

Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 19 June 2025, 2.00 pm



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Lee Steptoe (Chairman)
Councillor Zoe Lane (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Pam Byrd

Other Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Ian Selby

Cabinet Members

Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing & Projects
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing)
Mark Rogers, Head of Service (Technical)
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Service (Public Protection)
Phil Swinton, Health, Safety and Compliance Manager
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Performance and Climate Change
Ricky Szulz, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Manager
Celia Bown, Senior Housing Policy and Strategy Officer
Suniel Pillai, New Build Project Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Amy Pryde, Democratic Officer

1. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emma Baker, Anna Kelly, Nikki Manterfield and Philip Knowles.

Councillor Pam Byrd substituted for Councillor Anna Kelly.

Councillor Susan Sandall substituted for Councillor Nikki Manterfield.

3. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2025

The Chairman highlighted incorrect information within the minutes of the previous meeting within item 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey'.

The minutes stated:

'A question was asked if there was an incentive to fill in the survey to which it was replied that there were vouchers for various amounts, £250, £100 and £25, winners were randomly picked by computer.'

It was clarified the incentive was considered, however, was not applied.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED**.

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

The Cabinet Member for Housing updated the Committee. Lincolnshire County Council had confirmed the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) had come into force immediately, meaning bottled water and suncream could be provided to homeless individuals.

6. Earlesfield Project Completion

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report, The report provided an update on the completion of the Earlesfield Estate project, following long standing issues within the Council's housing stock.

The original project completion date had been set for 31 March 2025. Owing to delays on site along with supporting residents with complex needs, a revised completion date was set for 31 May 2025. These delays were monitored during the latter stages of the project to ensure that the revised target date was achieved.

119 properties in total have been completed under Phase 1 & 2 of this project. However, 2 properties had not been completed, due to issues around access. The following outcomes have been achieved through this project:

- Large quantities of products containing asbestos had been removed.
- Key components had been replaced in many of the properties; kitchen, bathrooms, central heating systems, windows and doors and rewires.
- Future repair and maintenance costs on these dwellings would be minimal for the foreseeable future.

- Residents have a safe and warm home they can live in for many years to come.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee congratulated all Officers involved for their hard work in the completion of the project.

One Member sought clarification around the outcome of the 2 properties that would not vacate their properties for work to take place.

It was clarified the 2 properties that did not vacate for work had been moved over to the Improvement Programme for key work components to take place. The residents of the 2 properties had complex needs, which is why the works could not be completed by 31 May 2025. It was more cost-effective to move the 2 properties over to the Improvement Programme for the replacement of key components.

The Director of Housing confirmed that approximately 300 properties were outstanding for electrical testing. However, gas checks were enforceable for entry.

The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed the Earlesfield Project was for minor changes of tenants' properties. The Council works alongside tenants for their availability prior to a visit taking place.

One Member emphasised the brilliant work undertaken by Officers. A query was raised on whether a project of a similar nature would take place in another area of housing within the District.

The Cabinet Member for Housing stated there were no arrangements for mass programs at present. The Earlesfield Project was specific to asbestos removal.

A query was raised on whether Members could request to receive a copy of the schedule of works for improvements due to take place.

The Head of Service (Housing Technical Services) clarified the schedule of works for improvements was not published, due to being ongoing and set within the Council's budget.

Stock condition surveys were completed every 5 years; however, some components may have a longer life period. On a yearly basis, prior to the improvements going ahead, the Council and contractors would communicate with the residents on upcoming works.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the completion of the project on the Earlesfield Estate to resolve long standing issues within our housing stock.

7. New Build and Acquisition Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing provided the report which outlined an update regarding the new build housing pipeline and purchases using the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF 2) and Capital Receipts.

Swinegate, Grantham

The scheme was progressing well although handover of the properties had been delayed from July 2025 to September 2025. This is due to a road closure being required for two days on Swinegate to connect the water.

Lincolnshire County Council Highways have approved the road closure but the earliest available date for this was mid- July 2025.

Monthly contract meetings are held with Lindums and the wider project team. The focus of these meetings now relates to the completion, snagging and handover of the properties. The 20 units consists of 18 one-bedroom apartments and 2 two-bedroom apartments.

Wellington Way, Market Deeping

The 11-unit scheme was considered by the Planning Committee on the 12 June 2025. The Planning Committee granted permission for the scheme.

