

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

11.00 AM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Ian Selby Chairman
Councillor Anna Kelly Vice Chairman

Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor Rhys Baker
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Zoe Lane
Councillor Robert Leadenham

Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Rob Shorrocks
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Sue Woolley

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager
Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager – Environmental Protection
& Private Sector Housing
Gary Andrew, IT Services Manager
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

68. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:

Emma Baker
David Bellamy
Harrish Bisnauthsing
Steven Cunnington
James Denniston
Patsy Ellis
Ben Green
Graham Jeal
Nikki Manterfield
Penny Milnes
Rhea Rayside
Nick Robins
Penny Robins
Vanessa Smith
Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Mark Whittington

69. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

70. Public Open Forum

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

71. Notices of Motion

72. Councillor Gareth Knight

Prior to the introduction of the printed motion, the Chief Executive apologised to Full Council for the identified procedural error when previously considering this motion at the meeting held on 13 October. Motions on notice are required to be tabled in order to become formal motions, through the moving and seconding of the motion. Legal advice had been received, and this meeting had been called to rectify the error.

Councillor Gareth Knight proposed the following motion:

This Council notes:

- 1. The ongoing public concern about the housing of asylum seekers by the Labour government;*
- 2. That the closure of asylum hotels is increasingly raising the question of where the government will go next to house asylum seekers;*

3. *That the private rented sector is a logical area for the government to exploit;*
4. *The use of Section 21 “no fault eviction” notices and fears from charities and tenants that they are being used to free up accommodation for government contractors to use for asylum seekers before the Renters Rights Bill abolishes Section 21 notices;*
5. *The Renters Rights Bill scheduled for Royal Assent in July 2025 with implementation scheduled from October 2025 to January 2026 (at time of writing the Bill had still not received Royal Assent);*
6. *That a wide range of councils have established mandatory registration for private sector landlords, primarily as a means of addressing concerns about “slum landlords” and substandard housing.*

This Council believes:

1. *In transparency for the sake of community cohesion;*
2. *In supporting our residents in private sector rental accommodation who fear eviction for no stated reason;*
3. *That the private rented sector is a valuable part of our housing mix and that landlords should always be supported in removing tenants who break the terms of their rental agreements.*

This Council resolves:

1. *To immediately introduce a voluntary register of all privately rented accommodation in South Kesteven, the landlords and managing agents of each property and a voluntary declaration as to whether or not the property is being used for a government contract or if Section 21 notices have been served by that landlord at any time in the last 12 months.*
2. *To ensure our housing officers receive full support in the fast and full introduction of the mandatory register as prescribed in the Renters Rights Bill.*
3. *To conduct a capacity review of our Private Sector Housing team to ensure they are adequately resourced to give proactive support to ensure our residents in private sector rental properties have safe and high quality accommodation.*

In introducing the motion, Councillor Knight ran through a history of Section 21 notices. These notices were due to be banned from 1 May 2026. There was no register for Section 21 notices; however, 18 councils in England had introduced registers to address issues with landlords.

The motion was seconded.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and seconded:

This Council notes:

1. *The Government’s announcement that Section 21 “no fault” eviction notices will be banned from 1st May 2026;*

2. *Fears from charities and tenants that the forthcoming Section 21 ban is leading to a rush of landlords “cashing in” to free up accommodation that can be converted into HMOs for government contractors to pay significantly higher guaranteed rents;*
3. *The anecdotal surge in Section 21 notices being issued, particularly in Grantham, over the last year as landlords seek to evict tenants before the ban comes into force;*
4. *Widespread public concern, fuelled by a combination of secrecy and deliberate misinformation, about the use of HMOs to house asylum seekers;*
5. *That a wide range of councils have got ahead of the Renters Rights Act by established mandatory registration for private sector landlords, primarily as a means of addressing concerns about “slum landlords” and substandard housing.*

This Council believes:

1. *In transparency for the sake of community cohesion;*
2. *In doing what we can to address matters of public concern rather than preventing discussion out of fear of not being seen to be politically correct;*
3. *In supporting our residents in private sector rental accommodation who fear eviction for no stated reason;*
4. *That the private rented sector is a valuable part of our housing mix and that landlords should always be supported in removing tenants who break the terms of their rental agreements.*

This Council resolves:

