

Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 4 December 2025, 2.00
pm



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Lee Steptoe (Chairman)
Councillor Zoe Lane (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Nikki Manterfield

Other Members present

Councillor Ian Selby

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council
Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member Housing
Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member Corporate Governance and Licensing

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing)
Phil Swinton, Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance)
Charles James, Policy Officer
Suniel Pillai, New Builds Project Officer
Kate Askew, Tenancy Services Manager
Jim Tuck, Voids Manager
Andy Garner, Capital Programme Lead
Jaron Hind-Maddock, Repairs Manager
Vicki Thompson, ?
Megan White, Support Officer Projects
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

33. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

The Chief Executive who was attending the meeting in the place of the Director of Housing and Projects who was currently on compassionate leave introduced

colleagues who were attending the meeting from the various sections of the Housing Service.

Jim Tuck – Voids Manager
Jaron Hine-Maddock – New Repairs Manager
Andy Garner – Capital Programme Lead
Vicki Thompson – Performance and Data Lead

Officers who regularly attended the Housing OSC:

Phil Swinton – Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance)
Megan White – Support Officer Projects
Suniel Pillai – New Builds Project Officer
Kate Askew – Tenancy Services Manager

And Sarah McQueen - Head of Service (Housing)

34. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ben Green, Councillor Gloria Johnson, Councillor Bridget Ley and Councillor Susan Sandall.

Councillor Gloria Johnson was substituted by Councillor Nikki Manterfield and Councillor Bridget Ley was substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

Councillor Zoe Lane, the Vice-Chairman had indicated that she would be late attending the meeting.

35. Disclosure of Interest

None disclosed.

36. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2025 were proposed, seconded and agreed.

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

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Committee that she and the Leader of the Council had attended the award ceremony for the Inside Housing Development Awards 2025 as guests of the Lindum Group Ltd who had built the development at Swinegate, Grantham known as Knapp House and she had on display at the Committee the award that had been received.

As Members were aware, the development had won the Inside Housing Development Awards 2025 for the best development up to £5m which had been a huge surprise.

Massive congratulations were given to those responsible for the development by the Committee who felt that the award was richly deserved.

The Leader of the Council stated that this was the first award that had been received in respect of Housing and hoped it wasn't the last.

38. New Build and Acquisition Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which provided the Committee with an update regarding the new build housing pipeline and purchase using Right to Buy capital receipts.

At the forefront of new developments was the Swinegate development known as Knapp House at Swinegate, Grantham which had been officially handed over to the Council in September 2025 with a formal opening ceremony taking place on 3 November 2025. The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Committee that all apartments within the development were now allocated.

The development at Larch Close, Grantham which was being undertaken by Mercer Building Solutions was progressing despite the inclement weather and was due for completion in December 2026.

Wellington Way, Market Deeping was another site which was actively progressing and work on site was due to start in early February 2026.

Planning permission for the three-unit scheme at Toller Court, Horbling was granted at the Planning Committee, October 2025. Procurement for the scheme had commenced with four expressions of interest received. A report recommending the award of the contract for the development would be presented to Cabinet at the meeting on 15 January 2026.

A public consultation had been undertaken in November 2025 in respect of the proposed development at Kesteven Road, Stamford and feedback from the consultation was currently being reviewed.

A question was asked in respect of those Members who sat on the Planning Committee who also attended the Housing OSC, did they need to declare an interest in respect of developments going to Committee. The Chief Executive indicated that there was no pecuniary interest as long as Members made no pre-determination in respect of any development.

The Committee were informed that the 12 empty properties at Lumby's Terrace, Stamford had now been sold for at least Red Book Valuation cost.

A question was asked in respect of the EPC rating on new build properties. It was stated that the highest rating was aimed for i.e. A.

Another Member asked what the projected loss of Council housing stock was in respect of Right to Buy (RTB) sales. Although the Cabinet Member for Housing did not have projected figures, in the three months of August to October only 2 properties had been lost due to RTB sales. Due to the change in the rules around RTB less applications were being received. It was indicated that the information would be circulated to Members of the Committee outside the meeting.

The Head of Service (Housing) Service stated that data was collected as required by Government at the end of the year which captured all the RTB sales, new builds and acquisitions. The next data capture would be the end of the financial year 2025/26 but the figures for 2024/25 were due to be published in the winter edition of the Skyline magazine. It was stated that the figures for 2025/26 could be brought to Committee when they had been completed next year.

➤ **Action**

Data capture figures for 2025/26 to be circulated to Members of the Housing OSC plus substitute Members attending the Committee.

