

Minutes

Cabinet
Tuesday, 21 July 2026



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for HR and Economic Development (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Paul Stokes, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
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 Bridget Ley, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Elvis Stooke

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)
Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager
Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager – Environmental Protection & Private Sector Housing
Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety Lead
Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management & Market Services
Emma Powley, Interim Democratic Services Manager
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services

18. Public Open Forum

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

19. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

20. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

21. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 2 June (ordinary) and 9 June (extraordinary) were agreed as a correct record.

22. Warmer Homes Grant

The Cabinet Member for Housing submitted a report and outlined that the Council had submitted a bid to Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for additional grant from the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund of £999k to enable energy efficiency improvement works to be completed on an additional 106 properties in the Council's Housing Stock during 2026/27. Confirmation was received in June 2026 that the Council had been awarded the grant.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the acceptance of the additional £999k Warm Homes Social Housing Fund grant which has been awarded to the Council by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero**
- 2. Approve the award of an additional £1.998m of works to Equans Buildings Ltd who are the Council's contractor for installing energy efficiency and low carbon measure in Council owned properties.**

Reasons for the decision

To ensure the Council is able to proceed with the proposed energy efficiency improvement works detailed in table 1 of the report.

Other options considered

Cabinet could have chosen not to accept the additional grant funding, but this would not have supported the achievement of an EPC rating of C across the Council's housing stock by 2030.

23. Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drone) Policy

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing submitted a report and explained that the use of Drones /Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA) was rapidly growing, and the use of drones would provide a safer option for certain work streams

for some Council activities. It was noted that the policy was designed to ensure compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) guidance on drone usage in the UK.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- a) Approves the policy and the use of Drones for specified works.**
- b) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Officer to make any minor or inconsequential amendments to the policy.**

Reasons for the decision

To ensure the Council has an approved policy in place for the use of Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones).

Other options considered

The Council could have continued to utilise scaffolding and mobile towers with current safety mitigations or engage contractors to undertake the works and inspections.

The following points were highlighted during the debate:

- At the request of members of the scrutiny Committee, the policy has been amended to include a process of informing residents of planned and emergency use of drones.
- As an additional safety feature, only drones with geofencing will be purchased and operated by the Council.
- A Data protection Impact Assessment would be undertaken when the Council would want to use a drone for any new purpose.

24. 2026/2027 Pay Award

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for HR and Economic Development introduced the report that sought Cabinet approval of additional budget to implement a pay award in line with the National Employers' for Local Government Services final offer effective from the 1 April 2026.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

Approved an additional budget of:

- **£214,000 from the Local Priorities Reserve to fund the General Fund impact of the proposed pay award impact for 2026/27.**
- **£37,000 from the Housing Priorities Reserve to fund the HRA Impact of the proposed pay award impact for 2026/27.**

Reasons for the decision

The staff award is a recognition of the hard work and dedication of our employees. It is proposed to back date the pay award to 1 April 2026. A delay in implementation could negatively impact some members of staff.

Other options considered

Not implementing a pay award would have had a significant impact on staff morale, employee relations, staff retention and relations with the Trade Unions

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Other options considered

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25. Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy Update

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste submitted a report that provided Cabinet with an update on changes to the Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy. It also sought Cabinet approval to implement the updated policy, which had been supported by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

Review and approve the updated Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy.

Reasons for the decision

The proposed amendments to the Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy would impact all residents, and therefore the report recommends that Cabinet:

- Review and approve the updated Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy

These changes have been proposed to ensure the services delivered by the Waste Team provide the best possible service standards for residents. They will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. The change in start time will ensure more consistent collections. It will also ensure that waste is not stored on vehicles in the depot yard overnight, which is a breach of health and safety regulations. The variations to Bank Holiday working will reduce the impact of Bank Holiday collection changes on residents and will reduce missed bin numbers. It will lessen the complexity of the collection schedule for residents, resulting in a more consistent collection schedule

- Other options considered

- The alternative option considered was to do nothing and leave the Refuse and Recycling Operational Policy as it currently stands and not make the suggested changes to start times and Bank Holiday working. This option would not enable the Waste Team to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Waste Service which is a key requirement under the Environment Act 2021.

The following points were highlighted during the debate:

- Success would be measured by the missed bin rates, which were already tracked and monitored.
- It was reported that there would be no additional costs related to the renewed policy.

26. Asylum Dispersal Grant Funding

The Cabinet Member for Housing elaborated on a report that sought Cabinet approval to accept the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding awarded to SKDC and to agree a proposed spending allocation framework. It was explained that following the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 21st July 2026 where this item had been discussed at length, in relation to Recommendation 2, it was the Cabinet Members intention to amend the funding amount for English Language lessons (in table 2 of the report) from £10,000 to £25,000.

The Leader summarised the comments raised by members at the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC) on this item.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the allocation of proposed asylum dispersal funding as detailed within Table Two in the report.**
- 2. Delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to allocate the remaining funding or reallocate any elements of the funding in Table Two which are not**

required or under-utilised to other permitted activity, subject to the relevant financial thresholds.

