the importance of 'Customer Service' as a culture for the whole organisation to implement, embed and achieve the overall goal to connect all objectives with the five priorities to improve customer experience and operational efficiency.
- 2.15. The Strategy ensures all services and staff provide an effective and positive customer experience who are aware of and understand their responsibilities in fulfilling the Customer Charter, Service Standards, Priorities and Vision to a high level.

Action Plan 2025 to 2029

- 2.16. An action plan has been developed which will support the Strategy and its priorities – this is detailed in **Appendix Two**.
- 2.17. The plan focusses on Year 1 (October 2025 to 31 March 2026) – which covers the 'Explore' activities. The activities for 2026/27 and beyond will move from Explore to Implement, with a new action plan being devised for this period. These activities will be appropriately linked to relevant Service Plans, staff appraisals and will detail financial implications of proposed actions.
- 2.18. The Customer Service Management Team will be responsible for the strategic direction of the action plan, collaborating with the Customer Experience Steering Group who will have oversight of the Strategy to enable effective co-ordination of delivery of the actions.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Improving customer experience is a key area of focus for South Kesteven District Council. A significant amount of work has taken place across all front-facing services who interact with customers within the District.
- 3.2. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure interactions with customers are of a consistently high standard and placing our customers at the heart of everything the Council does.
- 3.3. The Strategy also sets the direction for how Council employees will interact with customers, as well as emphasising the importance of the Council's values and behaviours.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 The action plan forms part of the Strategy, which is an overarching document, developed by the Customer Service Management team, with the support of the Customer Experience Steering Group and engagement with customers and local stakeholders. It provides a framework, objectives and standards to further develop a consistent approach across Council services.
- 4.2 The action plan demonstrates a clear commitment to the activities required to achieve shared objectives across teams to improving the service and engagement with our 'customers'.
- 4.3 The recommendation is therefore made to ensure Members are aware of the development and intended implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy and it's action plan and to offer opportunity for feedback.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix One: Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029
- 5.2 Appendix Two: Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 – action plan

Customer Experience Strategy

2025-
2029



SOUTH
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COUNCIL

Foreword

“Here at South Kesteven District Council, our customers are at the heart of what we do. This might be face-to-face assistance at our dedicated customer service points, when people get in touch directly by phone or email, if our tenants need guidance at their council property or sheltered accommodation – or simply how we relate to businesses, customers and community groups during the normal course of our work.

A great customer experience doesn't just happen though.

Everyone in our organisation must understand their role, responsibility and accountability. This results in a culture that takes customers' needs and satisfaction into account during all of our decision making, strategy development and action across all departments.

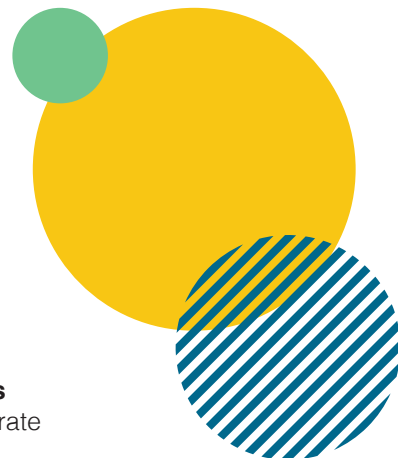
We therefore have training and guidance – and now this overarching strategy, a document created after consulting with you, the public.

It sets out our ambitions, as well as our priorities to develop and improve as we move forward.

We always welcome feedback on all of your interactions with the SKDC, and our contact details are on the back page.”



Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing



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Introduction

The strategy supports Priority 5 in our Corporate Plan: Effective Council. The mission for this priority in the corporate plan is:

“to deliver trusted high quality and value-for-money services that fulfil the needs and expectations of all our residents”

The ambitions within this priority, which will be incorporated into our strategy are to:

- **Provide excellent, value-for-money and financially sustainable services**
- **Actively and effectively engage with and listen to our residents, placing their needs and concerns at the heart of everything we do**
- **Through #TEAMSK retain a highly skilled, empowered, motivated and professional workforce**

Where we are now

We know that to improve our customers experience, we need to be honest and look at the way the service is currently provided, and how we can move forward to make positive changes for the Council and its customers.

In doing this, we have looked at the culture of the organisation, the way in which we use data and the technology currently available across multiple service areas.

We want to be able to positively move forward and make improvements in these three key areas, as well as making sure we understand our customers and their needs.

What this means for our strategy

We understand customers expect a more seamless, transparent, and responsive service.

By reviewing and refreshing our Customer Experience Strategy, the Council has an opportunity and responsibility to transform how we engage with

our customers. This is the first step in ensuring we adopt a customer focused approach for our front facing service areas, which will evolve to meet the needs of the people we serve.

Our Customer Experience Strategy is designed to place the customer at the heart of everything we do, aligning people, processes and technology to deliver consistent, personalised, and meaningful interactions across all channels.

This strategy reflects our commitment to improving every interaction between the Council and our customers – whether it is accessing services online, visiting our customer service centres, paying a bill, or requesting support. It recognises that customers are not just service users but valued businesses and residents in our district whose feedback, satisfaction, and trust are essential to building positive relationships.

Finally, this strategy provides a clear roadmap for understanding and anticipating customer needs and improving satisfaction.

Key objectives of this strategy:

- **Customers are at the heart of our service:** Embedding a mindset of empathy, respect and accountability throughout our organisation, ensuring every staff member understands their role in delivering excellent service.
- **Service Accessibility & Inclusion:** Ensuring equitable access to government services for all customers, regardless of language, ability or digital literacy.
- **Improved Service Design:** Using customer feedback, data and journey mapping to streamline services and design experiences that are simple, timely and intuitive.
- **Multi-channel access:** Providing consistent and high-quality service across in-person, phone, digital and community channels—meeting customers needs wherever they are.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Measuring satisfaction, identifying service gaps and using these insights to continually refine our approach and respond proactively to community needs.

Consultation

The Council and Customer Service Team believe our customers should be at the heart of all we do. Knowing our customers, getting feedback, taking this on board to improve services and moving forward with technology is vital in building a forward looking Customer Experience Strategy.

A consultation took place between 10 March 2025 and 7 April 2025, with a variety of stakeholders.

Who we consulted with

- ✓ Customers who contacted the Council via Customer Services
- ✓ Customers who contacted service areas within the Council directly i.e. not via Customer Services
- ✓ Other organisations that contacted SKDC
- ✓ Those who do not contact the Council
- ✓ Local businesses
- ✓ Community and Voluntary Groups
- ✓ #TeamSK (SKDC staff)
- ✓ Other service areas in the Council

The purpose of the consultation – To inform the Customer Experience Strategy. To:

- ✓ Find out how people contact SKDC, why they contact us and how often
- ✓ Establish what is important to people when contacting us
- ✓ Understand what is most in need of improvement
- ✓ Use this information to draw up SKDC's Customer Charter/Commitments and also what the Council expects from customers (SKDC's Expectations of its Customers)
- ✓ Measure the degree of support for the strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes

The results of the consultation

- Feedback received from those contacting Customer Services and service areas directly
- Efficiency, availability, knowledge and being kept informed identified as key concepts
- 80.2% of respondents agreed with the ambitions of the strategy
- 90.8% of respondents agreed with the outcomes in the strategy
- Automation and use of AI embraced by some respondents. Others keen that Council continue to interact directly with its customers - particularly those from vulnerable communities

Outcomes of the consultation

- ✓ Development of a Customer Charter – for both Council staff and customers
- ✓ Development of Service Standards across all public facing service areas
- ✓ Identification of areas for improvement, with subsequent action plan
- ✓ Embed Customer Experience Vision 2025 to 2029



How we currently operate

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

Both Bourne and Grantham Customer Service Centres provide face to face support. In addition, both centres also have self-service kiosks where customers can be supported by our experienced Customer Service Advisors. The kiosks enable access to a range of online services – all of which are detailed at the end of this strategy.

We use a wide range of IT systems to deliver our services. This means that our staff interpret information in a range of formats and often only get a partial view of the customers circumstances. This limits the customer's overall experience. Not all of our systems can facilitate the type of interactions that we now see as commonplace, such as sending a text message

update to a customer. We often have to join systems together to achieve the outcomes that the customer expects. This can be costly and time consuming.

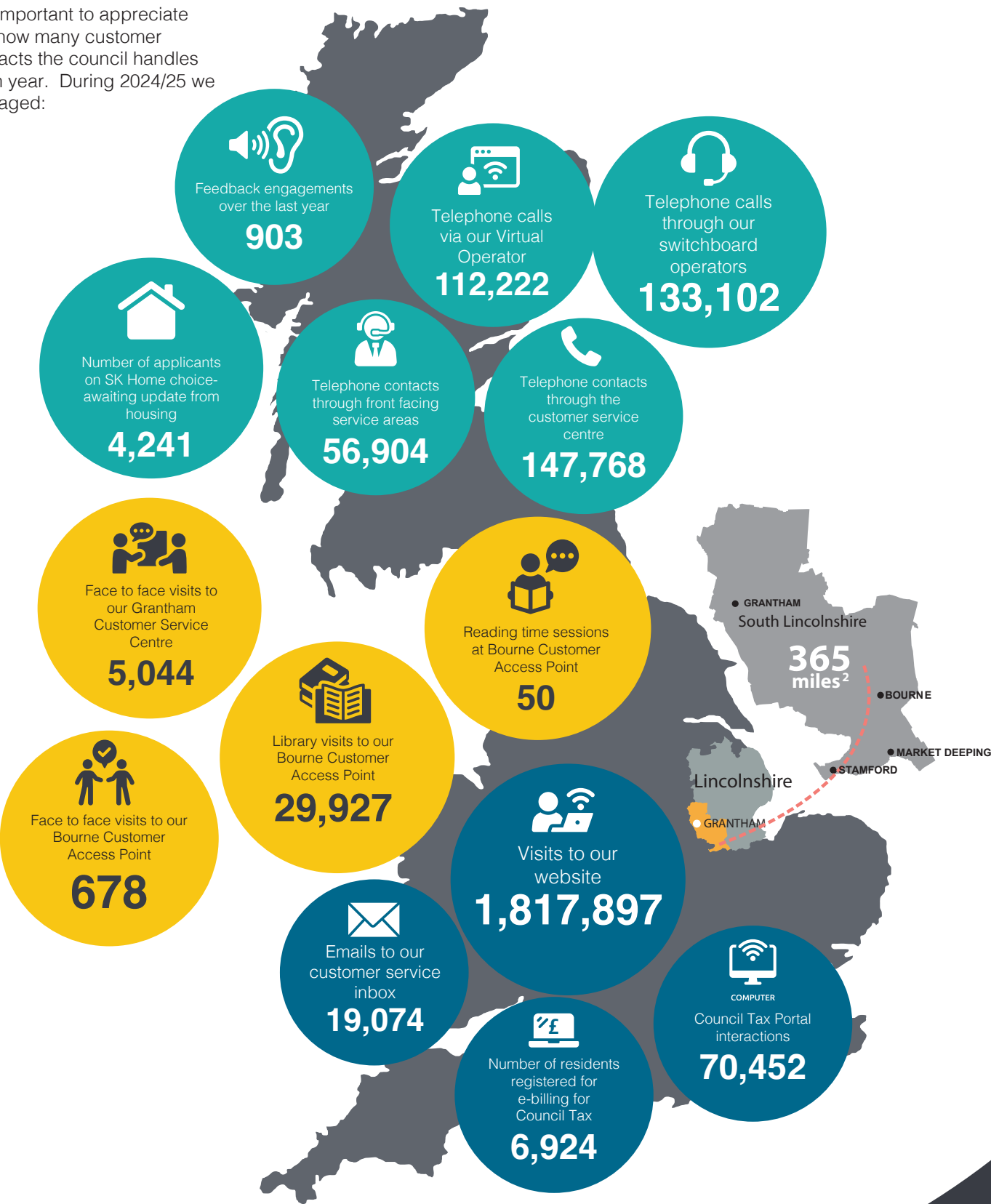
However, there are over 150 forms online which help customers to transact with us at any time of day or night. Some of these are joined to automated back office processes which enable prompt processing of work, or responses to enquiries. This is continuously being reviewed and improved to extend this further.

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



Our Service in Numbers

It is important to appreciate just how many customer contacts the council handles each year. During 2024/25 we managed:



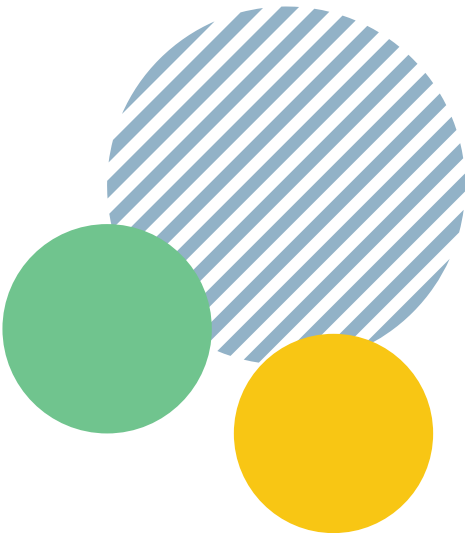
Alignment across the organisation

We believe that when we put customers at the heart of every decision, we create a lasting impact. That's why we're committed to working together across teams and departments — breaking down silos, sharing ideas, and aligning our efforts — to bring our corporate priorities to life in a way that truly serves the people who matter most: our customers.

Together, we're building a future shaped by empathy, innovation, and a relentless focus on delivering exceptional experiences.

Crucial to achieving this is showing we understand the powerful links between our customer experience ambitions and our wider corporate strategies.

By clearly connecting the dots between what we want to achieve for our customers and what we want to achieve as an organisation, we create momentum, focus, and purpose. This alignment ensures every action we take contributes to a stronger, more connected experience — for our customers and our people. Those strategies which are linked are:



Communities Strategy	ICT Strategy	Information Governance & Compliance	People Strategy
Working together to ensure community and customer initiatives effectively address the needs of both individuals and groups	Making information and services more accessible to all customers	Ensure customer initiatives comply with governance standards and legislation to safeguard customer data	Support empowerment by developing skills, evolving training programs and supporting continuous learning so people are empowered to excel in their roles
Ensuring our most vulnerable customers can access the services they need	Improving our services to make better use of time for both our customers and staff	Respecting customer trust by ensuring data us used ethically and responsibly across all our services	Develop the aims and objectives of the Customer Experience Working group
South Kesteven District Council Customer Experience Strategy			

Vision 2025 to 2029

Our vision is split into key themes which, combined, will improve customer experience as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. The Customer Experience Strategy will be implemented by each service area within the council to achieve our overall goal to connect all objectives within the five priorities as they are designed to work together to achieve the improvement of customer experience and operational efficiency.

Our Vision Statement

"To offer great customer experiences for residents, businesses and the wider community by putting them at the heart of everything we do"

In implementing this strategy, our core priorities will be:

Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos

Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels

Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion

Priority 4: Regular staff training

Priority 5: Technology

An action plan will be developed for each priority, which will be endorsed by Senior Management and Members. The action plan will be monitored by our Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and will form part of future service planning.



Customer Charter:

Our responsibilities to our customers

The Council is committed to ensuring that our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We have developed a Customer Charter as a result of the public consultation feedback, SKDC Service Area and Member workshops. This sets our promise to how we will deliver high quality services for our customers and the service standards we will provide which enable us to meet their expectations.

Our responsibilities are to:



Customer Charter:

What we would like from our customers

To help us provide a good service, we ask our customers to:

01

Treat our staff with respect and courtesy: We are committed to treating customers with professionalism and courtesy, in return we ask that our customers treat the staff member handling their enquiry with respect and courtesy at all times.

02

Provide requested information promptly and accurately: Ensure all information is delivered to us on time and in the correct format as requested. For efficiency, we rely on our customers to provide complete and accurate information.

03

Notify the Council of changes promptly: Let the Council know as soon as possible if personal circumstances or service requirements change.