The proposed development scheme would provide 11 affordable dwellings, which would provide a range of 1 and 2 bed flats, and 2-bed houses, which would include a mix of terrace, semi-detached houses, as well as 3 apartment blocks. The proposed housing mix would comprise of 5 x 2-bed houses, 4 x 2-bed flats and 2 x 1-bed flats.

The procurement of the 11 units had commenced via the Westworks framework following the receipt of 7 expressions of interest. Tenders are due back in mid-July 2025, and a report would be presented to Cabinet at their meeting in September 2025 to award the contract to the successful contractor. Works were expected to commence in November 2025, subject to the outcome of the procurement process.

Larch Close, Grantham

The 21-unit scheme was granted planning permission on 8 November 2023.

On 9 July 2024 Cabinet approved the contract award to Mercer Building Solutions to build 19 units at Larch Close. The original scheme also included 2 x 4 bedroom houses but due to the higher build costs and rental income associated with these properties the decision was made to submit a variation to the application to replace these houses with bungalows to meet the need for adapted properties for applicants on the Council's Housing Register.

A S73 application has been submitted to the local planning authority for this amendment which is being determined currently.

The Chairman of Planning Committee declared she had been involved with several of the projects. She congratulated all Officers involved.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

8. Homelessness and Rough Sleeper update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report.

As previously reported, SKDC's Rough Sleeper initiative is delivered via the Change 4 Lincs (C4L) team which covers four local authority areas: South Kesteven District Council, North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council

The team is hosted by South Kesteven District Council and was created by each district council contributing their Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

As of the 4th June 2025, South Kesteven District Council had 27 open cases and 4 individuals in temporary accommodation.

It was highlighted that rough sleeping had been more visible in Grantham more recently, with tents in public areas. It was confirmed that all individuals were known to the Council, though many had complex needs and had exhausted formal housing options.

- Number of active Homelessness cases had risen to 304 in April 2025, from 294 in March 2025.
- Numbers in temporary accommodation reduced to 59 in April 2025, from 73 in March 2025.
- Numbers of nightly paid placements increased to 17 in April 2025, from 15 in March 2025.

To support the reduction of nightly paid placements, the Council had secured access to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Grantham through a partner agency. This accommodation is now being fully utilised and has proven effective in helping meet temporary housing needs for individuals for whom other options are unsuitable.

Since the closure of the night shelter in Grantham on 28th February 2025 , discussions had continued with partner organisations to explore the option of operating the shelter on a year-round basis.

At the time of closure, demand for the shelter was low. However, with the recent increase in visible rough sleeping, there is a renewed sense that reinstating this provision may now be necessary. That said, many of those currently rough sleeping have either previously accessed the night shelter and been asked to leave due to

their behaviours or declined the night shelter, raising uncertainty about whether reopening the facility would provide an effective solution to the current challenges.

The Council continued to support refugee resettlement through 31 properties, managed by SECRO. This includes 2 self-contained properties and 29 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), collectively providing 128 bedspaces, 85 of which are currently occupied.

Councillor Matthew Bailey submitted the following questions:

1. How long does it take on average to assess if someone is Priority Needs after they identify themselves to the Council? I understand some of it is dependent on how long it takes someone to return evidence/paperwork, but do we have a ballpark number for how many days it generally takes? Could we look into any service improvements we could make to speed up this time?

2. SKDC had a successful partnership for a night shelter with the Ark over the winter which came to an end in February as outlined in the report. As the number of homeless has now increased by 50%, could we look at re-opening the facility either directly or with Ark? Has the SKDC property used for the night shelter been vacant since it closed in February?

In response to question 1, the Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed it takes 1 working day to make an assessment on an individual and determine whether they are Priority Needs.

The Head of Service (Housing) highlighted the initial assessment would request answers which could provide information on whether the Officer had reason to believe they were in priority need. If an individual was in priority need, they would fall into a certain category which would dictate what duties were owed to them, for example, children, pregnancy, victims of domestic abuse or vulnerability.

As part of the assessment, the Officer's would assess whether the individual would be significantly more vulnerable than an 'ordinary' person if they were to become street homeless.

In response to question 2, the Council and the Ark had a positive working relationship. The Ark closed due to the winter coming to an end, meaning the facility was not being utilised, due to warmer weather. The Council were liaising with the Ark on re-opening of the facility.