1. *To immediately introduce a voluntary register of all privately rented accommodation in South Kesteven, the landlords and managing agents of each property and a voluntary declaration as to whether or not the property is being used for a government contract or if Section 21 notices have been served by that landlord at any time in the last 18 months.*
2. *To provide updates to the Housing Committee at every meeting on the status of the voluntary register and the implementation of the Renters Rights Act including the introduction of the mandatory register.*
3. *To conduct a capacity review of our Private Sector Housing team to ensure they are adequately resourced to give proactive support to ensure our residents in private sector rental properties have safe and high-quality accommodation. This review is to report to the Housing Committee with recommended actions for consideration at the meeting scheduled for Thursday 5th February 2026.*

This amendment was accepted and became part of the substantive motion. The following points were highlighted during debate on the substantive motion:

- Section 21 notices were introduced in the 1980's.
- Rogue landlords were unlikely to participate in a voluntary register.
- Section 21 'no fault' evictions would be used to free up housing. Around 25% of councils in England have selective licensing schemes; these did not stop the serving of Section 21 evictions.

- It was legal from now until 1 May 2026 for any landlord to issue a Section 21 notice. In 2026 the private rented database would come into effect with a requirement that properties and landlords were registered. A voluntary register did not address concerns and would be an uncoded burden on officers.
- Private sector housing teams worked hard to support landlords in the district by enforcing housing standards.
- In one member's view, the cause of instability in the market was due to their being no coherent plan to address house building.
- One unintended consequence would be that good landlords would bear the cost of registration and compliance, and bad landlords would ignore the scheme, leading to higher rent and less properties. The worst landlords would remain invisible.

An amendment to remove resolution 1 and references to the 'voluntary register' in resolution 2 was proposed and seconded, and accepted by the mover and seconder of the substantive motion. The substantive motion therefore read:

This Council notes:

1. *The Government's announcement that Section 21 "no fault" eviction notices will be banned from 1st May 2026;*
2. *Fears from charities and tenants that the forthcoming Section 21 ban is leading to a rush of landlords "cashing in" to free up accommodation that can be converted into HMOs for government contractors to pay significantly higher guaranteed rents;*
3. *The anecdotal surge in Section 21 notices being issued, particularly in Grantham, over the last year as landlords seek to evict tenants before the ban comes into force;*
4. *Widespread public concern, fuelled by a combination of secrecy and deliberate misinformation, about the use of HMOs to house asylum seekers;*
5. *That a wide range of councils have got ahead of the Renters Rights Act by established mandatory registration for private sector landlords, primarily as a means of addressing concerns about "slum landlords" and substandard housing.*

This Council believes:

1. *In transparency for the sake of community cohesion;*
2. *In doing what we can to address matters of public concern rather than preventing discussion out of fear of not being seen to be politically correct;*
3. *In supporting our residents in private sector rental accommodation who fear eviction for no stated reason;*
4. *That the private rented sector is a valuable part of our housing mix and that landlords should always be supported in removing tenants who break the terms of their rental agreements.*

This Council resolves:

1. *To provide updates to the Housing Committee at every meeting on the status of the implementation of the Renters Rights Act including the introduction of the mandatory register.*

2. *To conduct a capacity review of our Private Sector Housing team to ensure they are adequately resourced to give proactive support to ensure our residents in private sector rental properties have safe and high-quality accommodation. This review is to report to the Housing Committee with recommended actions for consideration at the meeting scheduled for Thursday 5th February 2026.*

Debate resumed on the substantive motion:

- A capacity review had been completed on staffing within the Private Sector Housing team; an additional officer would be starting in 2026 to deal with this legislation. It would be good for this review to be shared with all Councillors.
- It was disappointing that the voluntary register had been dismissed as an idea; if the good landlords were 'on board' there was more capacity to chase the rogue ones.

In summing up, Councillor Gareth Knight thanked all members for their contributions prior to, and during this meeting.

He acknowledged the limitations of the motion – however a 'halfway house' based on good practice and certificates that were voluntary in other areas of the country had been proposed.

Opposition members didn't know what officer capacity was, but it was appreciated that this knowledge would lay with the Cabinet Member(s).

Councillor Knight felt there was concern in the public realm about Section 21 notices. Whether or not concerns were valid was beside the point – it was hoped that this motion addressed these concerns.

A recorded vote was requested – the results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For: Councillors Matt Bailey, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Tim Harrison, Gloria Johnson, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Paul Martin, Susan Sandall, Elvis Stooke, Sarah Trotter, Sue Woolley (13)

Against: Councillors Ashley Baxter, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Phil Dilks, Paul Fellows, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Habib Rahman, Max Sawyer, Rob Shorrocks, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Jane Wood, Paul Wood (16)

Abstentions: Councillors Rhys Baker, Barry Dobson, Anna Kelly, Ian Selby, Murray Turner (5)

Therefore, the motion **FELL**.

73. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 12:33pm.