04

Understand the impact of a delay: If information is not provided as requested, this could hinder or delay our decision making.

05

Use digital services where possible: Make use of the Council's website and online portals to access services and information, especially during peak periods or outside of standard hours

06

Engage positively and give honest and constructive feedback: Provide honest and constructive feedback to help the Council understand how services can be improved. Communication should be in a constructive and respectful manner, especially when raising concerns or giving feedback.

Service Standards

To ensure that the customer experience is consistent across SKDC, it would like to introduce service standards for the corporate contact centre and each of its service areas.

Operational Standards

By implementing operational service standards, we will be able to

- Ensure ways of working which are focussed on delivering a positive experience for our customers
- Improve customer satisfaction levels, reduce complaints and create a trusted customer contact process
- Ensure our staff have the tools available to them to achieve the best level of customer service as possible

Performance Indicators

We will monitor and report on the following:

Indicator	What we will do with this information
Number of calls offered	We will monitor peaks and troughs in call volumes throughout the day / week
	Where possible, staffing levels will be reviewed to complement peak activities
Number of calls answered	A service level of 80% of calls to be answered will be set for all initial calls being handled by the customer service team
	Where this is not reached, we will review the available data to understand whether the call was re-routed to a different channel – such as email, online or in person
Number and type of actions undertaken in response to website feedback	To understand how technology is being used by customers to engage with the Council
	To provide assurance that feedback is important, and where possible, actions are taken to improve the customers online journey
Number of days to respond to feedback and understand resolutions times	To provide assurance that feedback is important, and that lessons are learnt and implemented from all feedback
Undertake regular customer satisfaction surveys	Results will be analysed, and the Council will consider appropriate actions to make improvements
Continue staff working group meetings	To ensure all service areas are aware of their responsibilities within this strategy.

Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos

Our commitment:

- To ensure customers are advised when their enquiry is passed on to another member of the team or service area for resolution

Purpose:

- We will ensure that the customer voice is central to our decision making when we look at how our services are designed in the future. We'll also share learning and best practice across the organisation.
- To be transparent and keep residents informed throughout their customer journey. Being clear, respectful and responding in a timely manner.

2029 Outcomes:

The Customer Service management team will:

- Work with service areas to continually review the customer journey, measuring, monitoring and providing feedback regarding performance against service standards
- Embed existing customer champions across service areas, which will be linked to the launch of the strategy
- Produce a clear handover of communication between teams when transferring enquiries and expectations on response times.
- Set a standard of communication within teams.
- Ensure consistency of messaging via phone, email, online form or in person.
- Implement Training and development plans to respond to feedback and improve our offer
- Embed the customer voice into our performance appraisals across the authority



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Priority 2: **Access to multiple service channels**

Our commitment:

- Ensure customers have access to multiple service channels to support their needs and type of enquiry

Purpose:

- To enable customers to choose their preferred communication channel at every touchpoint.

2029 Outcomes:

- Each of our processes will continue to be reviewed in detail, and where necessary, remodelled to support digital interactions in the future.
- Focus on the core channels our customers prefer
- The customer will get an improved outcome and will have greater choice in how to access a service
- The council will see lower operating costs through greater levels of automation and a reduction in repeat contacts from customers.



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Priority 3: **Accessibility and Inclusion**

Our commitment:

- We will ensure our services are accessible and inclusive for everyone regardless of ability, background, or circumstance

Purpose:

- To comply with legal requirements and a commitment to supporting all customers equitably.

2029 Outcomes:

- We will aim to identify any and all barriers to accessing our services (e.g language, literacy, digital inclusion), reducing these through continued working across all teams
- 100% of our staff to receive training in accessibility and continuous learning in this area to increase staff confidence and capability
- Satisfaction scores from consultation with groups who may have previously experienced inaccessibility will be improved.



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion

73



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Priority 4: Regular staff training

Our commitment:

- We will ensure our staff receive regular training to enable them to respond to enquiries with accurate information

Purpose:

- To ensure all staff have knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver excellent customer service across all service areas.
- To stay current with changes in policy and procedure and service area updates.
- Our aim is to support all residents effectively across all contact channels.

2029 Outcomes:

- Development of staff learning plans to increase staff confidence through training
- Develop our knowledge-base for use by customers, staff and virtual assistants
- Training to better improve staff understanding and response to feedback
- Embedding a learning culture about customer service across our teams



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Priority 5: Technology

Our commitment:

- To review the provision of technology to improve services – such as customer contact, keeping customers up to date with progress of enquiries, website information

Purpose:

- To provide user friendly technology that enhances the customer experience and improves efficiency to access services. We want to ensure our customers can easily access information and services when and how they need to via our website, online portals, telephones and offices.
- Technological advancements are moving faster than ever and have a significant impact on customer expectations. There is no such thing as standing still. If we don't invest then in reality our services will be going backwards and won't be moving at the pace our customers expect. We need to fundamentally review the type and configuration of technologies used to deliver services across each channel

2029 Outcomes:

- Evaluate and consider the procurement and implementation of a new digital engagement / CRM platform
- Evaluate the deployment of new booking solutions to provide greater customer choice, independence and automation
- Evaluate deployment of chat technologies, including chatbots in high volume, repetitive environments
- Continue to improve digital access - 24/7, portals, online forms, support in offices for the less digitally confident.
- Ensure fast efficient updates through online portals, phone system, online, text message.
- Procure and deploy a new phone system.
- Continued development of our website – using feedback and improvements to our web pages from customer engagement. Also identifying gaps in our online information and updating regularly



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Welcome to my SK

Online Processes include

Look for it
Apply for it
Pay for it
Report it

Waste

- Assisted collection
- Bins & Bags
- Bulky waste collection
- Clinical waste (sharps box)
- Garden waste scheme
- Missed bin

Streetscene

- Dead animals
- Dog fouling
- Litter
- Overflowing / damaged litter bin

Housing

- Apply to carry out alterations and improvements
- Apply to rent a garage
- Assisted Garden Maintenance scheme
- Housing update form
- Mutual Exchange application
- Request a repair
- SK Homechoice

Licensing

- Animal boarding licence
- Charity house to house collection
- Charity street collection
- Dangerous wild animal licence
- Dog breeding licence
- Gambling licence
- Lottery licence
- Personal licence
- Pet shop licence
- Premise licence
- Private hire operator's licence
- Riding establishment licence
- Street trading licence
- Taxi vehicle licence
- Temporary events notice
- Transfer a premise licence
- Vary a designated premise supervisor

Neighbourhoods

- Abandoned vehicles
- Flytipping
- Fly posting
- Garden bonfires
- Graffiti Noise
- Untidy garden or land



Welcome to my SK

Online Processes

Look for it
Apply for it
Pay for it
Report it

Revenues & Benefits

- Benefits & Council Tax Support
- Discretionary Housing payment
- Move in
- Move out
- Move within
- Residential care
- Single occupancy
- Student discount
- Unoccupied & unfurnished

Environmental Health

- Food, Health & Safety enquiries & complaints
- Registering a food business
- Report a stray dog

Planning

- Apply for planning permission
- Apply for street naming and numbering
- Building regulation approval
- Local land charges search

Other Services

- Other Services
- Freedom of Information requests
- Pay for a parking fine
- Register to Vote
- Report a broken streetlight
- Stamford residents permit scheme





SOUTH
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Contact Details

South Kesteven District Council
01476 40 60 80

 **www.southkesteven.gov.uk**

**Alternative formats are available on
request: audio, large print and Braille**

Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 – Action Plan

The Customer Experience Strategy is underpinned by an action plan that runs from 2025 until 2029.

The action plan currently focusses on Year 1 of the strategy (October 2025 to 31 March 2026) – which are the “Explore” activities.

The activities for 2026/27 and beyond will move from Explore to Implement, with a new action plan being devised for this period. These activities will be appropriately linked to relevant Service Plans and staff appraisals

Each action will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis through the performance framework and ongoing customer consultation and engagement to ensure it meets current needs and is developed further to accommodate future requirements.

Priority 1	Our commitment to a customer first ethos
Priority 2	Access to multiple service channels
Priority 3	Accessibility and Inclusion
Priority 4	Regular staff training
Priority 5	Technology

Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos

Our commitment:

To ensure customers are advised when their enquiry is passed on to another member of the team or service area for resolution

Purpose:

We will ensure that the customer voice is central to our decision making when we look at how our services are designed in the future. We'll also share learning and best practice across the organisation.

To be transparent and keep residents informed throughout their customer journey. Being clear, respectful and responding in a timely manner.

Priority 1: Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 1: Work with service areas to continually review the customer journey, measuring, monitoring and providing feedback regarding performance against service standards	Review service area feedback with the relevant Customer Experience Champions; focussing on the feedback provided, query resolution and any remaining actions	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Monthly performance clinic meetings between the Performance and Customer Improvement Lead and service areas to continue, with focus on the Customer Charter, Service Standards and action plan	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Monitor peaks and troughs in customer interactions throughout the day / week and respond to these accordingly to ensure a high level of service is provided	Daily	31 March 2026	
	Monitor call handling against the 80% service level standard for calls being handled by the Customer Service Team respond to these accordingly to ensure 80% call handling is maintained	Monthly	31 March 2026	

Priority 1: Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 2: Embed existing customer champions across service areas, which will be linked to the launch of the strategy	Initial meeting with the Customer Experience Champions to introduce them to the Customer Experience Strategy, Customer Charter, Service Standards and action plan	One off	30 October 2025	
	Meet regularly with the Customer Experience Champions to embed the above and received feedback regarding actions being undertaken within their teams	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Undertake regular customer satisfaction surveys through a variety of methods	Every 6 months	30 December 2025	
	Undertake exit satisfaction surveys for customers visit the Bourne and Grantham Customer Service Centres	Daily	31 March 2026	
Outcome 3: Produce a clear handover of communication between teams when transferring enquiries and expectations on response times	Awareness to all staff: Information regarding handover to be clearly recorded on relevant software system	One off	30 October 2025	
	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Awareness to all staff: When handing over a communication, that they are to update the customer as to who it is being handed to (officers name and department) and why	One off	30 October 2025	
	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	
Outcome 4: Set a standard of communication within teams	Awareness to all staff: Out of office notifications to be standardised across all teams, providing the customer with key information such as date of return and who to contact in the officers absence	One off	30 October 2025	

Priority 1: Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
82	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Voicemail training to be provided to all staff; to ensure customer are able to leave a message and know this will be picked up and listened to, with the appropriate action being undertaken	One off	30 October 2025	
	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Ensuring the corporate feedback system is used correctly and understood by all service areas – how to record feedback, how to use the feedback system, responding to feedback and analysing information to improve services	One off	30 November 2025	
	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	
Outcome 5: Ensure consistency of messaging via phone, email, online form or in person. Implement Training and development plans to respond to feedback and improve our offer. Embed the customer voice into our performance appraisals across the authority	Undertake a review of supporting documents relating to telephone, email and online to ensure consistent information is provided	Quarterly	30 November 2025	
	Inclusion of Customer Charter and Service Standards in appraisal process to ensure requirements are understood and training needs identified	Annual	28 February 2026	
	Review training and development in line with front facing needs – such as handling difficult situations and managing difficult conversations	Quarterly	30 November 2025	

Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels
Our commitment:

Ensure customers have access to multiple service channels to support their needs and type of enquiry.

Purpose:

To enable customers to choose their preferred communication channel at every touchpoint.

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 1: Each of our processes will continue to be reviewed in detail, and where necessary, remodelled to support digital interactions in the future	Ensure customers have access to multiple service channels to support their needs and type of enquiry	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Where possible, staffing levels will be reviewed to complement peak activities	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Analyse the data available to understand whether service channel access needs to be reviewed	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Discuss with service area Customer Experience Champions to review processes and potential remodelling other methods of interaction	One off	November 2025	
Outcome 2: Focus on the core channels our customers prefer	Encourage customers to notify the council of changes promptly so we can respond to this change in a positive way	Monthly	31 March 2026	
Outcome 3: The customer will get an improved	Review access channel use for service areas – most / least used, at what time of day is the service access and how	One off	January 2026	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
outcome and will have greater choice in how to access a service	Active promotion of all service channels available to customers for each of the service areas – highlighting the benefits of each service channel	One off	November 2025	
	Ongoing promotion of service area channels (once appropriate method has been identified)	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Provide visual information to customers which shows busy / quiet periods – day of the week and hour of the day	Monthly	December 2025	
Outcome 4: The council will see lower operating costs through greater levels of automation and a reduction in repeat contacts from customers.	Activities link to Priority 5: Technology			

Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion

Our commitment:

We will ensure our services are accessible and inclusive for everyone regardless of ability, background, or circumstance.

Purpose:

To comply with legal requirements and a commitment to supporting all customers equitably.

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 1: We will aim to identify any and all barriers to accessing our services (e.g language, literacy, digital inclusion), reducing these through continued working across all teams	To undertake activities which ensures all those involved understand accessibility is not just about place – but always about people	Immediate	31 March 2026	
	Customer Service section on SKDC website to include all relevant information regarding people and place accessibility and inclusion	Immediate	November 2025	
	Promotion and advertising of translation service on request of any document (except a form)	Every 6 months	December 2025	
	Consider (with relevant service areas) providing easy read versions of documents / advice / instructions for those customers who have limited literacy, whose first language is not English	Every 6 months	January 2026	
	Review of feedback and demand as to whether outreach is needed within Deepings and Stamford.	Every 6 months	January 2026	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
86	Review accessibility for people who are deaf and hearing impaired – such as hearing loop and text relay.	Immediate	November 2025	
	Ensuring we include within our location on the website that both Customer Service Centres can be access on one level	Immediate	October 2025	
	Ensure all staff are aware of “Language line” and how to use this service	Immediate	October 2025	
	Liaise with SKDC IT Team and external provider to undertake a review of Website accessibility	Every 6 months	December 2025	
	All service areas to work together to understand what the needs of our vulnerable customers are. To be undertaken up as part of the regular meetings with Customer Experience Champions	Quarterly	31 March 2026	
	Liaison with third sector support organisations to better understand the barriers customers have when accessing our services	Ongoing	31 March 2026	
Outcome 2: 100% of our staff to receive training in accessibility and continuous learning in this area to increase staff confidence and capability	To ensure all staff are aware of the support available in Outcome 1	Ongoing	31 March 2026	
	Liaise with HR to explore the potential of customer facing (front-line) staff being trained in disability awareness - not just physical disabilities – but to also include insights into neurodivergent conditions, dementia, mental health etc	Immediate	November 2025	
	Liaise with HR to explore the potential of customer facing (front-line) staff receiving British Sign Language training	Immediate	November 2025	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 3: Satisfaction scores from consultation with groups who may have previously experienced inaccessibility will be improved	Introduce exit surveys at Bourne and Grantham Customer Service Centres	Immediate	December 2025	
	Work with our Community Engagement Team colleagues to ensure we engage appropriate. The team have contacts for groups that work with people with varying disabilities and also those who work with people whose first language isn't English.	As required	Ongoing	
	To work with the Community Engagement Team to ensure in person consultation is considered with those groups who support the people whose first language is not English. The consultation could form part of the feedback process from any interaction.	As required	Ongoing	
	Ensure service areas act on responses from consultation & feedback and publicise the outcomes / changes. It is important customer know that something has changes as a result.	Quarterly	31 March 2026	

Priority 4: Regular staff training**Our commitment:**

We will ensure our staff receive regular training to enable them to respond to enquiries with accurate information.

Purpose:

To ensure all staff have knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver excellent customer service across all service areas.

To stay current with changes in policy and procedure and service area updates.

Our aim is to support all residents effectively across all contact channels.