The flats originally used as a night shelter were occupied and the community hall was used on an ad-hoc basis by residents, as it was prior to the night shelter opening. The night shelter would have to be manned by security at a cost alongside visits from Officer's every morning and evening. It was felt that this would become a big expense, if only 2 individuals required the night shelter.

The Head of Service (Housing) clarified the Council had met with the Ark and discussions were ongoing based on cost. It was confirmed, a night shelter may be trialled to envisage the possible uptake of use.

One Member noted most parks in Grantham had a rough sleeper in a tent. Concern was raised on some behaviours of the rough sleepers, that was negatively impacting residents within proximity to the areas, especially The Paddock and Dysart Park in Grantham. The concerns raised from residents was around noise, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and threats of violence.

A joint meeting was due to take place with the Police on 23 June 2025, to establish how the Council can legally and safely deal with the situation.

It was queried whether there could be a specialist scheme established for homeless individuals who may or may not want assistance from the Council.

The Council did not have the same responsibilities and legal powers as social services or the Police.

The Committee were reassured of the Council's homelessness team and Change4Lincs. A colleague was available on a daily basis on the Customer Service Desk for any homeless individuals to engage and communicate with the Council.

The Director of Housing confirmed that Officers were regularly visiting the parks in an attempt to ensure the homeless individuals were keeping the area safe and clean.

The Council's Neighbourhood Team had offered to engage with the affected nearby residents on this matter and request clear reports of incidents and behaviours taking place.

A query was raised on whether Officer's were able to identify any homeless individual that was a veteran, and whether they would be signposted to agencies under the covenant.

The Head of Service (Housing) confirmed a veteran would be established under an initial assessment, then signposted to the relevant agency.

It was queried as to how many beds and homeless individuals the Ark could hold when operational.

The Community Hall could previously hold 12 'pop-up' beds comfortably.

In term of the priority needs assessment, it was questioned whether evidence would need to be in place prior to the completion of the assessment or retrospectively.

It was confirmed the information could be provided retrospectively. A vulnerability questionnaire would also be asked of an individual where a priority need may be identified and further evidence would be requested.

One Member raised whether the homeless individuals had access to other services such as Doctors, Dentists and use of electricity to charge a phone.

The Head of Service (Housing) confirmed the individuals may be accessing local services and charities to use electricity to charge a phone. The majority of individuals were registered at a Doctors or Dentist if they need to be, and the outreach would check this at first instance.

The Council's duties and responsibilities were discussed, and it was hoped they could work in partnership with social services and the Police. One Member felt that following feedback from residents affected, in residents' opinion it seemed as if the Council were doing little to combat the problem.

Members stated that they were informing residents affected by the matter, that the Council were doing all they could in exploring all options on such a complex matter of individuals with all types of needs.

A query was raised on complaints on anti-social behaviour and whether the Council felt they were receiving sufficient support from the Police.

The Head of Service (Public Protection) confirmed the Council were being supported by the Police, as a multi-agency approach. It was clarified that any noise related complaints should be dealt with by the Council's Neighbourhood and Environmental Health team. Joint-patrols had taken place alongside Safer Streets.

A question was raised on whether the Council could solve the long-terms problem, during the winter months.

The Head of Service (Housing) clarified this would depend on engagement with the individuals and whether they wish to accept the help. The Council would continue to offer services available during winter months.

The Committee noted the latest position of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper services

9. Housing Revenue Account Capital Works Programme update June 2025

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which provided an update on the progress of the HRA Capital Programme.

During 2024/25, the Team successfully procured a number of contracts, which were detailed in paragraph 2 and 3. The contracts were for kitchens and bathrooms, roof covering replacement, lift replacement, disabled adaptations etc.

The works were completed through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The Team completed 1,868 stock condition surveys in 2024-25. The data from the surveys was used to develop the Capital Programme.

As of 31 March 2025, 325 properties did not meet the Decent Home Standard, meaning the 325 properties would be prioritised for capital investment throughout the year.

The chart on 2.11 of the report details the works completed in April and May 2025, as well as the total number of key components planned for replacement during 2025/26.

The Council had previously been awarded £4.2m of funding from the Warm Home Social Housing Fund, which was match funded by the Council to create a £8.4m project that would enable the team to continue to deliver energy efficient measures in homes with an EPC rating below C.

One Member queried how the Council's target to reduce carbon emissions was being tracked alongside the improvements being put into place.

