

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**Wednesday, 10 December 2025,
10.00 am**

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Max Sawyer

Cabinet Members

Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Richard Cleaver

Other Members present

Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Elvis Stooke

Officers

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Community)
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection
Andrew Beaver, Community Safety Manager
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Nicola Moore, Customer Services Manager
Charles James, Policy Officer
Debbie Nicholls, Armed Forces Officer
Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

27. Public Speaking

There were none.

28. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pam Bosworth, Lee Steptoe, Rhea Rayside and Charmaine Morgan.

Councillor Rhea Rayside was substituted by Councillor Max Sawyer.

29. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

30. Minutes of the meeting held 16 October 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2025 were AGREED as an accurate record.

31. Updates from the previous meeting

It was noted that the outstanding actions were completed prior to the meeting.

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

There were none.

33. Rural Crime Action Team presentation

The Rural Crime Action Team (RCAT) presentation was given by PC Chris Davis.

The presentation encapsulated the following:

- Composition of the RCAT
- Scope and specialist operations of the RCAT
- Priority delivery groups
- Examples and analysis of current operation outcomes (including court results).
- Advice relating to theft of rural property.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was noted that there was a widespread issue about under-reporting of theft. The RCAT representative expressed that the best way to tackle this was to publicly highlight the success that the RCAT had with recovery of items.
- The RCAT representative did not have any statistics regarding the cultural identity of those involved with rural theft.
- It was confirmed that the goods from many high value rural thefts were subsequently relocated across Europe or broken into parts. However, it was noted that the rural theft within South Kesteven largely related to small value thefts rather than larger machinery.
- Members thanked the RCAT representative for his attendance.

The Rural Crime Action Team presentation was noted.

34. Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - Mid-Year (Q2) 2025/26

The Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - Mid-Year (Q2) 2025/26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing.

This report was the second of the reporting cycle and covered the period July to September 2025 (Quarter 2 2025/26).

Appendix A presented the overall performance against the eight actions presented. Commentary by the responsible officer was provided for each action. Performance was summarised using a RAG system as follows:

Seven of the actions were rated Green. These were actions which were on or above target as planned.

One action was rated as Amber, these were those off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement was delayed but with resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.

Zero actions were rated as Red. These were actions that are significantly below target.

Zero actions were rated as N/A. These were actions for which work had not yet meaningfully commenced e.g. being sequenced on the completion of other items, or where data was unavailable.

The Policy Officer did clarify that for Com7, on page 32 of the appendix, the cumulative total of money levered by the SK community fund was £4621.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was confirmed that the UKSPF did not undermine the existence of the SK Community Fund going forward. Alternatively, the UKSPF was used as a mechanism to support groups requiring funding exceeding £5000.
- Whether there was to be an upturn on the Quarter 3 and 4 results for Com7 would depend on the projects or groups that the funds were spent on.

The Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - Mid-Year (Q2) 2025/26 was noted by the Committee.

35. Customer Service Update - Quarter 2 - 2025-26

The Customer Service Update - Quarter 2 - 2025-26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing.

Appendix 1 showed the number of customer interactions so far during 2025/26, and comparison to Q2 2024/25. These interactions included all methods of contact.

In comparison to Q2 2024/25, all contact had increased slightly (2,097) with website contact increasing significantly by 300,071.

The increase in website contact was a result of increased use of online forms and online portals (such as Benefits and Council Tax), with the portal seeing over 90,000 transactions since it was launched. In addition, the waste round review resulted in an increase in contact for waste services pages, particularly during September 2025. Across the website, there was a total of 452 engagements with the 'did you find this page useful?' function – 119 stated yes (29%) and 333 stated no (71%).