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 1: Development of staff learning plans to increase staff confidence through training	Ensure relevant staff training is identified through the appraisal and 1-1 processes (2025 appraisals)	One off	30 October 2025	
	Review of current training needs and ensure our staff receive regular training to enable them to respond to enquiries with accurate information	Quarterly	31 December 2026	
Outcome 2: Develop our knowledge-base for use by customers, staff and virtual assistants	Performance and Change Improvement Lead to liaise with service areas as part of monthly performance clinics to identify gaps in information, to produce FAQs online and consider these activities as part of developing Virtual Assistants (see technology action)	Monthly	31 March 2026	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 3: Training to better improve staff understanding and response to feedback	Monitor customer feedback through variety of methods: We have asked customers to engage positively and give honest & constructive feedback to help the Council understand how services can be improved.	Monthly	31 March 2026	
	Provide relevant training as a direct result of the feedback from our customers			
Outcome 4: Embedding a learning culture about customer service across our teams	Ensure all services are aware of their responsibilities within this strategy – customer service is an ethos, a culture, not just one team	One off	30 October 2025	
	Regular review of above activity to ensure actions are being undertaken as required	Monthly	31 March 2026	

Priority 5: Technology**Our commitment:**

To review the provision of technology to improve services – such as customer contact, keeping customers up to date with progress of enquiries, website information.

Purpose:

To provide user friendly technology that enhances the customer experience and improves efficiency to access services. We want to ensure our customers can easily access information and services when and how they need to via our website, online portals, telephones and offices.

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

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
Outcome 1: Evaluate and consider the procurement and implementation of a new digital engagement / CRM platform	<p>Meet with other Councils to understand what digital engagement / CRM platforms are used to understand the capabilities and benefits</p> <p>Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2</p>	One off	31 March 2026	
Outcome 2: Evaluate the deployment of new booking solutions to provide greater customer choice,	<p>Explore the technology which is currently available to us (if new technology if needed) to enable customers to undertake self-booking</p> <p>Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2</p>	One off	31 March 2026	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
independence and automation	Review use of desk bookings by service areas to understand whether this is officer or customer led. To review improvements to ensure the contact channel is known to all staff and customers and is being used to its full potential	One off	30 November 2025	
Outcome 3: Evaluate deployment of chat technologies, including chatbots in high volume, repetitive environments	Research to be undertaken to understand how technology is being used by our customers to engage with the Council – platforms for access etc Meet with other Councils who are using this technology to understand the objectives they have set, whether these are being met and the outcomes from deployment of the technology Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2	One off	31 March 2026	
	Telephone system – text message and chat bot Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2	One off	31 March 2026	
Outcome 4: Continue to improve digital access - 24/7, portals, online forms, support in offices for the less digitally confident	Promotion of online and self service portals during National Customer Service Week (6 to 10 October 2025)	One off	6 to 10 October 2025	
	Review existing online / feedback – working with service areas to review specific customer feedback to ensure digital access continues to be developed and relevant technology is considered to move the Council forward Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2	One off	31 March 2026	

Activities to be undertaken		Frequency	Deadline	Status
	<p>Work with Third Sector organisations to understand the technological barriers faced by residents of South Kesteven</p> <p>Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2</p>	One off	31 March 2026	
Outcome 5: Ensure fast efficient updates through online portals, phone system, online, text message	<p>Review available technology can provide proactive messaging to customers.</p> <p>Where existing technology is not available, consider alternative requirements.</p> <p>Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2</p>	One off	31 March 2026	
Outcome 6: Procure and deploy a new telephone system (September 2026)	<p>Review the specific improvement requirements for new telephone system (replacement in September 2026) and include in tender specification</p> <p>Outcome will determine next steps and activities for Year 2</p>	One off	November 2025	
Outcome 7: Continued development of our website – using feedback and improvements to our web pages from customer engagement. Also identifying gaps in our online information and update regularly	Review resources available to undertake activities directly associated to the website; co-ordination of web champion, regular review of website content, liaison with service areas for improvement, review of customer feedback	One off	October 2025	
	Continue to monitor monthly website feedback and report improvement requirements to service areas	Monthly	31 March 2026	



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for Finance, HR and Economic
Development

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement 2024/25

Report Author

Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

✉ carol.drury@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the obligations regarding publication of equality information and to allow Members to consider the draft 2024/25 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the 2024/25 draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement and offer comment on the content.**
- 2. Recommend the Leader of the Council publishes this information at the earliest opportunity.**

Decision Information

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

1. Implications

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

Finance and Procurement

1.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2. The public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) came into force in 2011. The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

1.3. The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations. The specific duties require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty and to set equality objectives.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

1.4. The requirement to publish equality information must be met at least annually. This helps to ensure the information published is up-to-date and relevant. The benefits of collecting, using and publishing robust equality information include:

- helping to identify equality challenges so these can be addressed

- having relevant data to enable decision-makers to fully understand how their policies and decisions impact on people with different protected characteristics, including outcomes of individuals
- finding ways to mitigate any adverse impact identified
- maximising opportunities for advancing equality and fostering good relations
- enabling the setting of equality objectives based on robust evidence of the key challenges for staff and service users
- having baseline data available for measuring progress in delivering equality objectives, so improving outcomes for individuals with projected characteristics.

1.5. The benefits to employees and services users include:

- greater transparency about the Council's equality performance regarding employment and service delivery
- Helping them to understand the rationale behind difficult decisions being taken by the Council
- Enabling them to hold the Council to account for its performance on equality.

1.6. Equality impact is identified through the production of this document. In producing this document, the Council can identify potential areas of workforce under representation and highlight good practice. The Annual Position Statement aims to improve awareness of equality responsibilities and further embed those responsibilities within the Council's working practices.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. Tackling inequality, challenging discrimination, promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity will help the Council achieve its vision to be a "thriving district in which to live, work and visit". The Council's Corporate Plan (2024-2027) underpins our commitment to equalities and states that equality objectives will be supported by a delivery plan as part of the People Strategy. It is the responsibility of all Officers and Members to implement the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. The aim of these principals is to inform decision-making at every level within the Council, reflecting an ongoing commitment to eliminating discrimination, the advancing equality of opportunity for all, and fostering good relations between different communities.
- 2.2. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement will be published for information purposes. It is presented to Committee today in draft form to allow Members to comment on the content.

- 2.3. The law does not prescribe a required format for this document. Organisations can present information in any way they choose. They can also determine content beyond that listed above. When the Committee's comments have been heard and considered the document will be put through the design process and published on the Council's website.
- 2.4. The 2024/25 Annual Position Statement includes the Council's current Equality Objectives which cover the period 2024-2027. The document also contains a snapshot of the actions taken against these objectives to provide Members with an overview of achievements.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on public sector organisations when exercising public functions to have due regard to the three aims of the Equality Duty. These are to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance opportunities for people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't share it
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't share it.
- 3.2. Gov.uk explains that "advancing equality of opportunity means having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their relevant protected characteristics
 - take steps to meet the different needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic
 - encourage participation in public life or any other activity by underrepresented groups
 - take steps to meet the different needs of disabled persons

Considering people's different needs and taking steps to meet those needs can be relevant to avoiding indirect discrimination. There are specific provisions in the act about making reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities".

- 3.3. On the subject of the need to foster good relations, Gov.uk states "fostering good relations means having regard to the need to deal with prejudice and support understanding. For example, some decisions have the power to bring divided groups together and to support their mutual understanding. Other decisions may inadvertently cause people with one protected characteristic to blame people with another for a social problem".
- 3.4. In the interests of clarity, the term "relevant" in the above quotes relates to all of the nine protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010.

- 3.5. Two further specific duties are placed on public sector organisations, which are to:
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years
 - Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually.
- 3.6. The publication must include information to show that the Council has properly considered the three aims of the Equality Duty. It must also include information relating to employees who share protected characteristics (for public bodies with 150 or more employees) and information relating to people who are affected by the public body's policies and practices who share protected characteristics, i.e the residents of South Kesteven.
- 3.7. Therefore, the purpose of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement is to share this information and provide an overview of how the Council has complied with the three aims of the Duty during 2024/25.
- 3.8. If the Council does not publish equality information as required by the specific duty regulations, there is a risk of being subjected to legal challenge, as well as potential reputational damage.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The publication of the 2024/25 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement is a statutory responsibility therefore, no other options were available for consideration.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. To inform Members of action taken to ensure the Council complies with equality law and to reinforce the Council's commitment to the equitability of its services and their delivery.

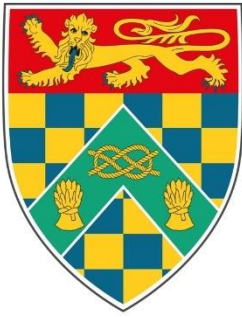
6. Consultation

- 6.1. Services across the Council were consulted, providing teams with the opportunity to contribute to the content of the document. The purpose of this consultation was to show the collective commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. Appendices

- 7.1. Appendix A: Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement for 2024/25.

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SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Equality and Diversity
Annual Position Statement
(Draft)
2024/2025**

Introduction

South Kesteven District Council is fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity. This statement provides an overview of actions across the District during 2024/2025 in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Council is committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion in everything it does whether as community leader, service provider, commissioner or employer. The Council strives for an equal and inclusive district where everyone, including residents, staff and councillors as well as the voluntary, faith and other community sectors are supported to reach their full potential. Individuals and agencies are treated with respect and are actively involved in shaping the decisions which affect the workplace and the community.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to the ways the Council and its staff deliver services and improves outcomes across South Kesteven.

This document provides general information relating to the people who live and work within the District and highlights the Council's activity to improve equality of access to its services.

The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 established nine protected characteristics:

- age
- race
- sex
- gender reassignment
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief
- pregnancy and maternity
- and marriage and civil partnership

The Act also sets out a Public Sector Equality Duty which means Council must consider the potential impact of policies, procedures and functions on people with any of the above characteristics and also in relation to socio-economic status and formal or informal caring responsibilities.

The duty requires the Council to have **due regard** to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The specific duties placed on public bodies are to:

- **Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty** – including information relating to employees who share protected characteristics and information relating to service users. (This is achieved through the publication of this Annual Position Statement).
- **Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.** The Council's objectives are outlined below. These can be reviewed and revised as required within the published timeline. For South Kesteven District Council, this is currently 2024-2028.
- **Equality Objectives 2024-2028**

The commitment to equalities is about long-term, continuous improvement. It is the responsibility of all Officers and elected Members to implement the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The equality objectives are supported by a delivery plan as part of the People Strategy which includes actions for all service areas. This ensures the needs of our staff and our residents is at the heart of what we do – from the earliest stage of development, through to decision-making and implementation.

Objective	How this will be achieved
Continue to maintain an inclusive, diverse workforce that feels valued.	In all parts of your work life we will work in a fair and equitable manner.
	Encourage celebration and support our differences.
Continue to build and promote a culture of equality and inclusion into all the services, functions and projects we deliver.	Develop a network of equality allies across the Council who are empowered to support and advise their colleagues on matters of equality, diversity and inclusion
	Ensure all projects, policies strategies and reports which have a direct impact on people are accompanied by a robust equality impact assessment.
	Consult with residents on all aspects of the Council's work that have a direct impact on them as our customers
Continue to develop and support resilient, connected and inclusive communities that have a voice in the decisions that affect them.	Ensure the Council's services are responsive to different needs and treat service users equitably, with dignity and respect.
	Involve, listen and respond to our communities effectively.
	Engage with communities to promote opportunities for funding and project support.

Profile of South Kesteven District

South Kesteven is one of seven districts in Lincolnshire. It is bordered by North Kesteven to the north, South Holland in the east, the unitary authorities of Rutland and Peterborough to the south and the counties of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire to the west.

The District covers 943 square kilometres (365sq miles) with an administrative centre in Grantham and three other market towns of Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping. Two-thirds of the population lives in one of the four towns and the remainder live in one of over 80 villages or in other rural settings. According to Census 2021 figures, South Kesteven has 62,850 domestic dwellings. Grantham is the largest urban settlement. The District is divided into 77 parishes and 30 Wards which are represented by 56 councillors.

Population

South Kesteven has a population of 145,758. This is an increase of 11,970 since 2011 and of 21,970 since 2001 (*Source: Office of National Statistics (ONS)*).

This equates there are 153 people per square kilometre this compares with a Lincolnshire average of 130 people per square kilometre.

The overall population size is projected to increase to 153,027 by 2035 and to 159,188 by 2045. This will be due to a net increase in international and internal migration as well as typical population growth.

People in South Kesteven are predominantly White British (91%) with ethnically diverse communities making up the remaining 9%.

The country which has the highest number of people living in South Kesteven from outside the United Kingdom (UK) is Poland (1.47% of SK residents).

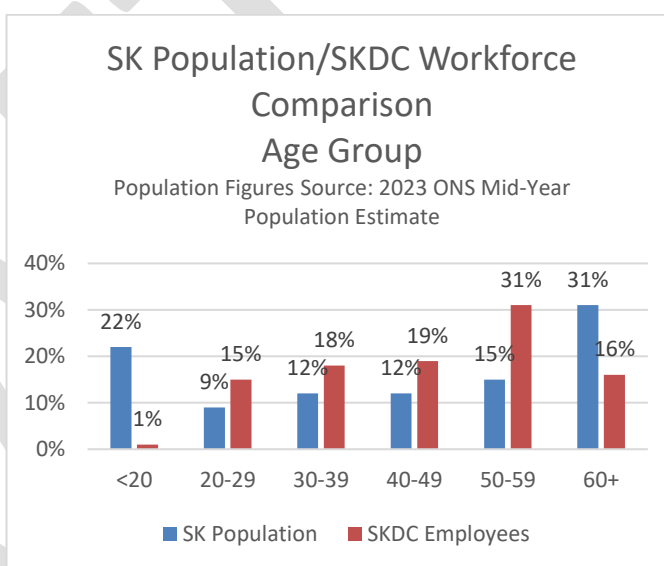
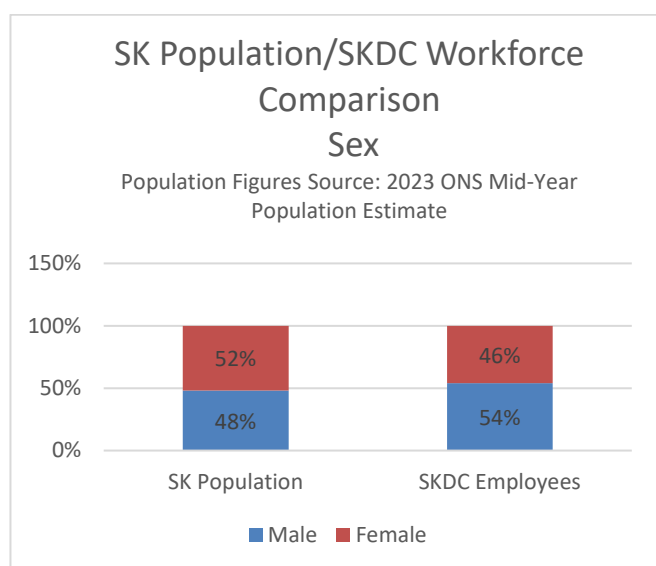
Many people of diverse nationalities and ethnicities have made their home in South Kesteven. The top ten most numerous are from Germany, Lithuania, India, South Africa, Romania, Latvia, Portugal, Hungary, United States and the Philippines. The Council provides translation and interpreter services on request for residents whose first language is not English.

During the year to June 2023, there was net internal migration of 1,229 people with a total of 8,573 new residents from other parts of the UK. The greatest movement in terms of both inflow and outflow was from the 20-24 age bracket. The figures also showed a significant outflow of 15-19 year olds which were -294 down on the previous year.