(14:10 Councillor Zoe Lane arrived)

A further question was asked in respect of whether the Cabinet had approved a long term Acquisition Policy. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that a new Asset Management Plan would be coming to the February meeting of the Housing OSC which would include property acquisitions and land acquisitions with the document going before Cabinet on 10 February 2026.

The Committee noted the report and the Chairman thanked all Officers for their hard work in respect of the new build development projects.

39. Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the regular report on the status and recent activity in SKDC's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper services.

Homelessness was a year round concern which doubled when the cold weather arrived. The report updated the Committee in respect of the homelessness and rough sleeper services and highlighted the continued demand across both the statutory homelessness function which was delivered by the Council's Housing Options Team and the rough sleeper service which was delivered through the Change4Lincs Partnership.

An increase in the homelessness prevention grant funding was received for 2025/26 and this was used in conjunction with the Rough Sleeper Prevention and

Recovery Grant to meet local needs. Funding beyond March 2026 was currently unclear.

Rough sleeping remained a focus and 10 individuals were identified in the annual October 2025 snapshot which took place on 30 October 2025 and was required by MHCLG.

Homelessness figures remained steady and the use of nightly paid temporary accommodation had reduced due to the improved provision of alternative accommodation such as an HMO secured in Grantham. The winter night shelter had opened on 10 November 2025 and eight individuals had stayed on various nights since the opening.

The Council was also managing pressures linked to national resettlement programmes with the Home Office with 45 properties currently being managed by a Government contractor across South Kesteven.

The Chairman asked whether the next round of homelessness funding would be expected before Christmas when the next round of local government funding was usually known.

The Chief Executive indicated that the provisional settlement figure should be known the week commencing 15 December 2025. The figures would be worked on over Christmas and should include a number of grants which had been baselined into the multi-year settlement. A report from the Leader would go to the Joint Budget OSC on 13 January 2026.

The Chairman asked for confirmation that the funding that had been received last year had increased by 27% would this be repeated this year. The Chief Executive responded that no notification of any uplift had been received and it was expected that the revenues grant from the Government would be flatlined which would mean a negative budget.

Questions were then asked on the content of the report which included whether the figures shown in Table 2, paragraph 3.23 were they just South Kesteven figures, the Head of Service (Housing) replied that yes, the figures were only South Kesteven figures. The Rough Sleeper provision was carried out by the Change4Lincs Partnership across the four districts but was not a statutory function, it was a discretionary service that was provided for using the Rough Sleeper Funding received. The figures following on in the report referred to the homelessness function which was statutory under the Council's homelessness duty and again were for South Kesteven only.

Thanks were given to the work undertaken in respect of the Grantham Ark Project working in conjunction with St Wulfram's Church. A comment was also made in respect of the homelessness figures and that fact that some people would not engage with the Council and that perhaps the public's perception was that "nothing

is being done". The Head of Service (Housing) stated that often when the public see a visible form or homelessness its thought that the Council was doing "nothing".

Homelessness was a hugely complex issue and placing someone in accommodation was not always the answer. Often those who were homeless had very complex needs that needed to be met and a sporadic support network put in place around the person. There were also people who had a tenancy but choose to sleep rough. The Housing Team tried to engage as much as possible with homeless and rough sleepers and other partners to support them. In some case people simply do not want to engage with the Council.

In respect of a means of contact the Change4Lincs Team supplied simple older model mobile phones which tended to have a longer battery life to enable contact for those willing to engage.

Further questions were asked about whether any profiling was carried out but the Head of Service (Housing) stated that each case was individual and each person had complex needs.

A discussion then followed in respect of properties within the district used for resettlement purposes by the Government with particular organisations being referred to. The Chief Executive reminded Members of the recent briefing that Members had received in respect of Houses of Multiple Occupation within the district and information which could be viewed as sensitive. Reference was made again to properties within the district and the Member was advised to write to the Home Office to which the Member replied he had but the Home Office had indicated that it was too expensive to relate the information requested. Further discussion followed and it was stated that references to particular organisations should not be included within reports going forward.

The Head of Service (Housing) stated that a complex formula was used in respect of resettlement by the Government and although the Council did not have any say in where properties were situated, they could comment in respect of infrastructure pressures, health pressures, lack of transport links and education pressures and highlight the rurality of the area.

A further question was asked about those who were homeless or rough sleeping and who had pets and it was stated that each case was looked at individually and the Council was mindful of those who had pets and tried to make a balanced judgement.

Members noted the report and the Chairman thanked Officers for their hard work in respect of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper function.

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

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing presented the report which covered the performance of Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) against the Corporate Plan 2024-27. The Corporate Plan was adopted by Council on 25 January 2024 and the KPI's relevant to Housing were agreed by the Committee in March 2024.