It was confirmed the Council's Corporate carbon emission target did not include any improvements made on the Council's properties, due to not being directly occupied by the Council. The target related to assets owned and operated by the Council.

It was noted that the installation of air source heat pumps combined with other works to insulate the property was a time-consuming job. Members thanked all Officers involved.

The Head of Service (Housing Technical Services) confirmed that 472 properties failing the Decent Homes Standard would be validated and be brought through the current year's programme. The aim was for all properties to receive 100% decency at the end of each financial year.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the progress being made to deliver the Capital Works Improvement Programme and improvements in performance in order to enhance the Council's social housing stock.

10. South Kesteven District Council Draft Housing Strategy (2025-2030)

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report. The new strategy was being developed in order to address significant changes in national policy and local priorities.

Although there was no statutory requirement for the Council to have a Housing Strategy, it was recognised as best practice. It provides a clear framework for housing policy across the district.

The Draft Housing Strategy (2025-30) set out a renewed vision for a secure, safe, good quality and sustainable housing. Supporting residents to live healthy and independently in resilient communities. The document aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan and had 5 strategic priorities in place:

- Delivering affordable and specialist housing.
- Improving existing housing standards and safety.
- Supporting independent living.
- Promoting sustainable housing.
- Fostering sustainable communities.

The strategy was underpinned by core delivery principles such as customer engagement, performance management, value for money, safeguarding and partnership working.

A monitoring framework alongside the strategy would attract progress against each priority.

Consultation played a key role in shaping the draft strategy and the consultation involved council staff, partners, developers, service providers and the community. Support for the proposed priorities was strong across all stakeholder groups.

This draft strategy would undergo further consultation prior to being finalised and presented to a future meeting of Cabinet, for approval. As part of further consultation, an all Member's workshop would be arranged.

The Director of Housing confirmed the document would be formatted to coincide with the Corporate Plan.

A Member was pleased to see an objective around the introduction of specialist housing.

Concern was raised on the definition of affordable housing, and how this would tie into the Council's Local Plan.

The Director of Housing confirmed the objective on specialist housing would mean partnership working with Lincolnshire County Council and specialist housing registered providers. The Council were not a specialist housing registered provider.

It was felt that a main priority identified was the preferred option of more one-bed properties.

It was questioned whether the Council could enforce one-bed properties to be built through the Local Plan and whether the Council had powers of enforcement in the area of private sector housing.

Unfortunately, the Council did not have any powers of enforcement in relation to one-bed properties or private sector housing.

At an estimate, around 600 people on the choice-based letting system required a one-bed property, out of 1600 people.

The Head of Service (Public Protection) confirmed private sector housing could be enforceable in the event of inspections where hazards were visible. Inspections were assessed on varying degrees of enforcement powers. Some of the Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) were licensed, however, most were not licensed due to being below the occupancy threshold.

Key changes from Government legislation on the increased amount of social housing including the makeup of housing new builds with one-bedrooms. The legislation takes the balance of local need into consideration, this would support new developments coming forward.

A suggestion was made on whether the Council had enquired on purchasing care homes that had recently closed.

The Director of Housing highlighted new one-bedroom developments in Grantham. Officers would explore the local need across the district and explore other areas of district.

If there are any major changes made to the document, it would be brought back to Housing OSC at a future meeting. Following that, the Housing Strategy was due to be heard at Cabinet in October or November 2025.

ACTION: For a Member Workshop to be set up in July 2025 on the Draft Housing Strategy (2025-30).

The Committee reviewed and made comment on the draft Housing Strategy which is subject to further consultation.

(The Committee had a 15 minute break)

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

The Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25 report was introduced by the Policy Officer and report author.

Appendix A of the report provided the overall performance against the actions being presented. Commentary by the responsible officer was provided for each action.

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

Two actions were rated as Amber, these were 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 were significantly below target.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Clarity was sought as to why the delivery and effectiveness of the Housing Options service was rated as an Amber. The Director of Housing clarified this was because of the number of overdue homeless decisions – 8 out of 126, when the target was zero.
- It was confirmed that the Domestic Abuse Officer role was permanent with an officer in post.

The committee noted the Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25 report.

12. Housing Service Performance

The Housing Service Performance report was introduced by the Director of Housing and presented by the Heads of Services for Housing.

It was confirmed that Housing Service Performance reports would be provided at each subsequent Committee meeting.