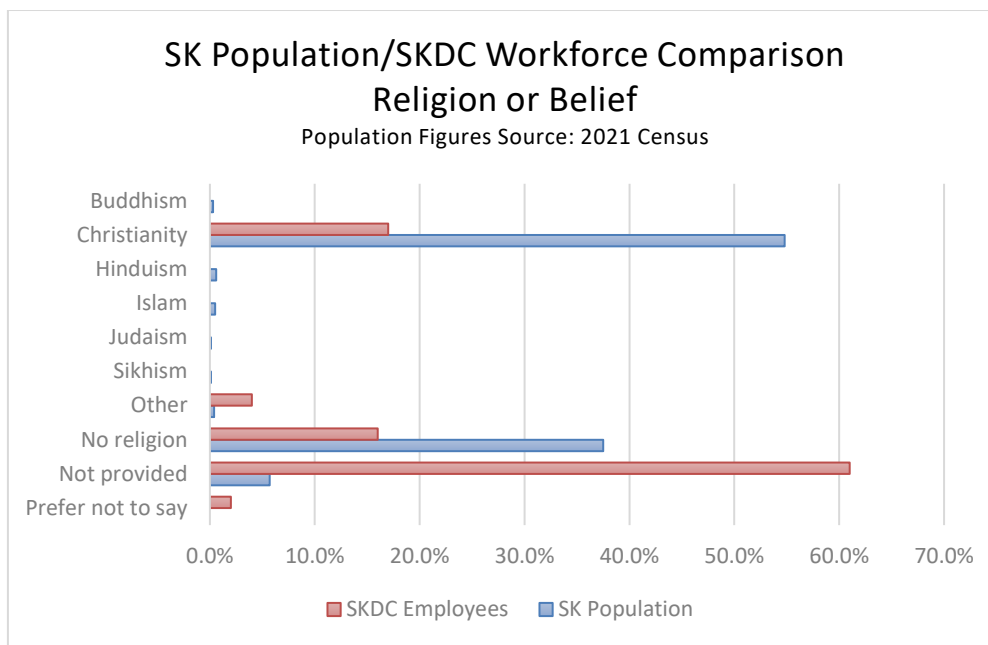
The proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase significantly by 2040 according to POPPI (Projecting Older People Population Information). The current number of people aged over 65 in the District is 34,362 which accounts for 24% of the total population of the District. This figure is projected to increase to 48,500 by 2040 (i.e. a 41% increase).

Demographic and Workforce Comparisons

Using data available through the Census and Office for National Statistics Mid-Year Estimates, the Council is able to build a statistical picture of the District's residents. By comparing this information with data held in relation to the council's workforce, it is possible to determine the extent to which the staff of the Council reflects the local population. Such comparison enables the Council to identify any gaps in the knowledge base relative to the population, as well as providing opportunities for organisational development and change to ensure the authority remains representative of the District. The following graphs illustrate a direct comparison, based on percentages, between the population of South Kesteven and the workforce of the Council. Some information relating to certain protected characteristics is currently not collected by the Council. Where no direct comparison is possible, separate charts have been provided. Mandatory equality information now forms part of the Council's recruitment process, with the option of 'Prefer Not to Say'. This should improve the quality of data available to the council.

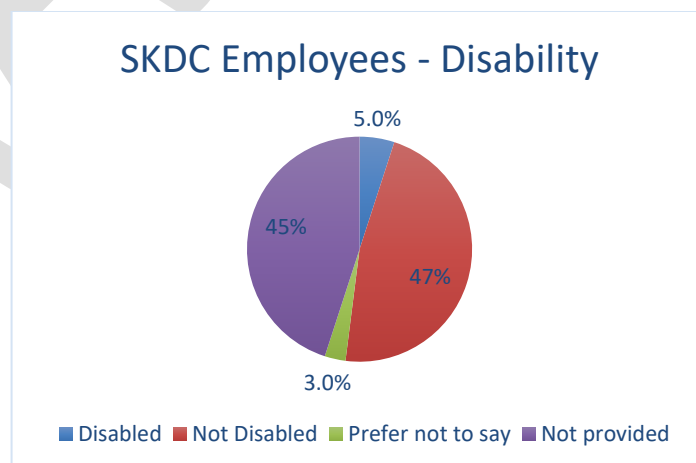
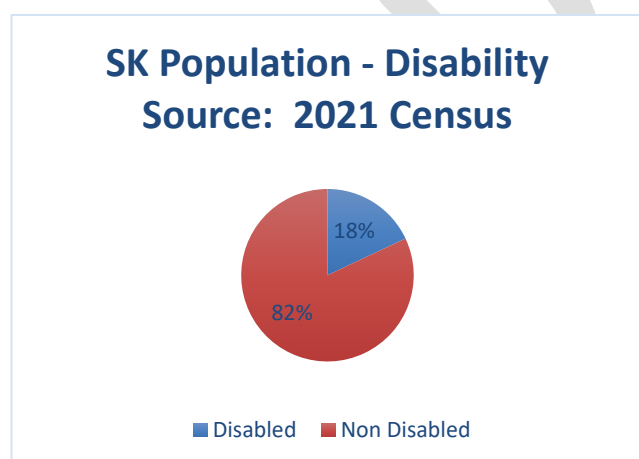


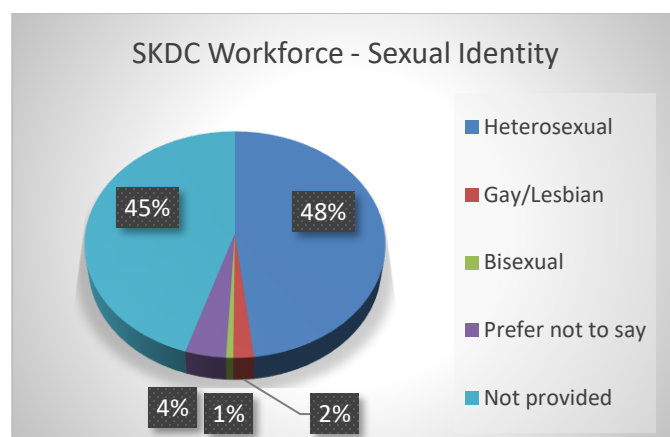
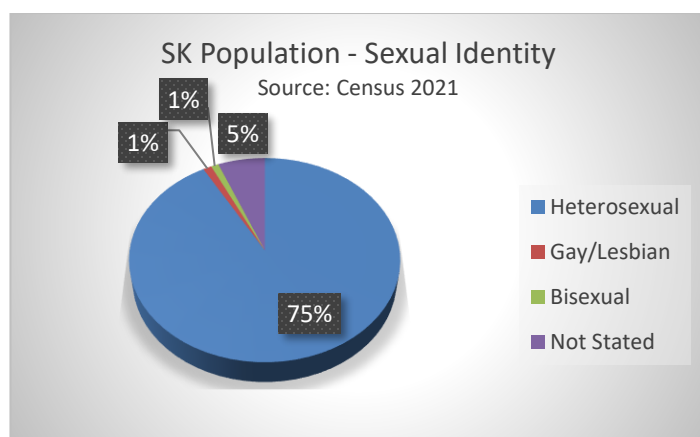
The figures relating to age range appear to show a large imbalance between the SK population and the Council's workforce. However, the population figure includes all persons from birth to 19 while the workforce figure only represents people aged 16 and above. When calculating the <20 age-group SK population figure to include only those of working age the percentage reduces from 22% of the SK population to 4%. It could similarly be argued that the percentage difference for those aged 60+ would reduce dramatically if the comparison was specifically related to working people.



The images above provide an illustration, by age-group and sex, of the population of the District directly compared with the workforce of South Kesteven District Council.

The following images provide information relating to other key protected characteristics taken from the 2021 Census alongside the South Kesteven District Council workforce data with supporting narrative where available.





Population and SK Workforce Statistics

Data provided by the 2021 Census shows the population of South Kesteven as 90.5% white British. Ethnically diverse identifiers therefore account for the remaining 9.5%. Statistics for some of the protected characteristics are not known for a large proportion of the workforce. For example, ethnicity data held, shows the Council's employees as 68% white British which is a slight reduction on 2023/2024 (68.03%), with 5% representing ethnically diverse identifiers (an increase on 2023/2024 where a figure of 4.5% was recorded). 0.1% of the workforce responded with "prefer not to say", whilst 27% did not provide an answer.

Supporting our staff

During 2024/25, the Council had a total of 590 employees.

The workforce statistics show 16% of the workforce were aged 29 and under, and 47% are over 50. The Council is continuing to increase the appeal of working for SKDC. Actions include:

- building relationships with local schools and colleges to advertise roles
- a range of apprenticeship options
- a graduate scheme which offers a Level 7 leadership qualification as well as placements across the Council.
- summer internships and a significant number of work experience placements

The Council has a new recruitment website and has produced new recruitment materials to attract to a wider talent pool. The Council also has a detailed workforce development plan.

The Council has a comprehensive engagement and wellbeing plan for colleagues built from staff feedback. There are also staff network groups to support colleagues including the Carers Network, Menopause Café and Parents Forum. Education and training awareness activities are also promoted to staff on topics such as mental health, physical wellbeing and social wellbeing.

Since March 2022, the Council has had a People Panel made up of 31 employees from across the Council. The panel provides a forum for feedback and involvement on issues of strategic importance affecting colleagues.

Mandatory equality information now forms part of our recruitment process and includes an option of 'Prefer Not to Say'. These are used for monitoring and are not used to inform the recruitment process. Hiring managers conduct 'blind shortlisting' to reduce unconscious bias.

The Council has gender split is 54% male / 46% female. The 'gender pay gap', last reported in March 2024, was a mean of 4.83% (0.98% in 2023) and a median of 0.80% (0% in 2023).

The Council's People Strategy 2022-25 and supporting Action Plan has introduced a number of proactive measures to increase the diversity of its workforce to ensure it reflects the demographics of the District. Progress towards the aims of the People Strategy is monitored via the quarterly reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to the Council's Corporate Plan through Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Strategy is also regularly reviewed by the Employment Committee and Corporate Management Team (KPI). The People Strategy 2022-25 can be found [here](#). This document is being refreshed during 2025.

Ensuring Equality and Inclusion In our Workforce

Wellbeing: The Council puts on a varied wellbeing programme for staff. Regular staff surveys help shape the programme which has included a range of educational and awareness initiatives on topics such as mental health, breast cancer and strokes.

First Aiders for Mental Health: It is predicted by 2025, there will be in excess of 15,000 living with a common mental health disorder in South Kesteven. It is therefore, increasingly important for staff to be supported. The Council now has 33 First Aiders for Mental Health amongst staff and elected Members who can listen and signpost colleagues to other support services.

Employee Assistance Programme: The Council recognises the demands placed upon staff in their working and personal lives. To help staff deal with these demands, the Council offers an Employee Assistance Programme. This programme, which is also available to elected Members, is a free confidential service providing year-round support and information on a range of personal and work-related issues.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Allies: The Council has a network of eight 'Equality Allies' across the workforce to provide support to colleagues on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, and to act as critical friends during the equality impact assessment process. The Council has three more 'champions' who offer similar support and are also LGBTQIA+ Allies.

People Panel: Since March 2022, the Council has had a People Panel made up of 31 employees from across the Council. The panel provides a forum for feedback and involvement on issues of strategic importance affecting colleagues.

Recruitment: The Council's People Strategy 2022-2025 and supporting action plan is introducing proactive measures in order to improve the diversity of the workforce, so that it reflects the demographics of the district. One such measure is name-blind shortlisting which reduces the potential for unconscious bias during the recruitment process.

Ensuring Equality and Inclusion for our Customers and our Communities

Equality Impact Assessments:

The Council's Equality Impact Assessment process requires consideration is made in the development or review of every policy, function, project or procedure impacting South Kesteven residents. Copies of assessments are published along with committee reports to ensure due regard is given throughout the decision-making process.

Funding to Food Support Agencies:

Ring-fenced funding is available to support the work of agencies and community groups which provides access to food and essential supplies to those in need. This support is offered to the Food banks in the four towns as well as community larders, agencies providing hot meals to vulnerable individuals and community cafés operating on a 'pay what you can' basis.

Translations and Interpreters:

Any document can be provided in an alternative format on request. This includes translation into other languages, documents in large print or Braille and information in audio format. All staff have access to Language Line for instant translation services and in-person interpreter services are provided when required. Staff and customers have access to Text Relay to assist with calls to, and from, the Council for people with a hearing impairment.

Changing Places Facilities:

The Council supported the installation of Changing Places facilities in Wyndham Park, Grantham, the Meres Leisure Centre and South Street toilets in Bourne.

Access to the Arts:

The Council operates two Arts Centres within the District. Each venue provides a varied programme of workshops, live performance and cinema. Signed and relaxed pantomime performances at the Guildhall yearly. Stamford Arts Centre has audio description equipment for cinema, for people who are visual impaired/blind to be able to enjoy cinema. The venue also has 'Watchword' installed for cinema, whereby deaf customers use glasses personal to them that display the subtitles and describe the noises happening on screen. These glasses have opened up the number of screenings deaf customers can attend as they aren't only relying on captioned screenings. Stamford Cinema also provides captioned cinema screenings. Regular programming of LGBTQAI+ performances across both, including Monocle (inspired by the secretly notorious 1930s Parisian lesbian club Le Monocle), and well known drag artists such as Danny Beard and Bagga Chipz. The Groove at Guildhall Arts Centre is a safe disco/club experience for adults with additional needs and their families/carers.

Play Areas:

Consultation with residents, as part of the funding application for large scale refurbishment projects of the play areas at Gonerby Hill Foot and Beeden Park, Grantham, has resulted in inclusive equipment being installed in each of these play areas. This provides more opportunities for users to access a healthy lifestyle. Multi-functional fitness equipment was installed at Dysart Park with the support of the Rotary Club of Grantham.

Positive Futures: The Council and LeisureSK Ltd work closely with Positive Futures who use sport and physical activity to engage with young people in deprived communities, by allowing them use of the facilities to provide these programmes. Sessions are provided free of charge to those attending.

Volunteers and Events: The development of the Council's Volunteer Policy has enabled the recruitment of parks volunteers from diverse backgrounds. This has provided opportunities to develop their social and interaction skills with members of the public. Volunteers support the running of the visitor centre and assist with regular events including; Grantham Deaf Group Coffee Morning; Building Brighter Futures; Introduction to BSL for adults and children; dementia awareness training; Young Adults social group for those with learning difficulties; and 'Let's talk about Ageing-Well'.

Cost of Living Support

The Council has two dedicated Welfare and Financial Advice Officers. The aims and objectives of this Team are to support our most vulnerable residents who cannot access any other income, to sustain their home, health, family, and security. The value of financial support issued to residents through this team since it was established in 2021 amounts to £2.722m with £607,900 being issued

Age Friendly Communities: Age Friendly Communities work to ensure our district is a good place to live and grow old. SKDC has signed the Age Friendly Employer pledge and will start to promote this to businesses and organisations within the district.

Physical Activity: The Council completed a Moving Communities Community Survey and established there was a need to provide more sessions for beginners into physical activity, women and girls and for older people. As a result, these sessions are being delivered directly via the leisure centres.

Alternative formats and languages

This information can be made available in other languages, large print, Braille, or audio. If you, or someone you know, might benefit from this service, please contact us.

To request a document in a specific language or format please contact:

☐ **01476 40 60 80**

☐ **pr@southkesteven.gov.uk**

Polski / Polish:

Skontaktuj się z nami, korzystając z powyższych danych, jeśli potrzebujesz przetłumaczyć ten dokument na swój język

Lietuviškai / Lithuanian:

Susisiekite su mumis naudodami aukščiau pateiktą informaciją, jei jums reikia šio dokumento, išversto į jūsų kalbą

Português / Portuguese:

Entre em contato conosco usando os detalhes acima se precisar deste documento traduzido para o seu idioma

Română / Romanian:

Vă rugăm să ne contactați folosind detaliile de mai sus dacă aveți nevoie de traducerea acestui document în limba dvs

Magyar / Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot a fenti elérhetőségeken, ha szüksége van erre a dokumentumra az Ön nyelvére lefordítva

Latviski / Latvian:

Lūdzu, sazinieties ar mums, izmantojot iepriekš norādīto informāciju, ja jums ir nepieciešams šis dokuments jūsu valodā

Deutsch/ German:

Bitte kontaktieren Sie uns unter den oben genannten Kontaktdaten, wenn Sie dieses Dokument in Ihre Sprache übersetzen lassen möchten

தமிழ் / Tamil

இந்த ஆவணத்தை உங்கள் மொழியில் மொழிபெயர்க்க வேண்டும் என்றால், மேலே உள்ள விவரங்களைப் பயன்படுத்தி எங்களைத் தொடர்பு கொள்ளவும்

Español/ Spanish

Póngase en contacto con nosotros utilizando los detalles anteriores si necesita que este documento se traduzca a su idioma.