During Q2 2025/26, 94% of calls were answered, with just 6% of calls being 'abandoned' to other service channels. This was an improvement from Q2 2024/25, where these figures were 81% and 19% respectively.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was confirmed that the Website Feedback page within the report's appendix related to individual enquiries.
- Noting that 71% of respondents stated that they did not find the web page useful, it was confirmed that improvements were made in the 12% of cases where sufficient constructive information was given.
- Reassurance was sought that Customer Service remained accessible to more vulnerable individuals. Reassurance was given that in-person appointments for vulnerable individuals was still encouraged within the Customer Service team. Furthermore, a consultation about accessibility was planned for quarter 4.

The Customer Service Update - Quarter 2 - 2025-26 was noted by the committee.

36. Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – Q2 2025/26

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – Q2 2025/26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

The initial amount of Household Support Funding for SKDC was £458,452, totalling 14% of the county allocation. Although this was subject to change should other districts be unable to allocate their funding.

An update was given in respect of the various methods within the scheme's delivery plan and funding distribution. The methods that were active were classed as being on track.

A total of 961 vouchers were issued during the period from 4 August 2025 to 22 September 2025, to the value of £170,364.

Regarding additional wrap-around support, the team received 1,028 referrals during Q2 (972 were processed), with £99,180 support provided.

The action plan for additional activities being undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26 was detailed in Appendix 1.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was queried and confirmed that SKDC engaged with organisations including the following: BBC Children in need, Better Housing Better Health, Bourne United Charities, Charis Grants, Citizens Advice, Department for Work and Pension, Len Pick Trust, Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire District Councils, Lincolnshire Community Foundation, Money and Pension Service, Percy Bilton Charity, Shine Lincolnshire.
- Members praised the extensive work of the Welfare and Financial Advice Team and queried whether their capacity level was manageable, noting that it was a small team. The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community) confirmed that there were capacity pressures when the Household Support Fund was live, however, officers were transparent with applicants about the timeframes and had not received any delay-related complaints.
- It was confirmed that the scheme issued more food support than energy support as energy support was available through other means within the wrap-around support.
- The Cabinet Member for Housing noted that they were disappointed with the turnout to the mobile support stations. However, believed that they were worth continuing because of the support given to those who engaged.
- It was confirmed that details would be sent to Members of where to refer individuals for Welfare and Financial Advice Team support.

ACTION

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – Q2 2025/26 was noted by the Committee.

37. Armed Forces Covenant Report 2025

The Armed Forces Covenant Report 2025 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Appendix A of the report outlined the work of the Council's Armed Forces Officer, supported by the Council's Armed Forces Champion, to deliver the Council's advocacy and engagement commitments under its Gold Award status within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The appendix also gave an overview of the events and activities undertaken during 2025 and actions for delivery of those in 2026.

A pictorial presentation accompanied the report.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Attention was drawn to Mr Peter Foxon's story on SKDC's YouTube channel and the soldiersfromthesky.co.uk website, exhibiting insightful Armed Forces historic material.
- It was confirmed that SKDC were compliant in meeting the three statutory principles of housing, health and education.
- It was noted that the 45-person strong Armed Forces Covenant Partnership ensured a joint approach between services.
- The Armed Forces Champion thanked the Armed Forces Officer for their dedication, confirmed that 16% of veterans in South Kesteven were female, and noted that Councillor training was being introduced from February about the Armed Forces Covenant.

Following discussions, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to recommend the Cabinet Member for Planning to publish the information within the report at the earliest opportunity,

38. Small unmanned aircraft (Drone) Policy

Councillors Moran and Dilks left the meeting.

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED for the Small unmanned aircraft (Drone) Policy to be redirected for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee.

39. LCC Health Scrutiny update

Councillor Manterfield declared an interest as an NHS employee.

It was agreed for the LCC Health Scrutiny update to be emailed to Members.

40. Work Programme 2025 - 2026

It was noted that the following amendments would be made to the Work Programme:

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| Health & Wellbeing Action Plan | - Added to January meeting |
| Citizens Advice Bureaux South Lincolnshire Presentation | - Added to January meeting |
| Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan | - Moved to March meeting |
| Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue 'Firestoppers' Presentation | - Added as unscheduled |

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

There was none.

The Chairman concluded the meeting at 11.45 am.