The period covered was Q2 (July – September). Of the nine KPI's relevant to the Housing OSC seven were green, one was amber and HOUS12 was currently under review and would not be known until the end of the financial year. The Cabinet Member reminded the Committee that the KPI's belonged to them and were not set in stone if they were found inadequate, then the Committee could review and amend them. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing thanked the Policy Officer, Charles James for the hard work which had gone into the report.

Discussion on the KPI's followed with the following comments/questions made:

- The continued improvement to the turnaround of void properties and repairs.
- Who was delivering the Empty Homes Policy, the Head of Service (Public Protection) was leading of this policy and it was noted that there was a lot of work being undertaken on the project. It was suggested that the new Policy come to a future meeting of the Committee.

➤ Action

The new Empty Homes Policy to be added to the Work Programme for June 2026.

- Thanks were given to the Housing Team for the work that had been undertaken to improve the Service over the last few years to a Service to be proud of.
- A question was asked in respect of the target for HOUS7 and what data had been used to set the target. It was noted that the performance for this target had significantly improved and it was suggested that this target be reviewed at the February meeting of the Committee to stretch the targets going forward.
- Were the overdue decisions listed within the report the same issues or different issues from the previous ten listed. No, it was stated that these were in regard to homelessness cases and were ten different cases. It was noted that the target set was an optimistic target and going forward more tolerance would be included. It equated to 9% which was good.
- A question was asked in relation to safeguarding and domestic violence and it was stated that these were considered separately. There was a lot of work being undertaken in these areas and it was suggested that more information could be included in the next KPI report, with situations rather than statistics.

It was noted that safeguarding came under the remit of Rural and Communities OSC.

The Policy Officer stated that he would take the comments made in respect of the KPI's and the metrics used and rethink the measures going forward.

41. Housing Performance Data

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which showed a significant improvement in the Housing Service which included reduced, outstanding and overdue repairs, better damp and mould response times, fewer void properties and shorter turnround periods, higher levels of decent homes and stock conditions survey coverage.

Housing Services Performance also showed progress with reduced housing register applications, lower register numbers following increased lettings and a seasonal fall in anti-social behaviour cases.

Compliance remained strong across the key safety areas with near or 100% compliance in all areas. The Cabinet Member for Housing referred the Committee to page 56 of the report which concerned voids. Over the last 12 months she indicated that never a week passed without someone asking about void figures. At March 2025 the number of void properties had stood at 103 by October 2025 the figure stood at 50, in less than six months the figure had halved. The average time to repair temporary accommodation voids stood at eight days, three years ago the figure would have been unheard of and she praised the officers for the work that had been undertaken to get the figures to where they currently stood. She reminded Members where figures had been when looking at the data, especially those which were still showing as red, and reminded the Committee that very optimistic targets had been set.

The Head of Service (Housing) Services then went through each slide highlighting various factors.

Repairs Call Handling

All areas were above target and continued to be with a positive performance above 90%.

Reactive Repairs – All Repairs

It was noted that although the figures were still red the improvement since March 2025 had been good and the Team had done sterling work. The number of outstanding repairs had fallen from 4,075 in March to 2,660 in October which was a massive improvement. The number of overdue repairs had also reduced from 2,276 in March to 1,249 in October which showed a continued improvement. A question was asked as to what WIP stood for and it was confirmed that this was

Work in Progress. A question was asked in respect of the 10% and it was stated that this was in relation to 10% of the 4,075 total.

Reactive Repairs – In House

The total had again reduced from 2,807 in March to 1,700 in October. The number of repairs overdue had reduced from 2681 in March to 914 in October which showed improving numbers.

Reactive Repairs – Sureserve

Overall it was a positive performance on heating repairs. It was confirmed that Sureserve were the main contractor for heating. Completion was shown as on time or near to targets with post inspections at 5% with a target of 10%.

Reactive Repairs – Other Contractors

The number of repairs had reduced, however the number of repairs overdue had increased. Completion on time figures had remained below target and work was being done to mobilize the new contractors to increase capacity to complete more repairs on time and improve the service for residents. A dedicated new Contracts Officer had started in November which would help with managing contractors.

Damp and Mould

Awaabs Law had come into effect in October 2025. 85% of inspections had been completed on time in October which was ahead of target. The number of outstanding repairs had reduced from 875 in March to 270 in October. The number of jobs completed on time was below target and this was an area that was being focused on through weekly meetings with the Damp and Mould Team and the Head of Service. Where a difference in performance was highlighted, this was addressed with a focus in the particular area put in place. It was stated that the Team were on track to meet the requirements in respect of Awaabs Law.