Nepali / Nepalese:

यदि तपाईंलाई यो कागजात तपाईंको भाषामा अनुवाद गर्न आवश्यक छ भने कृपया माथिको विवरणहरू प्रयोग गरेर हामीलाई सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्

*The languages listed above represent the top ten spoken, after English, in South Kesteven. If you know someone who needs information in any language beyond what is listed please contact us as above.



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

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

Corporate Enforcement Policy

Report Author

Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection

✉ ayeisha.kirkham@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To consider a new draft Corporate Enforcement Policy.

Recommendations

The Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

Consider the draft Corporate Enforcement Policy and provide any feedback or amendments prior to this being adopted by Cabinet.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Effective council

Which wards are impacted?

All Wards

1. Implications

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

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. All enforcement policies across the Council should be reviewed regularly to ensure consistency with collection and enforcement activities. The fee for each type of fixed penalty notice, where not set by law, will be set by the Council during the annual budget cycle.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 It is good governance for the Policy to be scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a view to it being considered for adoption by Cabinet. Lincolnshire Legal Services are satisfied with the contents of the Policy.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy was last revised in February 2017, and a review and update is necessary.
- 2.2. A revised draft Corporate Enforcement Policy ("the Policy") has been developed and is attached at Appendix One. This a full revision of the 2017 Policy and covers enforcement activities across all the Council's Regulatory Services, setting out what regulated businesses and individuals can expect from the Council in terms of regulation. The Policy is targeted only at cases where action is needed and is based on the guiding principles of consistency, transparency, proportionality, and accountability.
- 2.3. This Policy applies to functions carried out within the following Regulatory Services:
 - Public Protection (this includes Environmental Health, Environmental Protection, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety (Neighbourhoods) and Licensing)

- Development Management
- Building Control
- Finance
- Tenancy Services

Each Manager of a regulatory service covered by this Policy will be responsible for its effective implementation through the enforcement activities of their team. Each Officer within these teams will be responsible for applying it in relation to the enforcement activity covered by this Policy.

- 2.4. The Policy also incorporates three other South Kesteven District Council Enforcement Policies as specific content within the appendices. This is to aid ease of reference and consistent application of approach. These policies are:
 - Enviro Crime Enforcement Policy (adopted April 2018)- now Appendix A to the policy titled Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour- Fixed Penalty Notices.
 - Environmental Services Enforcement Policy (dated February 2017)- now Appendix B to the policy titled Environmental Health Approach to Investigation and Enforcement.
 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (dated November 2018) - now Appendix C to the policy titled Private Sector Housing Approach to Investigation and Enforcement.
- 2.5. The Policy is an overarching document covering all enforcement functions undertaken by South Kesteven District Council. Under this, there are more detailed policies which cover specific service functions in more detail, for example, the Development Management Enforcement Policy (Planning Control).
- 2.6. The Policy will ensure that the Council achieves and maintains consistency in its approach to enforcement and identifies that all enforcement activities, including investigations and formal actions, will be conducted in accordance with the following:
 - The statutory powers of the Officer dealing with the matter.
 - All other relevant legislation including the Enforcement Concordat (Regulators Compliance Code)
 - Any other relevant policies.
- 2.7. The Policy requires the investigations that South Kesteven District Council undertakes to be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation, and in consideration of any relevant Codes of Practice and Guidance.
- 2.8. The enforcement options listed within the Policy range from no action to prosecution, and identifies that when deciding whether to prosecute, South Kesteven District Council will have regard to the provisions of The Code for Crown

Prosecutors as issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions. This Code provides two tests that must be satisfied when deciding to prosecute, these are the following: Evidential Test and the Public Interest Test.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The Policy is also due to be considered by Environment OSC in September and Housing OSC in October. Once a final draft is agreed the Policy will be formatted and graphics applied before being presented at Cabinet for adoption.
- 3.2. Within Appendix A of the Policy a Flytipping and Littering fixed penalty matrix is proposed. This approach has been discussed at the Lincolnshire Environmental Crime Partnership with Legal Services Lincolnshire supporting this as a proportionate approach to fixed penalty application. If the matrix is adopted, South Kesteven District Council would be trialling this approach for Lincolnshire, and this would be fed back the Lincolnshire Environmental Crime Partnership and wider partners such as the National Flytipping Prevention Group. If the matrix is not adopted a standard fixed penalty would continue, which currently is £1000 for Flytipping and £500 for Littering offences (with early repayment reductions applicable).
- 3.3. Within Appendix C of the Policy, a new section is included regarding The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020, providing a penalty matrix scheme to those not meeting the standards required.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 To take no action. In this situation the 2017 Corporate Enforcement Policy would remain without review.
- 4.2 To update the Corporate Enforcement Policy separately to the following policies and not include them within the corporate enforcement policy within the appendices:
 - Enviro Crime Enforcement Policy (adopted April 2018)
 - Environmental Services Enforcement Policy (dated February 2017)
 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (dated November 2018)

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy was last revised in February 2017, and a review and update is necessary. This new over-arching policy is a full revision of the 2017 policy and covers the enforcement activities across all the Council's Regulatory Services. This policy also incorporates and updates three

other enforcement policies to support ease of reference and consistent application. The new policy also provides an option for other enforcement policies to be added to the over-arching policy as an appendix.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Lincolnshire Legal Services have been consulted and are satisfied with the content of the Policy, the draft appended to this report incorporates the advice received.
- 6.2. Senior Managers and the Corporate Management Team have also been consulted, and feedback has been incorporated into the Policy.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1. [SKDC Corporate Enforcement Policy Feb 2017](#)
- 7.2. [SKDC Enviro Crime Enforcement Policy April 2018](#)
- 7.3. [Environmental Services Enforcement Policy FEB 2017](#)
- 7.4. [Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy](#)

8. Appendices

- 8.1. Draft Corporate Enforcement Policy 2025.

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Corporate Enforcement Policy

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- 14. Appendix**
 - A. Appendix A: Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour- Fixed Penalty Notices.**
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 - D. Appendix D- Example of a Decision Log & Action Plan**

1. Introduction

This policy covers the enforcement activities across all the Council's Regulatory Services and sets out what regulated businesses and individuals can expect from the Council in terms of regulation. The policy is targeted only at cases where action is needed and is based on the guiding principles of consistency, transparency, proportionality, and accountability. Its purpose is to secure compliance with the law whilst minimising the burden on individuals, businesses, and the Council itself. The policy will not affect the discretion of the Council to take legal proceedings where it is in the public interest. Enforcement actions will be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation.

This policy applies to functions carried out within the following Regulatory Services:

1. Public Protection (this includes Environmental Health, Environmental Protection, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety (Neighbourhoods) and Licensing)
2. Development Management
3. Building Control
4. Finance
5. Tenancy Services

Each manager of a regulatory service covered by this Policy will be responsible for its effective implementation throughout the enforcement activities of their team. Each officer within these teams will be responsible for applying it in relation to the enforcement activity covered by this policy.

This corporate enforcement policy is an overarching policy for all enforcement functions undertaken by South Kesteven District Council. Under this, there are more detailed policies which cover specific service functions in more detail, for example, the **Development Management Enforcement Policy (Planning Control)** ([insert link](#)) or the **Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Enforcement Policy** ([insert link](#)). Where no service-specific enforcement policy is in place and enforcement action is being considered, this overarching policy will apply.

2. Approach to Enforcement

It is important to achieve and maintain consistency in our approach to enforcement. In many cases the decision to enforce is discretionary and any enforcement action taken must be proportionate to the risks posed and the seriousness of any breach of the law.

All enforcement activities, including investigations and formal actions, will be conducted in accordance with:

- The statutory powers of the officer dealing with the matter.
- All other relevant legislation including the Enforcement Concordat (Regulators Compliance Code)
- Any other relevant policies

The actions and decisions that the council decides to take will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be judged on its own merits in line with the actions listed in the following policy.

3. Regulators' Code

The Regulators' Code is an important part of the Government's better regulation principles. The aim of the Code seeks to promote an approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement that is: proportionate, consistent, and targeted. The Regulators' Code can be found using this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>

Whilst this Council has had regard to the Regulators' Code in preparing this policy, it is important to note that in some instances we may conclude that a provision within the code is not relevant or is outweighed by another provision. If this occurs, then it will be properly reasoned, based on material evidence, and documented.

The Council will continue to have regard to the Regulators' Code and in particular, will undertake the following:

- Carry out our activities in a way that supports those we regulate to comply and grow
- Provide simple and straightforward ways to engage with those who we regulate and to hear their views
- Base our regulatory activities on risk
- Share information about compliance and risk
- Provide clear information, guidance and advice to those we regulate to help them meet their responsibilities
- Ensure our approach to regulatory compliance is transparent

Where we consider that formal action is necessary each case will be considered on its own merits subject to the general overriding principles that apply to the way each case must be approached. These principles are set out in this document and in the Regulators' Compliance Code.

4. The Code for Crown Prosecutors

When deciding whether to prosecute, South Kesteven District Council will have regard to the provisions of The Code for Crown Prosecutors as issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions. This code provides two tests that must be satisfied when deciding to prosecute, these are the following:

4.1 Evidential Test

This test is to determine if there is enough evidence to prosecute and to consider the quality of evidence (what evidence can be used in court and if it is reliable).

They must be satisfied that, against each alleged offender for each offence, there is sufficient evidence to provide a "realistic prospect of conviction".

4.2 Public Interest Test

This test is to determine if there is a public interest for the case to be brought to court. It balances and considers factors that in large supports or opposes the case being brought to court. The Code for Crown Prosecutors identifies that when applying this test, the following factors for and against prosecution should be considered:

- How serious is the offence committed?
- What is the level of culpability of the suspect?
- What are the circumstances and harm caused to the victim?
- What was the suspects age and maturity at the time of the offence?
- What is the impact on the community?
- Is prosecution a proportionate response?
- Do sources of information require protecting?

In addition, in certain limited circumstances, where the full test under this code is not met, a threshold test may be applied. This will depend on the seriousness or circumstances of the case.

5. Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008

The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, as amended, was designed to enable more consistent enforcement of regulations across local authority boundaries, better coordination between local authorities and central government, and more effective enforcement of regulations. It also requires regulators to conform to certain principles. The Primary Authority scheme aims to ensure that any company trading across council boundaries in the scheme is guaranteed access to advice.

South Kesteven District Council, when considering taking enforcement action against a business or organisation that has primary authority, will comply with the requirements of the act. We will have due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State in relation to Primary Authority.

6. Principles of Good Regulation

South Kesteven District Council operates its services with due regard to the “Principles of Good Regulation” which is set out in the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. This covers the following:

- **Proportionate** – Endeavouring to minimise costs of compliance for businesses, reflecting the harm and impact on victims. Our actions will relate to the seriousness of the offence, and to the previous actions taken by the Council or its partners.
- **Accountable** – Our activities will be open to scrutiny, with clear and accessible policies and a fair and efficient complaints procedure.
- **Consistent** – Our advice to those we regulate will be robust and reliable, respecting advice provided by others. Carrying out our duties in line with service standards and endeavouring to act in a similar manner to other enforcement authorities.
- **Transparent** – We will make clear the difference between legal requirements and recommendations, ensuring those we regulate understand their duties and what

they can expect from us. We will provide information and any advice on the legislation we enforce in plain language and will be open and transparent in our actions.

- **Targeted** – Focusing resources on higher-risk enterprises and activities, utilising intelligence to direct our priorities wherever possible.

7. Conduct of Investigations

The investigations that South Kesteven District Council undertakes will be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation, and any relevant Codes of Practice and Guidance will also be considered.

Relevant legislation and codes of practice include but are not limited to:

- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)
- Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (Code of Practice for Powers of Entry and Description of Relevant Persons) Order 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equalities Act 2008
- Consumer Rights Act 2015
- Any other relevant legislation that may be in force

All investigations will be conducted in accordance with:

- i. The statutory powers delegated to the officer dealing with the matter.
- ii. Compliance with the Legislation, Guidance and/or Codes of Practice associated with the matter under investigation, for example, the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice and Practice Guidance, HSE Enforcement Management Model, Health and Safety Rating System Enforcement Guidance.
- iii. Local in-house procedures and delegated authority to assist in the making of consistent enforcement decisions.

Subject to the needs of an investigation, officers will notify the individuals or businesses they are subject to an investigation as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Council will make timely decisions to enable the progression of the investigation and decision making. The person or business subject to an investigation will be informed of the outcome.

During an investigation, officers may utilise specific equipment to gather evidence and carry out overt and covert surveillance. This can include, but is not limited to the use of camera, video, sound level meters, light meters etc. This equipment will be used primarily to gather evidence, but may also be used as a deterrent, where it is necessary and proportionate to do so, and in line with legislation. This will be in accordance with the Council's Regulatory

Investigatory Powers Act Policy which can be found here:
[Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/Regulation%20of%20Investigatory%20Powers%20Act%20Policy.pdf)

The investigation process may include the interviewing of those persons suspected in the breach of legal requirements. Where the offence being investigated is an either way offence (could be heard in Magistrates or Crown Court) and/ or carries imprisonment as a sanction, then those persons suspected of breaching legal requirements will, where appropriate be offered an interview in accordance with Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

8. Officer's Powers of Entry

Enforcement officers have a wide variety of duties and must act as investigators. This is supported by strong powers of entry, seizure and inspection contained in various statutes. If individuals or businesses obstruct officers or refuse to provide information, they could be subject to criminal sanctions. Officers use these powers at their discretion with the support of the Council who will uphold them.

Officers will use their powers of entry only, when necessary, but usually to carry out an inspection of premises or in the process of an investigation. The Council will always support officers who act in good faith. This includes prosecuting those individuals who obstruct or assault officers during investigations or inspections.

If the legislation allows, officers may examine premises and articles, remove articles, label samples, request information, issue enforcement notices and may in some instances be accompanied by other persons. In appropriate cases, a warrant from a Magistrate may be obtained to obtain entry to premises.

An officer must be able to explain the legal basis for any action and justify all separate actions used.

9. Appointment of Officers and Identification

All officers are trained and authorised to act under relevant legislation enforced or administered by the service in which they are employed. Their authorisation will follow the scheme of delegation's procedure adopted by the Council.

All officers are issued with an identification card bearing their photograph. This identification must also be produced on request.

10. Liaison with Other Regulatory Bodies and Enforcement Agencies

Where appropriate, enforcement activities within all services with regulatory responsibilities will be coordinated with other regulatory bodies and enforcement agencies to maximise the effectiveness of any enforcement.

Where an enforcement matter affects a wide geographical area beyond the boundaries of the district or involves enforcement by one or more other local authorities or organisations, the relevant authorities and organisations will be informed as soon as possible and all enforcement activity coordinated with them.

Services with regulatory responsibilities will share information relating to wider regulatory matters with other regulatory bodies and enforcement agencies. Examples include:

- Government Agencies.
- Health and Safety Executive.
- Police Forces.
- Fire Authorities.
- Statutory undertakers.
- Other Local Authorities.

Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing are covered in detail in separate Council policies and all information shared will be in accordance with the principles of data protection and freedom of information legislation.

11. Enforcement Actions

The enforcement options available include the following:

11.1 No Action

In certain circumstances, contraventions of the law may not warrant any action. This may be because the cost of compliance to the offender outweighs the detrimental impact of the contravention, or the cost of the required enforcement action to the Council outweighs the detrimental impact of the contravention on the community or in the public interest to pursue any form of action.