Technical Services

Repairs call handling results were positive and ahead of target with the percentage of calls handled and interflowed at 92% in April with only 8% abandoned.

Whilst improvements had been made in the number of overdue repairs, emergency/non-emergency repairs completed on time, and post inspections, these were still below target. However, repairs satisfaction was on target at 95% in May.

Emergency repairs completed on time regarding damp and mould was on target at 100% in May, as was the number of overdue surveys at 1. Improvements had also been made regarding the timely completion of other repairs, with the exception of the 'no damp and mould repairs overdue.'

With the exception of the average time to repair a minor void, improvements had been made across the voids service. Particularly the average time to repair a temporary accommodation void which was on target at 7 days in May.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was confirmed that there was an agreement in place with Welland Procurement that any sub-contracting would be offered to local businesses initially.

- It was queried at what point are prices agreed with contractors. For material costs there was confirmed to already be a contract in place with Hughes Gray for the purchase of materials for in-house teams. With external contractors, separate budgeting was set out in the revenue accounts to account for the contractor's time, cost and materials.
- South Kesteven District Council facilitated four apprenticeships for local college students, two in repairs and one in voids.
- It was acknowledged that whilst the cost of materials had increased over recent years, there had not been issues with the availability of materials.
- It was confirmed that KPI's were monitored as benchmarking by using Housemark. There informed the targets set by SKDC.

Allocations & Lettings

Allocations & Lettings call handling was positive, achieving 11-13% over target for March-May 2025.

The number of cases in temporary accommodation dropped from 73 in March to 59 in May, largely due to the high number of lettings in April. The allocations statistics confirmed this with 138 offers made during April, 87 of which being SKDC properties with 51 being housing association.

The number of monthly homeless approaches remained broadly similar.

Tenancy Management statistics were presented outlining the number of anti-social behaviour cases, Right-to-Buys, successions, mutual exchanges, evictions, and notices issues.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- It was queried whether there had been an increase in the number of Housing Register applications. It was explained that trends showed there was often a spike in January and during the peak of summer.
- It was confirmed that the reason for the increase in the number of complete Housing Register application waiting for assessment was due to a combination of the complexity of the applications being received and staffing levels. The Head of Service (Housing) outlined that their focus was on decreasing the time taken to assess application as they would like to see this drop from 10 weeks to a month.
- A Member praised SKDC for retaining its housing stock and observed that more applications was likely the result of increased rent in the private sector.
- A breakdown was given of the staffing level and positions within the service.

Compliance

It was confirmed that the following areas were 100% compliant: Legionella, Asbestos, FRA, Lifts, Smoke.

Gas was at 99.3% and EICR was at 95.17%. The issue with EICR was where SKDC were being denied access by particular residents to undertake the necessary work. The Director of Housing confirmed that SKDC had taken the stance that non-emergency repairs would not be completed for properties where the statutory compliance was not in place.

The Housing Service Performance was noted by the Committee.

13. Garage Sites and their Development update

The Garage Sites and their Development update was presented by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

It was noted that the consultancy support for full stock condition and feasibility reports on the garages within the district were ongoing.

Quotes were explored from Asset management frameworks, the results of which were initially over £50,000.

Further updates would be provided to the Committee in due course.

14. Choice Based Lettings Update

The Choice Based Lettings Update was presented by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

It was outlined that the greatest number of active applications were in Band Three, followed by Band Two.

In May, there were 139 incomplete applications awaiting further information, and 47 households were successfully housed, the majority of which had been in Band One.

A full review of the allocations policy was planned to ensure that it reflected updated system functionality, met the current housing priorities, and addressed evolving local needs. A revised policy would be presented to the Committee later in 2025.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Talks were ongoing with the developer to explore the potential of closing bids when the property was allocated, rather than when it was let.
- It was confirmed that whilst it fell outside of the Allocations Policy, a website advertising mutual exchanges was being explored.
- It was outlined that rents were set by central government with scope for SKDC to increase rents annually by CPI plus 1%.
- It was queried what actions were taken by Officers to mitigate the effects of radon. The Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead confirmed 100 radon test kits had been sent to residents and SKDC had been engaging with the UK Health Security Agency to identify the most impacted areas. A barrier found was the lack of

engagement by some residents, however, SKDC were in the tender process to identify radon remediation work.

The Choice Based Lettings Update was noted by the Committee.

15. Work Programme 2025/26

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

There were none.

17. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:43.