Voids

The Cabinet Member for Housing had already highlighted the amount of work that had been undertaken in respect of Voids which were currently showing all green across all areas. Reference was made to the average void time which had been 79 days in March 2025 and now stood at 67 days in October.

Customer Satisfaction

Performance in this areas was ahead of targets with tenants happy with the work being undertaken and positive feedback was being received.

Planned Works

Direction of travel was positive and it was stated that planned works were on track to meet targets by the end of the year. Again clarity was sought that the acronym used YTD stood for Year to Date which was confirmed. Reference was made to Warm Homes Decarbonisation Social Housing Fund and the Head of Service (Housing) was confident that these targets would be met by the end of year.

Asset Management

Performance was on track to reach the 100% target by the end of the year. Once again clarity was sought in respect of the acronym used SAP which stood for Standard Assessment Procedure.

Stock Condition

It was stated that the percentage of properties surveyed would be up to date by the end of the year. The Chief Executive stated that “push back” by tenants to enable access to properties by officers was partly responsible for the amber colours shown. A question was raised in respect of access to properties to which the Head of Service (Housing) responded.

Allocations and Lettings Call Handling

The target had slipped slightly which had been due to staff shortages.

Housing Options

The number of people in temporary accommodation had fallen from 73 in September 2025 to 49 in October this was due to people moving on and people being offered permanent accommodation including new build Housing Association accommodation. Nightly paid accommodation had also reduced. The Head of Service (Housing) stated that there was an array of different reasons for people becoming homeless and it could be a combination of factors.

Allocations

In October 2025 there were 400 applications waiting assessment in October this had reduced to 289. Additional staff provision had been provided to address the backlog in processing the applications which had been a focus for the Team. A questions was asked in relation to staff to which the Head of Service (Housing) responded and stated that extra resources had been put in place to bring the figure down.

The numbers on the housing register were shown and had been split into the individual banding as requested previously with the majority of people falling into Band 3. The overall figures showed a positive position.

Tenancy Management

It was stated that it was hard to quantify the work and effort that Officers put into this particular service. Anti-Social Behaviour had fallen which was expected in the winter months, RTB sales had slowed right down with none in September or October due to the change in discounts. Work was done with tenants to try and keep them in their homes with eviction being a last resort. Again the CPNw referred to a Community Protection Notice Warning, and NSP was a Notice Seeking Possession. Due to the number of acronyms used it was suggested that a glossary be attached to the report going forward.

Compliance

The Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance) stated that since the report had been written the lift compliance was now at 100%. The Electrical Safety Certificates were still below target but were slowly increasing the total number of outstanding action stood at 16.

Fire Risk Assessments – Remedial Actions

Since the report had been published a further 181 actions had been closed and the total number of outstanding actions now stood at:

High – 0

Medium – 96

Low – 200

Advisory recommendations – 91

The Committee discussed the performance data which overall gave a positive direction of travel. Comments were made in respect of staffing levels within various Teams, actions in respect of non-compliance for issues such as gas and the risks this posed. It was suggested that a remedial action sheet be circulated to the Committee by email via the Chairman of the Committee.

➤ Action

That the Chairman to circulate an email to Members of the Committee if/when notified of remedial actions taken in respect of compliance.

Further discussion followed in respect of repairs and access to properties, timeframes, fire risks and whether there were themes, the longest void relet time and the outstanding work undertaken by the Housing Teams.

42. Work Programme 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that she wished to bring a report to the Committee in respect of the Renters Right Act. Provisional dates of when parts of the Act became effective were known and also some funding had been received. A

plan was being drawn up to cover the burden which would be placed on the Council by the Act once more detail was known and she asked for a report to come to the February meeting of the Committee.

A Committee Member who was substituting asked whether a report on Empty Homes could come to the Committee in the first quarter of 2026. He also asked about a report in respect of the Sheltered Housing Review for a total cost per scheme, fairness between the schemes and the options to rationalise any under used spaces within the facilities. Also when the garage site survey results were known could these be circulated once known rather than wait until all surveys had been completed.

Clarity was sought in respect of the timing in respect of the first quarter and it was confirmed that the Member had referred to the new financial year. It was confirmed that an Empty Homes report could come to the June meeting of the Committee.

In respect of the Sheltered Housing Review, a lot of work had gone into the Service Charge Review which was due to come to the Committee in February. It was felt that this Phase should be completed before anything further was added.

It was confirmed that updates in respect of the Garage Sites could come to the Committee as and when they were completed.

A comment was raised in respect of Article 4 which had been recently raised at meetings and it was confirmed that this would be discussed at the Joint OSC meeting.

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

None.

44. Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and thanked everyone for the work that was being undertaken within the Housing Service. He wished everyone a fantastic Christmas and a successful 2026.

Meeting closed at 15:54.