11.2 Informal Action and Advice

For minor breaches of the law, we may give verbal or written advice. In such cases, we will clearly identify any contraventions of the law and give advice on how to put them right. This advice will include a timeframe for compliance.

We will also advise offenders of any relevant 'good practice.' Where good practice advice is issued, we will make clear what needs to be done to remedy any breach of law and what is advice only.

We will make offenders aware that failure to comply with any information, action or advice given could result in an escalation of enforcement action.

We may take informal action when:

- The act or omission is not serious enough to warrant formal action.
- From the individuals or businesses past history we can reasonably expect that informal action will achieve compliance
- We have high confidence in an individual or business proprietor.
- The consequences of non-compliance will not pose a significant risk to public health, public safety, or the environment.

This can include compliance advice, guidance and support

11.3 Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) provide a quick, visible, and effective way of dealing with matters as an alternative to prosecution.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) may be issued by authorised officers for certain offences, enabling the offender to discharge liability by payment of a specified amount within a specified time period.

Where the council has discretion to set the amount of the fixed penalty this will be detailed in the Council's Fees and Charges scheme, otherwise, the fixed penalty amount will be as determined in relevant legislation. Where a fixed penalty amount is reduced for early payment, this will also be detailed in the Council's Fees and Charges scheme.

If a FPN remains unpaid after the expiry of the specified payment period, the case will be referred to be considered for prosecution.

FPNs may be issued either "on the spot" or by post.

Further information relating to the issuing of FPNs regarding environmental crime related matters can be found within **Appendix A** attached to this Policy.

11.4 Forfeiture Proceedings

This procedure may be used in conjunction with seizure and/or prosecution. This course of action should be used where there is a need to dispose of goods in order to prevent them from re-entering the marketplace or to avoid a further problem. In appropriate circumstances, we will make an application for forfeiture to the Magistrates Courts.

11.5 Seizure

Certain legislation enables authorised officers to seize goods, equipment or documents for example unsafe food, sound equipment or any items that may be required as evidence for possible future court proceedings. An appropriate receipt will be given for any goods taken.

11.6 Administrative Penalties

In certain circumstances, the Council can impose a penalty if a Council Taxpayer fails to provide information. It is very important that a Council Taxpayer notifies the Council when there is a change in their circumstances, which could affect a discount or exemption. The council can charge a penalty of £70 when the resident does not advise the council of this within 21 days that:

- They are no longer entitled to a discount.
- Their property is no longer entitled to an exemption.

And

- They do not respond to a written request for information to identify the person liable to pay Council Tax
- They knowingly supply false information regarding the identification of the person liable to pay Council tax.

Where a £70 penalty has been imposed as above, and the person, on a further request for information still fails to provide the information, or continues to provide false information, the Council may impose a further penalty of £280. A further penalty of £280 will apply each time information is withheld, or false information is given.

11.7 Injunctive Actions

Injunctive action may be used where offenders are repeatedly found guilty of similar offences or where it is considered the most appropriate course of enforcement i.e. to deal with dangerous circumstances, significant consumer detriment or serious anti-social behaviour problems.

For cases that involve antisocial behaviour, where other interventions have failed or is not appropriate, a civil injunction could be sought to give prohibitive or positive requirements.

11.8 Formal Notices

Certain legislation allows notices to be served requiring offenders to take specific actions or cease certain activities. Notices may require activities to cease immediately. In other circumstances, the time permitted to remedy the breach will be reasonable and will take into account the seriousness of the contravention and the implications of the non-compliance.

All notices issued will include details of any applicable appeals procedures.

11.9 Criminal Behavior Orders (CBO)

When the legal breach under investigation is anti-social behaviour, in that the offender's behaviour has caused, or was likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or the activity is deemed detrimental to quality of life. If considered appropriate, an application can be made to the Court for a CBO on conviction, to stop this activity.

An application for a CBO could be made to the court on the back of a prosecution. The court may also specify additional positive engagements or requirements to prevent re-offending.

11.10 Simple Caution

Where appropriate, a caution may be issued as an alternative to prosecution.

A caution will be issued to:

- i. Deal quickly and simply with less serious offences.
- ii. Divert less serious offences away from the courts.
- iii. Reduce the chance of repeat offences.

For a Simple Caution to be issued several criteria must be satisfied:

- i. Sufficient evidence must be available to prove the case.
- ii. The offender must admit the offence.
- iii. It must be in the public interest to use a Simple Caution

- iv. The offender must be 18 years or over.
- v. The offender should not have received a simple caution for a similar offence within the last 2 years.

A simple caution will not be considered in the case of a second or subsequent offence.

If the offender commits a further offence, the caution may influence our decision to prosecute. If during the time the caution is in force the offender pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, committing another offence anywhere in England and Wales, the caution may be cited in court, and this may influence the sentence that the court imposes.

Simple Cautions are administered and issued by the relevant Assistant Director/ Director.

11.11 Work in Default

In place of or as well as prosecutions we have certain powers to carry out work in default (South Kesteven District Council may carry out any action necessary and recharge the costs to the offender). We will only use these powers after a notice to carry out work has ended. We will claim back all our charges either through the courts or as a land charge on the property.

11.12 Demand for Payment

The Council will ensure that the method of collecting money owed to the Council is collected in a fair and efficient manner. The Council will ensure early contact is made to minimise large debts accumulating and ensure the debtor does not suffer from unnecessary hardship.

11.13 Prohibition/ Stop Notices and Injunctions

Where an offender is required to take immediate action, it may be necessary for a statutory notice to be served. These include Prohibition Notices, Planning Enforcement Notices, Closing Orders, Stop Notices Criminal Behaviour Orders or Injunctions, and can be issued in one or more of the following circumstances:

- i. There is an imminent risk of injury to health or safety.
- ii. There is a serious hazard to residential premises.
- iii. There is an imminent risk of serious environmental pollution.
- iv. The consequences of not taking immediate and decisive action, to protect the public, would be unacceptable.
- v. Where an unauthorised development is unacceptable and is causing serious harm to public amenity near to the site, or where there has been breach of a condition notice.
- vi. Where unauthorised development is unacceptable, and continuing work is or may cause irreversible damage, and remedial action is not a satisfactory option; vii the guidance criteria on when prohibition may be appropriate are met.

- vii. We have no confidence in the integrity of an unprompted offer by a proprietor to close premises voluntarily, or stop using any equipment, process or treatment associated with the imminent risk.
- viii. A proprietor is unwilling to confirm in writing his/her unprompted offer of a voluntary prohibition.
- ix. Where it would be the most effective remedy available

We will make offenders aware of any right of appeal they may have against any action we have taken.

The act of serving a prohibition/stop notice or injunction does not prevent us from deciding to prosecute depending on the seriousness of the circumstances that led to the serving of that notice.

11.14 Refusal / Suspension / Revocation of Licences

We issue licences and approval for a variety of activities such as hackney carriages, caravan sites, food premises, selling alcohol and providing entertainment, animal welfare licences, houses in multiple occupations etc. with specific conditions which control how facilities at the premises are managed and provided, these are mandatory and voluntary conditions and site specific.

If there has been a relatively minor incident where licence conditions have been broken and the duty holder is willing to take the necessary action to have things right, it may be appropriate to give a verbal or written warning first. If there are serious failures to meet the licence conditions or if the informal approach fails to bring about the necessary improvements, we will present a formal report to the relevant authorised Head of Service or where required report to the relevant Council Committee or panel and make representations as to whether a licence will be granted, renewed, withdrawn or amended. The duty holder will be entitled to make a statement to support their case.

If there is a serious incident where licensing or registration conditions have been broken, we will consider it in line with the conditions relating to prosecutions and if appropriate, start legal proceedings. In some cases, we may need to suspend a licence or approval until the relevant Head of Service, Committee, or panel can consider the matter.

There are several separate Policies relating to Licensing, for example, Gambling Act Statement of Principles, Statement of Licensing Policy, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy and Houses of Multiple Occupation Licensing Policy.

11.15 Closure Orders

Under the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, the Local Authority may issue a closure notice on a premise(s). That is, if we are satisfied on reasonable grounds that the use of the particular premises, has resulted in, or is likely soon to result in nuisance to members of the public. Or that there has been or is likely soon to be disorder near those premises

associated with their use, and that the notice is necessary to prevent the nuisance or disorder from continuing, recurring or occurring.

11.16 Power to Charge for Enforcement

Where legislation allows, we will make reasonable charges as we consider appropriate as a means of recovering expenses associated with the service of enforcement notices e.g. under Section 49 of the Housing Act 2004. Charges will be published in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges scheme.

11.17 Proceeds of Crime applications

The provisions of the Council Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) will be used by this Local Authority where it is appropriate, to ensure the recovery of an offender's financial gain or benefit following conviction. Where a Proceeds of Crime Act application is considered as appropriate. This will seek to recover the financial benefit that the offender has gained through the course of their criminal activities and will look to confiscate the assets from the offender. Where such an approach is considered as appropriate, the council, at its earliest opportunity, will seek advice from an accredited financial investigator, so that a financial investigation can be run parallel. All relevant timescales required as part of this process will be followed.

11.18 Prosecution

It is recognised that the decision to prosecute is significant and could have far reaching consequences for the suspected offender. In all cases, the decision to instigate and undertake a prosecution, rests with the Assistant Director of that service, and in line with the council's scheme of delegation within the constitution.

The criteria for the issue of proceedings are:

- i. The alleged offence involves a breach of the law with the result that public health, safety, or wellbeing is, or has been, put at risk, or there has been irreversible damage.
- ii. There has been a reckless disregard for the environment.
- iii. Someone has died as a result of the law being broken.
- iv. Someone has failed to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice
- v. Officers have been intentionally obstructed while carrying out their duties.
- vi. The alleged offence involves deception which may or may not result in a loss or potential loss of public funds.
- vii. A serious potential risk has been identified which the suspected offender has not rectified despite having been given a reasonable opportunity to comply with the law.

- viii. The alleged offence involves a failure to comply in full, or in part, with the requirements of a statutory notice.
- ix. There is a history of similar offences.
- x. The alleged offence is considered to be anti-social behaviour or causes public alarm, and it is desirable to reassure the public and deter other potential offenders.
- xi. A prosecution is in the public interest, there is a realistic prospect of conviction and sufficient evidence to support proceedings.

We will consider all material evidence and information before deciding upon a prosecution in order to make a fair and objective decision. When determining whether to prosecute, we will have due regard to the provisions of the Code for Crown Prosecutors as issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Section 222 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1972 states that where a local authority finds it expedient to commence or defend legal proceedings, for the promotion or protection of the inhabitants of their area, they can do so. This therefore allows for a pragmatic approach when dealing with offences.

11.19 Appeals

Where any enforcement action is undertaken using legislation that includes a specific appeals procedure, we will advise you of that procedure at the required time.

12. Complaints

The Council will aim to provide effective, timely complaint responses in accordance with SKDC's Customer Feedback Process, Compliments, Comments & Complaints process.

If a customer is still not satisfied with the response, they may complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they feel they have been unfairly treated. A leaflet about this is available on request.

13. Review

This Policy will review periodically in the light of any significant changes in legislation, Codes of Practice, or other guidance.

14. Appendix

Appendix A: Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour- Fixed Penalty Notices.

Appendix B- Environmental Health Approach to Investigation and Enforcement

Appendix C- Private Sector Housing Approach to Investigation and Enforcement

Appendix D- Example of a Decision Log & Action Plan

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Appendix A

Environmental Crime and Antisocial Behaviour- Fixed Penalty Notices.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) provide a quick, visible, and effective way of dealing with straightforward environmental crimes and they are an alternative to prosecution. Normally offences resulting in a FPN will be witnessed directly by the officer. However, an officer may consider it appropriate to issue a FPN to an offender if they have not directly witnessed the offence but have reliable witness testimony.

An FPN will be appropriate for first-time offenders and one-off incidents meaning the recipient can avoid a court appearance and possible conviction. The Council will adopt a robust approach in its use of FPNs and all other associated enforcement powers. Our officers, or those working on behalf of the Council, will be fair but firm, polite and consistent.

An FPN will only be issued when:

- An offence has been committed
- A FPN is a proportionate response
- There is evidence to support prosecution if the offender does not pay the fixed penalty
- The offender understands why the FPN is being issued

Offences

This policy applies to the categories of offences set out in the following Table:

Littering	A person commits an offence if they throw down, drop or otherwise deposit any litter in any place which is open to the air and which the public has access to, with or without payment. This will also apply to littering from vehicles as of 1st April 2018.
Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)	Under the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, authorised officers have the power to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to anyone they reasonably believe is in breach of the PSPO).
Fly tipping	A person commits an offence if they deposit (or knowingly causes/permits) controlled waste to be deposited in or on any land unless a waste management licence authorising the deposit is in force and the deposit is in accordance with the licence.
Duty of Care	A householder or commercial operator has a legal obligation (duty of care) to take all reasonable measures to ensure any waste is disposed of correctly. The Environmental Protection Act requires all householders and businesses to ensure their waste is only removed by registered waste carriers.
Household Waste	Domestic waste control and presentation of the bin is covered under s.46 and 47 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and is a civil penalty, where there is an obligation to first issue the notice. There is the appeal process described in s.47 of the legislation.
Commercial Waste	A person commits an offence if they store waste in a manner that causes a nuisance or is detrimental to the amenities of the locality.
Graffiti	A person is guilty of an offence if they deface with graffiti any property that is not their own or that they do not have the permission of the owner to deface.
Fly Posting	A person commits an offence if they display advertising material on buildings and street furniture without the consent of the owner.
Abandoning a Vehicle	Vehicle A person commits a criminal offence if they abandon a motor vehicle or anything that has formed part of a motor vehicle on any land in the open air or on any other land forming part of a highway.
Nuisance Parking	A person commits an offence if they leave (or causes to be left) two or more motor vehicles parked within 500m of each other on a road or roads where they are exposed or advertised for sale for the purposes of a business.
Repairing vehicles on a road	It is an offence to run a business which carries out repairs to motor vehicles on the highway.

Age

The issue of a FPN will only be considered for those persons who commit an offence and are aged 16 years or above.

Where a person under the age of 16 has committed an offence, officers will seek to work with parents and/or schools to prevent further offences and educate the young person where possible. Appropriate adults will be sought in all cases.

Fee and Payment

The fee for each type of fixed penalty notice, where not set by law, will be set by the Council during the annual budget cycle. Where a new offence is established or variation to the existing penalty fee takes place within the budget year, then the relevant legislated default penalty fee will be adopted.

If the person either refuses to accept a FPN or, having accepted such a notice, does not pay before the end of the suspended enforcement period of 14 days, a reminder letter will be issued giving a further seven days' notice from the date of this letter. If the fixed penalty remains unpaid and to ensure the credibility of a FPN scheme, the assumption will be that all cases involving non-payment will be considered for referral to court.

Payment of a fixed penalty by instalments will not be accepted.

Appeals

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for criminal offences do not have a formal ground of appeal.

The legislation that governs fixed penalty notices means that a person who receives an FPN can challenge the offence in court if they believe the penalty should not have been issued to them.

It is important to note that payment of a fixed penalty notice is an invitation for the person issued with the FPN to discharge their liability to prosecution.

Flytipping and littering - Fixed Penalty Matrix

In relation to Section 33, 34 and 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, for fixed penalty notices (FPN) the council will utilise the FPN matrix and consider the application of the below matrix in certain circumstances:

Fly Tipping	Maximum Fine (each offence) £1,000	Optional FPN Amount (case by case basis): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Car Boot or Less - £600*• Small Van Load - £800*• Transit Van or Above - £1,000
Littering	Maximum Fine (each offence) £500	Optional FPN Amount (case by case basis): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single Item - £250*• Multiple Items - £500
<p>The optional FPN amount stated* could be raised back to the maximum amount, depending on the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size of item(s)• Location of item(s)• Risk to public health and safety• Risk to the environment• Court likely to impose a nominal penalty.• Previous advice/warning given.• Oversight/ignorance of the law.		

Court Action

A FPN may not be appropriate where it is known that the offender has previously been issued with a FPN for a similar offence, particularly if they have not paid. Court action will be considered in such cases as will offences where the impact of the offence upon the local environment and the cost related to rectifying is significant. Court action will be considered if:

- Payment has not been made
- The offence is major, e.g. significant fly tip, dumping of hazardous waste
- The offence is committed by a persistent offender
- The offender is violent or aggressive

Appendix B- Environmental Health Approach to Investigation and Enforcement

General Principles

This policy guides all officers involved in investigation, enforcement action and recommending or deciding upon the commencement of legal proceedings within the scope of Environmental Health.

Inspections and Visits

Inspections or visits will not take place without a reason. They may be undertaken in response to a complaint; in accordance with risk-based programmes; in accordance with statutory requirements or on receipt of relevant intelligence.

Where complaints are being investigated, notice of inspections/visits will not normally be given unless we are required to do so by legislation.

In accordance with the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice, most food hygiene inspections will be carried out unannounced during normal hours of operation of the business. In some circumstances, appointments to undertake an inspection have to be made.

On occasion, if admission has been refused, premises are unoccupied or prior warning of entry is likely to defeat the purpose of the entry, we may apply to a Justice of the Peace for a Warrant to enter premises, by force if necessary.

Liaison with other Enforcement Agencies and Regulatory Bodies

Where appropriate, enforcement activities within Environmental Services will be coordinated with other regulatory bodies and enforcement bodies to maximise effectiveness.

The Primary Authority Scheme was established by the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 (as amended). Officers will liaise with Primary Authorities when applicable e.g. before taking enforcement action. We will comply with the requirements of this Act when we are considering taking enforcement action against any business or organisation that has a primary authority and will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in relation to Primary Authority.

Where there has been a work-related death at a premise where the local authority is the enforcing authority, we will work with other regulators involved in the investigation to consider any health and safety offences as effectively and efficiently as possible. This will be undertaken in accordance with the Work-related Deaths Protocol for the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Local Authorities, and the Health and Safety Executive.

We will have regard to the Health and Safety Executive Enforcement Management Model (EMM) and associated guidance when considering enforcement decisions relating to health and Safety at Work.

Appendix C- Private Sector Housing Approach to Investigation and Enforcement

Introduction

The private rented sector is growing rapidly and although the majority of landlords provide well-managed and safe homes, the Council recognises that there are some landlords who neglect their responsibilities and put their tenants at risk due to the poor condition of their homes.

This document is intended to provide guidance for officers, landlords, letting agents and residents in respect of our approach to improving standards in private sector housing and dealing with enforcement. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's Environmental Services and Corporate Enforcement Policies which set out our commitment to the Principles of Good Enforcement and the Regulators Code.

Throughout this document, the term "landlord" also includes "property agents" and "letting agents" unless specified otherwise.

Approach to Enforcement

The Council recognises that most landlords and individuals wish to comply with the law and will seek to assist them in doing so by providing assistance to enable them to comply with legal requirements. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure compliance without the need for formal action and in most circumstances, landlords will first be given the opportunity to investigate and resolve any issues at their properties. However, formal action will be considered where necessary, for example, where there is a serious or imminent risk to public health, a history of non-compliance or where landlords have failed to take action within informally agreed timescales.

The Council expects landlords to have a good understanding of the standards required in privately rented accommodation and refer to published guidance. The Council works closely with DASH Services (Decent and Safe Homes) to provide the Lincolnshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme to encourage and promote good property standards and management practices in the private rented sector.

The Private Sector Housing team will respond to complaints from tenants and other residents about the condition of private housing, prioritising them on the basis of an assessment of risk. Unless there appears to be an imminent risk, tenants are encouraged to contact their landlord initially to try to resolve the matter themselves in the first instance.

The Council may proactively target enforcement activity where intelligence suggests that this may be necessary, or to support the Council's wider priorities. This may include but is not restricted to; houses in multiple occupation, properties with poor energy efficiency ratings, poorly built/converted properties, and area-based interventions.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The assessment of housing conditions will be carried out using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System as set out in the Housing Act 2004. This is a risk-based evaluation tool

used to identify and protect against risks and hazards to health and safety from deficiencies identified in dwellings. The HHSRS is based on statistical evidence relating to the likelihood and outcome of the occurrence of 29 different hazards. The assessment method results in a score for each relevant hazard which falls within one of two categories:

- Category 1 hazards – these represent a serious hazard to health and the Council has a duty to take appropriate action.
- Category 2 hazards – these represent a lesser hazard to health and the Council has a discretionary power to take action.

The Council will not normally take enforcement action to remedy (or reduce) minor or moderate Category 2 hazards. However, where any significant Category 2 hazards are identified, a number of Category 2 hazards exist which in combination present a greater cumulative risk, or where the vulnerability of the occupants is a particular factor, appropriate formal action to secure improvements will be considered.

The HHSRS can be used to assess hazards across all tenures. However, the Council will not normally require owner occupiers to undertake works to their own homes unless there is an imminent risk to the occupier or deficiencies at the property are adversely affecting another property or person.

Overcrowding

The Housing Act 2004 introduced “crowding and space” as a hazard under the HHSRS, however, the Housing Act 1985 was not repealed and as such there are two provisions in force. The standards in the Housing Act 1985 are prescriptive based on the number and size of rooms in a property, often including living and dining rooms as being suitable sleeping rooms. It takes no account of the remaining living space.

The Council will follow the Government’s HHSRS enforcement guidance which advises councils to use the HHSRS in respect of overcrowding. The Council will have regard to guidance in considering appropriate action on a case-by-case basis.

Where enforcement action may result in a family having to leave their home the Council will work with all parties to mitigate the impact.

Summary of Enforcement Options

A range of enforcement powers are available to the Council relating to the regulation of the Private Rented Sector the table below details some of these and describes the circumstances as to when they may be considered appropriate.

Action	Circumstances
1. No Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints or allegations of housing legislation breaches or statutory nuisances are of minor or low risk to health and the landlord has not been informed by the complainant, or allegations are unsubstantiated and unwitnessed. • Formal action is inappropriate in the circumstances.
2. Advisory notices and letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where conditions are evidenced to justify action and investigation and it is appropriate to give the opportunity to landlords and tenants to make representations, provide information or effect change to meet compliance. • No health impacts are present which pose a risk to health or nuisance
3. Formal notices or Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The defect/conditions present a risk to health and/or a nuisance. • There are previous failures of statutory requirements. • Previous advisory notices/letters were ignored, or action was not taken in a timely manner or to the correct standard. • There is a lack of confidence in the individual or management i.e. the willingness to respond to an informal approach. • The Council is legally required to serve a statutory notice
4. Financial Penalties (up to £30,000 if under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 or Tenant Fees Act 2019. Up to £5000 under other legislation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-compliance with an improvement or overcrowding notice. • Failure to obtain a property licence (Both parts 2 and 3 Housing Act 2004). • Significant and/or repeated breaches of HMO management regulations. • Breaches of the conditions of the property licence. • The amount of penalty decided by Financial Penalty Matrix for Housing Act 2004 offences is detailed below. • Used as an alternative to a prosecution. • Other financial penalty powers are within breaches of the following legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations

	<p>2020, Amount of penalty decided by Financial Penalty Matrix for offences is The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 detailed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 • Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014 and • The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 and subsequent amendments.
5. Works in Default - Emergency Remedial Action & Emergency Prohibition Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an imminent risk to the health and safety of the occupant and/or public. • Awaiting the service of a notice or a prosecution would not adequately protect the public interest. • However, this does not rule out subsequent action being taken in conjunction with a prosecution, financial penalty, RRO or other legal action.
6. Works in Default – noncompliance with a notice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We may choose to carry out works required by notice if they have not been completed within the permitted time or are not likely to be completed within the permitted time. • This may be taken in conjunction or followed with a prosecution or financial penalty and/or RRO.
7. Rent Repayment Orders (RRO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RROs will be considered after every successful prosecution for failure to comply with an Improvement Notice (section 30); Prohibition Order, including Emergency Prohibition Orders (section 32); Offences in relation to licensing of HMOs (section 72) and in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act (section 95). • Where a landlord fails to licence a licensable property and they received a significant amount of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, a RRO application may be made to the First Tier Tribunal.
8. Banning Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council may decide to seek a Banning Order following the breach of 'banning

	order offences' by landlords and agents. A banning order lasts for a minimum of 12 months and prevents landlords or agents from letting their own properties or being involved in the lettings and property management industry across England.
9. Interim & Final Management Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council may decide to seek an Interim Management Order (IMO), following the breach of certain licensing offences, where the health and safety or welfare of the occupants is at serious risk (the 'health and safety condition' section 104 Housing Act 2004) and/or breach of a banning order by landlords and agents. An IMO lasts for a maximum of 12 months and gives control of the subject property to the Council. At the end of the Interim period, a Final Management Order (FMO) of up to 5 years may be sought, which follows the same principles but on a longer-term basis.
10.	

Housing Act 2004 offences Financial Penalty Matrix.

The following matrix is used by officers in determining the penalty amounts for a Financial Penalty Notice under the Housing Act 2004 which were introduced as an alternative to prosecution by the Housing and Planning Act 2016. It has been created having specific regard to the Government Guidance for Local Authorities: Civil Penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, published in April 2018.

Each of the rows in the matrix takes into account certain criteria set out in the guidance. Each row produces a score dependent on the severity of the issue, being either 1, 5, 10, 15 or 20. At the end of every row, the officer will have to justify the most appropriate score chosen based on evidence in the case. The sum of the scores of each of the 4 rows produces a total. This final total is then compared against the council's set fee ranges, which determines the exact penalty amount; see table below. For example, a matrix total of 17 would result in a penalty of £7,500, a score of 55 would result in a penalty of £20,000 etc.

Consequently, the officer using the matrix will at no point be setting the penalty amount themselves as it is automatically calculated by the matrix, dependent on their assessment and resultant scores in each of the 4 rows.

In setting the financial penalty the Council assumes that the offender is able to pay any penalty imposed unless they supply suitable and sufficient financial evidence to the contrary. It is for the offender to provide this information. If the Council is not satisfied that reliable or suitable information has been provided, reasonable inferences relating to their ability to pay will be drawn from the information available and any other evidence available to the Council.

The ability of an offender to raise finance against their rental portfolio may be taken into consideration where the offender claims they are unable to pay a financial penalty and shows they have only a low income.

Score Range	Fee
1-5	£1,000
6-10	£2,500
11-15	£5,000
16-20	£7,500
21-30	£10,000
31-40	£15,000
41-60	£20,000
61-80	£25,000
81-100	£30,000

Factors	Score = 1	Score = 5	Score = 10	Score = 15	Score = 20	Total	Justification
1. Deterrence & Prevention.	High confidence that a financial penalty will deter repeat offending. Informal publicity not required as a deterrence	Medium confidence that a financial penalty will deter repeat offending. Minor informal publicity required for mild deterrence in the landlord community.	Low confidence that a low financial penalty will deter repeat offending (e.g. no contact from offender). Some informal publicity will be required to prevent similar offending in the landlord community.	Little confidence that a low financial penalty will deter repeat offending. Likely informal publicity will be required to prevent similar offending in the landlord community.	Very Little confidence that a low financial penalty will deter repeat offending. Informal publicity will be required to prevent similar offending in the landlord community		
2. Removal of Financial Incentive	No significant assets. No or very low financial profit made by offender	Little asset value. Little profit made by offender.	Small portfolio landlord (between 2-3 properties). Low asset value. Low profit made by offender.	Medium portfolio landlord (between 4-5 properties) or a small Managing Agent. Medium asset value. Medium profit made by offender	Large portfolio landlord (over 5 properties) or a medium to large Managing Agent. Large asset value. Large profit made by offender.		

3. Offence & History	No previous enforcement history. Single low-level offence.	Minor previous enforcement. Single offence	Recent second time offender. Offence has moderate severity or small but frequent impact(s).	Multiple offender. Ongoing offences of moderate to large severity or a single instance of a very severe offence.	Serial offender. Multiple enforcement over recent times. Continuing serious offence		
4. Harm to Tenants(s) (*Score is doubled on this section in line with Statutory Guidance)	Very little or no harm caused. No vulnerable occupants. Tenant provides no information on impact.	Likely some low-level health/harm risk(s) to occupant. No vulnerable occupants. Tenant provides poor quality information on impact.	Likely moderate level health/harm risk(s) to occupant. Vulnerable occupants potentially exposed. Tenant provides some information on impact but with no primary or secondary	High level of health/harm risk(s) to occupant. Tenant(s) will be affected frequently or by occasional high impact occurrences. Vulnerable occupants more than likely exposed. Small HMO (3-4 occupants), multiple occupants exposed. Tenant	Obvious high-level health/harm risk(s) and evidence that tenant(s) are badly and/or continually affected. Multiple vulnerable occupants exposed. Large HMO (5+ occupants), multiple occupants exposed. Tenant provides excellent information on impact with primary and secondary evidence provided (e.g. medical, social services reports).		

				provides good information on impact with primary evidence (e.g. prescription drugs present, clear signs of poor health witnessed) but no secondary evidence.			
					Total:		

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 Penalty Matrix

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 provide duties for landlords of certain rented domestic properties in relation to managing risks associated with the electrical installation. Without prejudice to the wording of the regulations, these include:

- Ensure national standards for electrical safety are met. These are set out in the 18th edition of the 'Wiring Regulations', which are published as British Standard 7671.
- Ensure all electrical installations in their rented properties are inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person at least every 5 years.
- Obtain a report from the person conducting the inspection and test which gives the results and sets a date for the next inspection and test.
- Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 days of the inspection and test.
- Supply a copy of this report to a new tenant before they occupy the premises.
- Supply a copy of this report to any prospective tenant within 28 days of receiving a request for the report.
- Supply the local housing authority with a copy of this report within 7 days of receiving a written request for a copy.
- Retain a copy of the report to give to the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test.
- Where the report shows that further investigative or remedial work is necessary, complete this work within 28 days or any shorter period if specified as necessary in the report.

The full wording of the regulations can be found online and at the time of draft are located here: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/312/contents/made.

Where a local housing authority is satisfied, beyond reasonable doubt, that a private landlord has breached a duty under regulation 3, the authority may impose a financial penalty of up to £30,000.

The regulations detail the steps required by a local authority to take as well as the right of a landlord to make representations and the right of appeal against any subsequent decision to issue a financial penalty. In determining the value of a financial penalty, the Council will have regard to the matrix below.

In using this matrix, the council has regard to the non-statutory guidance issued by the government “Guide for local authorities: electrical safety standards in the private rented sector.”

General principles (to be applied to all financial penalties made under the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020
No penalty charge shall be issued above the statutory maximum of £30,000
No penalty charge shall be less than 20% of the starting value after all aggravating and mitigating factors are considered and taken into account.
Mitigating factors will be considered based on evidence submitted by the landlord or their agent to the Private Sector Housing Team prior to and including any representations that the landlord provides following service of a Notice of Intent to issue a Financial Penalty

The offences under the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 have been split into two tiers of offences as detailed below:

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020	Regulation	Tier
Ensure national standards for electrical safety are met. These are set out in the 18th edition of the ‘Wiring Regulations’, which are published as British Standard 7671.	3(1)(a))	Tier 1
Ensure all electrical installations in their rented properties are inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person at least every 5 years	3(1)(b))	Tier 1
Obtain a report from the person conducting the inspection and test which gives the results and sets a date for the next inspection and test.	3(3)(a)	Tier 1
Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 days of the inspection and test.	3(3)(b)	Tier 2
Supply a copy of this report to a new tenant before they occupy the premises.	(3(3)(e)(i)	Tier 2
Supply a copy of this report to any prospective tenant within 28 days of receiving a request for the report	3(3)(e)(ii)	Tier 2
Supply the local housing authority with a copy of this report within 7 days of receiving a written request for a copy.	3(3)(c)	Tier 2
Retain a copy of the report to give to the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test.	3(3)(d)	Tier 2
Where the report shows that further investigative or remedial work is necessary, complete this work within 28 days or any shorter period if specified as necessary in the report.	3(4) – 3(6)	Tier 1

Failure to comply with duties under the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020

Starting Value of penalty charge (Note 1)	Tier 1	Tier 2
1 st Relevant Penalty	£6,000	£1,200
2 nd subsequent penalty issued to the same person/company	£15,000	£3,000
Subsequent penalty issued to the same person/company	£24,000	£4,800

Aggravating Factors (use all that apply) (note 2)	Tier 1	Tier 2
Evidence of failure to comply with multiple duties. (note 6)	£3,000	N/A
Acts or omissions demonstrating high culpability (note 4)	£3,000	£600
Large housing portfolio (note 5)	£3,000	£600
Vulnerable occupant and/or significant harm occurred as a result of failure to comply with regulations (note 7)	£3,000	£600

Mitigating Factors (use all that apply) (note 3)	Tier 1	Tier 2
Evidence of Low culpability (note 8)	-£3,000	-£600
Rapid action taken to remedy failings (note 9)	-£3,000	-£600

Notes 1-3 set out the overall process for determining the value of a given financial penalty. Notes 4-10 give details on specific other issues.

Note 1 Determining the starting value of a financial penalty.

The starting point for a financial penalty is based on the number of previous financial penalties issued under these regulations in the previous four years. The Council will take into account any such financial penalties irrespective of the locality to which the breach of legal duty relates.

Note 2 Aggravating factors.

After the starting point as per note 1 has been determined any relevant aggravating factors are considered and where appropriate to do so, the given value is added to the starting point to provide the maximum level of financial penalty. At this stage, it is possible for the notional penalty to be above the statutory maximum, but once mitigation and income are considered if the value is still above the statutory maximum, it will be capped as per the “general principles.”

Note 3 Mitigating factors.

After aggravating factors are considered and applied where appropriate, mitigating factors are considered and where there is sufficient and compelling evidence the relevant value will be discounted from the Financial Penalty. In considering whether it is appropriate to include a mitigating factor, evidence shall be considered that has been gathered by the inspecting officer in the course of any investigation as well as any representations that have been provided following a served Notice of Intent.

Note 4 Acts or omissions demonstrating high culpability.

This aggravating factor will be applied where, the person to which the financial penalty applies, acted in a reckless or deliberate manner in not complying with a statutory notice or previous relevant formal advice.

Note 5 Large housing portfolio.

The aggravating factor is applied where the perpetrator has control or manages of 10 or more units of accommodation. For the purposes of this aggravating factor, the definition of a person having control and person managing are as defined by Housing Act 2004 Section 263.

Note 6 Multiple failings.

To be included where there is evidence of a failure to comply with three or more regulations, irrespective of whether they are defined as “Tier 1” or “Tier 2”. For the avoidance of doubt, multiple failures of the same regulation do not apply, it is based on evidence of failure of duties under separate provisions within the regulations.

Note 7 Vulnerable persons and/or serious harm.

This factor will be applied if either the property is occupied by a vulnerable person or if significant harm has occurred as a result of the failure to comply with the duties imposed by these regulations. A vulnerable person is defined as:

A person who suffers or is at risk of suffering harm or detriment which the ordinary person would not suffer or be at risk of suffering due to age, disability, or severe financial insecurity.

This factor applies where an occupant is vulnerable and, due to the underlying failure to comply with the relevant legislation is placed at additional risk or harm compared with a non-vulnerable resident.

For purposes of this factor, significant harm is defined as:

A physical or mental illness or injury that corresponds to one of the four classes of harm as recorded in Housing Act 2004 Section 9 Operating Guidance for the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Note 8 Low culpability.

This factor will apply where the perpetrator provides sufficient evidence that they only marginally fell short of their legal obligations, for instance:

- Significant efforts were made to address the relevant breach of duty, although they were inadequate to mitigate the underlying cause to issue the penalty.
- They have offered a reasonable defence for why they were unaware of the breach of duty.
- Failings were minor and occurred as an isolated incident.

It will not be sufficient to claim not to have known of the legal requirement or deficiency that forms the underlying reason for the financial penalty in order to benefit from this factor.

It will also not apply where the underlying failure was due to the inaction of the perpetrator in properly managing rented properties, responding to complaints of poor standards, carrying out routine visits, instructing others to assist where necessary etc.

Note 9 Rapid action taken to remedy failings.

This factor will apply where, on notification of the alleged failure of the legal duty, the perpetrator took rapid action to remedy the underlying failings which could mean:

- Undertaking remedial works to address the deficiencies noted.
- Obtaining copies of existing electrical reports and providing them to the relevant party.

In order to benefit from this factor, it is the responsibility of the perpetrator to provide sufficient evidence of compliance. It will not be sufficient to simply claim works have been completed, but photographs, videos, and arrangements with the Private Sector Housing Team to visit are all appropriate measures to demonstrate compliance.

In assessing whether “rapid action” was taken, the Council will take into account the extent of the remedial works or actions required, and the time taken from receipt of any requirement to action. This could be evidence of quotes for works, agreed start dates from contractors etc.

In setting the financial penalty the Council assumes that the offender is able to pay any penalty imposed unless they supply suitable and sufficient financial evidence to the contrary. It is for the offender to provide this information. If the Council is not satisfied that reliable or suitable information has been provided, reasonable inferences relating to their ability to pay will be drawn from the information available and any other evidence available to the Council.

The ability of an offender to raise finance against their rental portfolio may be taken into consideration where the offender claims they are unable to pay a financial penalty and shows they have only a low income.

Statement of Principles under the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015

This statement sets out the principles that South Kesteven District Council will apply in exercising its powers to require a relevant landlord to pay a financial penalty.

The Regulations require the Council to prepare and publish a statement of principles which it proposes to follow in determining the amount of a penalty charge.

In determining the amount of a penalty charge, the Council must have regard to the statement of principles which was most recently prepared and published at the time when the breach in question occurred.

Legislative background

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 came into force on 1 October 2015 and introduced the following duties (amended by the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022) for “relevant landlords” when premises are occupied under a “specified tenancy”:

- A smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of the premises on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation; and
- A carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room of the premises which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and contains a fixed combustion appliance other than a gas cooker.
- Checks are made by or on behalf of the landlord to ensure that each prescribed alarm is in proper working order on the day the tenancy begins if it is a new tenancy, and
- Where, following a report made on or after 1st October 2022 by a tenant or by their nominated representative to the landlord, a prescribed alarm is found not to be in proper working order, the alarm is repaired or replaced.

Where the Council has “reasonable grounds” to believe that a relevant landlord is in breach of one or more of the duties the authority must serve a remedial notice on the landlord.

Reasonable grounds include evidence from a Private Sector Housing Officer or other relevant professional such as an Officer of the Council, Fire service, Police etc.

In line with the Council’s Corporate Enforcement Policy, a staged approach will be used, giving the landlord 7 days to comply where there is no history of non-compliance. If there is a history of noncompliance or compliance is not achieved within 7 days a remedial notice will be served.

Where a remedial notice has been served and the Council is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the landlord on whom a remedial notice was served has failed to take the

remedial action specified in the notice within the specified period the Council must (where the occupier consents) arrange for the remedial action to be taken and may require the landlord to pay a penalty charge.

Principles followed in determining the amount of Penalty Charge

The purpose is to protect the safety of residents in rented accommodation. Where legislation is not complied with the financial penalty aims to:

- Change the behaviour of the landlord and deter future non-compliance.
- Eliminate any financial gain associated with non-compliance.
- Be proportionate; giving consideration to seriousness, past performance, risk, and Government guidance.
- Reimburse the Council for costs incurred in enforcement.

Penalty Charge

The Regulations allow a civil penalty of up to £5,000 to be imposed on landlords who fail to comply with a remedial notice.

The level of penalty covers the cost of all works in default, officer costs, inspections, and administration on a cost recovery basis. In addition to this, an appropriate and proportionate penalty fine is levied.

The level of Penalty Charge is set on a scale with a minimum penalty of £700.

Where there is a history of noncompliance or unspent convictions relating to housing, or where there are increased risk factors such as vulnerable occupiers, or the property presents a high risk, additional charges will apply to a maximum of £4,500.

Level of Penalty Charge

A fee of £700 will be charged in all cases. This covers the cost of works in default, officer costs, inspections, administration, and a penalty for non-compliance with the notice.

In addition to the £700 charge, additional penalties will be levied as follows:

- Previous spent or unspent conviction or works in default.
undertaken relating to the owner's role as a landlord. £1,000
- Previous remedial action taken under this legislation. £1,000
- Per additional storey above or below ground level
(e.g. Two storey house is £100; Three storey house is £200) £100
- No clear or direct means of escape £500

- Increased risk of ignition or spread of fire.
(e.g. poor electrics, open fires etc.) £500
- Vulnerable occupants (e.g. elderly or disabled persons,
children or others considered vulnerable due to their
circumstances) £500

Energy Efficiency – Private Rented Property Minimum Standard

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 set out the minimum level of energy efficiency for private rented property. The minimum is currently set at an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of band E.

The Council will have regard to the Guidance for landlords and local authorities on the minimum level of energy efficiency required to let domestic property issued by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy in the application of this legislation.

The minimum standard applies to domestic privately rented properties which are let under certain types of tenancy, and which are legally required to have an EPC as described in the Regulations.

Subject to certain exclusions and exemptions the prohibition on letting sub-standard property takes effect as follows:

- From 1 April 2018, landlords of relevant domestic private rented properties may not grant a tenancy to new or existing tenants if their property has an EPC rating of Band F or G (as shown on a valid Energy Performance Certificate for the property).
- From 1 April 2020, landlords must not continue letting a relevant domestic property which is already let if that property has an EPC rating of band F or G (as shown on a valid Energy Performance Certificate for the property)

Where a landlord wishes to continue letting property which is currently sub-standard, they will need to ensure that energy efficiency improvements are made which raise the EPC rating to a minimum of E.

In certain circumstances as defined in the Regulations, landlords may be able to claim an exemption from the prohibition on letting sub-standard property. Where a valid exemption applies, landlords must register the exemption on the national PRS Exemptions Register.

Most exemptions last for 5 years, but do not pass to a new owner or landlord on sale or transfer of the property. The new owner will need to either improve the property to the minimum standard, or register an exemption themselves, where one applies, if they wish to continue to let the property.

The Council will use the information contained in the PRS Exemptions Register to check compliance with the Regulations. Where it is suspected that a landlord may be in breach of the prohibition on letting sub-standard property, the Council may serve a Compliance Notice requesting information from the landlord to decide whether that landlord has in fact breached the prohibition.

The Council will impose a financial penalty at the maximum level permitted by the Regulations and will also impose the publication penalty, where satisfied that the landlord is, or has been in the last 18 months:

- in breach of the prohibition on letting sub-standard property (which may include continuing to let the property after April 2020), or
- in breach of the requirement to comply with a Compliance Notice, or
- has uploaded false or misleading information to the Exemptions Register.

The maximum penalties are currently as follows:

- £2,000 for renting out a sub-standard property for less than 3 months.
- £4,000 for renting out a sub-standard property for 3 months or more.
- £1,000 for providing false or misleading information on the PRS Exemptions Register
- £2,000 for failing to comply with a compliance notice.

Where penalties are imposed under more than one of the above, the total penalty may not exceed £5,000. This applies per property and per breach.

The Council will impose the maximum penalty for each of the breaches.

A publication penalty means that some details of the landlord's breach will be published on a publicly accessible part of the PRS Exemptions Register, where it will be available to view for 12 months.

As a penalty may be served up to 18 months after the suspected breach, a person may be served with a penalty notice after they have ceased to be the landlord of a property.

Appendix D:

Example of a Decision Log & Action Plan

Decision Reference:					
Alleged offender			Offence and Legislation		
Name:					
Address:					
Corporate Priority:					
Priority Evaluation	Y	N		Y	N
Public safety – protecting our community/removing dangers to life			Immediate & significant environmental harm or nuisance		
Significant financial loss to council			Significant impact on delivery of overall priorities		
Statutory duty/national enforcement priority			Significant reputational loss		
Outline of Circumstances and Decision / Advice Sought					

Evidential / Public Interest Criteria	Y	N		Y	N
Sufficient evidence to prosecute			Offer of caution rejected by offender		
Previous advice / warning given			Court likely to impose nominal penalty		
Any previous conviction(s) / caution(s)			Evidence of recklessness or negligence		
Was there risk to public health & safety			Long (unjustifiable) delay since offence		
Was there risk or danger to environment			Other sanctions available		
(Actual / potential) financial loss incurred			Previous suggestion of no prosecution		
Oversight/ignorance of the law			Victim content for no prosecution		
Has offender been co-operative			Officer obstructed		
Is offender young, elderly, or vulnerable			(Actual/potential) gain to the offender		
Is there a 'vulnerable' victim			Failure to comply with a statutory notice		
A 'technical' offence			Evidence of 'intent' or 'guilty knowledge'		
Widespread publicity about type of offence			Long term/recurrent offending		
Investigating Officer:		Team Leader/ Manager		Consulted Y / N	
Signed:		Date:			

Financial and Reputational Costs and Benefits

Decision / Advice			
Decision Summary:			
Prosecution		Further investigation needed	
Injunction		No Further Action – Public Interest	
Simple Caution		No Further Action – Priority Area	
Bankruptcy		No Further Action - Evidential	
Eviction		Other (specify)	
Reprimand/Final Warning			
Further legal advice needed			
Action Plan			
Further Action Agreed	Action Date By	Officer	
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
Service Manager:		Signed	Date

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Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26

WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT TITLE	OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMIITEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE PRIORITY
10 December 2025				
Rural Crime Action Team presentation	[External – Rural Crime Action Team] Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Service (Public Protection)	For an update to be given on the work of the Rural Crime Action Team.		
LCC Health Scrutiny Committee update		Update provided by Cllr Morgan		
Corporate Plan: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Q2	Charles James (Corporate Policy Officer)	To present the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan 2024-27 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for quarter 2 2025/26.		Effective Council
Customer Service Update Q2 2025/26	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	To provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Q2 2025/26.		Effective Council
Welfare & Financial Advice Team update – Q2 2025/26	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	To provide the Committee with an update regarding the Household Support Fund (Q2 2025/26), and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice team. This will detail the activity undertaken		Enabling economic opportunities Effective council

REPORT TITLE	OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMIITEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE PRIORITY
		by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities		
Armed Forces Update	Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager	This report provides an update on the Council's actions to meet its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Act and the Armed Forces Covenant; achievements under the Council's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award; heritage recognition delivered by the council's Soldiers from the Sky airborne forces trail project; engagement and advocacy agendas and plans for the coming year.		Connecting communities Enabling economic opportunities Housing Effective council
Small unmanned aircraft (SUA Drone) Policy	Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead	To seek comment on and recommend Cabinet approves the policy to allow officers, under strict control, to utilise small (under 250 grams) drones fitted with cameras. This would be to undertake inspections on properties to identify damage as well as pre planned maintenance inspections for works at height.		Effective Council

REPORT TITLE	OFFICER	PURPOSE	ORIGINATED/COMMIITEE HISTORY DATE(S)	CORPORATE PRIORITY
27 January 2026				
Customer Service Update Q3 2025/26	Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	To provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for Q3 2024/25		Effective Council
Welfare & Financial Advice Team update – Q3 2025/26	Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community)	To provide the Committee with an update regarding the Household Support Fund (Q3 2025/26), and the wrap around support provided by the Welfare and Financial Advice team. This will detail the activity undertaken by the team, number of residents supported, value of support provided and an update regarding District, County and National activities		Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan Update				

Unscheduled Items

Report title	Issue	Originated	Corporate Priority

The Committee's Remit

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

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

- Street furniture