3. Approved the adoption of the SK Community Fund process to award any elements of available funding to community organisations as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

Reasons for the decision

The Council has been awarded £666,000 of Government funding and is projected to receive a further amount of £321,600 in financial year 2026/27. The funding can only be utilised to mitigate the impact of asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation within the district of South Kesteven.

Therefore, it is necessary to determine how the funding can be best utilised to support asylum seekers and the wider community. The amounts allocated in Table Two are estimated amounts and may be subject to change. Therefore, it was recommended that delegated authority be provided to reallocate any elements of the funding which are under-utilised or not required. As the proposals include elements which will be delivered by community organisations (Voluntary Sector fund, and leisure and cultural activities) it will be important that the Council establishes a clear and transparent process for community groups to bid for the monies available.

Other options considered

The Council has received funding specifically to support asylum seekers and the wider community in relation to the Government's Asylum Dispersal Scheme. It will be necessary to report on how the funding has been allocated and spent. Therefore the 'do nothing' option has been discounted.

It was noted that the elements of the community funding referred to in the report, are suggested to be managed by the Community Development team under the same criteria as the community fund. In terms of measurability of success, it was noted that this would most likely be related to statistic which would be indicators. However, the quantifiable evidence of success would be very difficult to measure.

27. Local Plan Progress and Updates

The Cabinet Member for Planning submitted a report requesting that Cabinet consider the future direction of the Local Plan preparation and associated governance arrangements. It was reported that continuing work on the existing legacy Local Plan to its current timetable would involve abortive work and would most likely fail to deliver a Local Plan capable of meeting tests of soundness. Therefore, Cabinet were being asked to agree that the Council ceases work on the existing 'legacy' plan to agree that plan-making activities under the new Local Plan-making system be introduced.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Agree that the Council ceases work on the existing ‘legacy’ Local Plan.**
- 2. Agree that plan-making activities under the new Local Plan-making system are initiated.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Planning and Growth, following consultation with the portfolio holder for Planning to:**
 - a) Authorise publication of a Notice of Commencement at the earliest appropriate opportunity to start the plan-making process;**
 - b) Authorise publication of a Local Plan Timetable (based on the indicative timetable attached at Appendix A, or any variation of) to provide full details of the programme for production of the Local Plan on the Council’s website;**
 - c) Authorise the carrying out of a Scoping Consultation exercise with stakeholders and publish a summary of the scoping consultation; and;**
 - d) Prepare and approve the documents and actions that are required to support the self-assessment requirements for passing Gateway 1.**

Reasons for the decision

Continuing work on the existing legacy Local Plan to its current timetable would involve abortive work and most likely fail to deliver a Local Plan capable of meeting tests of soundness. Option 1 has therefore been discounted as it carries the greatest risk to the Council.

Other options considered

Potential to apply faster build out rates, higher densities to achieve higher overall numbers has been considered and rejected. Officers have in confidence consulted with MHCLG, Planning Advisory Service and the Planning Inspectorate. The common response has been to be understanding of our position and open to our proposed change in Local Plan approach. MHCLG officers have asked to be kept advised of Cabinet’s decision. Officers have reviewed how the Council should respond to the new plan-making system and draft guidance. Two options have been considered:

Option 1 - Continue under current regulations and submit by December 2026

- If the submission deadline is missed, or the plan is found unsound, the Council would need to restart plan preparation under the new system. This would make much of the work already undertaken abortive and create reputational risk for SKDC.
- It is no longer realistic to complete the evidence base and draft Regulation 19 Local Plan in time for consultation in September 2026. This option is therefore not feasible.

- Option 2 - Transition now to the new plan-making system (Recommended)

- This would provide clarity and certainty. A single statutory pathway, with defined gateways, would reduce risk and establish clear expectations.
- It would make best use of existing work. Existing options, plan content and evidence could be developed further and redirected to address the need for additional sites to support the Council's housing supply.
- At the time of writing, the shape of Local Government Reorganisation and its implications for the Local Plan process are unknown. The indicative Local Plan timetable therefore reflects the need to consult neighbouring authorities to maximise alignment on timescales and boundaries before final timelines are confirmed.

The following points were highlighted during the debate:

The Government had made it clear that all local authorities should continue their production of an up-to-date local plan and to have them in place as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation was not a reason to delay plan-making and any delay in doing so would increase risk to the authority.

It was explained that there was a need for a continuation or preparedness post LGR and it was made evident that SKDC needed to keep progressing their Local Plan with the possibility of working towards growth in the local area.

28. Stock Management Policy

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing Committee submitted a report that sought Cabinet approval of the draft Stock Management Policy. To strengthen the formal arrangement, an overarching Stock Management Policy had been drafted and was appended to the report. It was explained that any stock level write-offs would be in accordance with the financial regulation and would vary with each of the five areas.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

Approve the Stock Management Policy

Reasons for the decision

It is essential that the Council has a Stock Control Policy to ensure that Council assets are protected thereby reducing the risk of theft.

It is also important that the Council is aware of its stock levels in the event of an insured peril where it would need to be evidenced as part of any claim

Other options considered

The alternative option was not to be approve a Stock Management Policy, but this has been discounted as there is a clear recommendation from Internal Audit supported by Section 151 officer to put in place a formal Stock Management Policy in place.

29. Local Government Reorganisation - Government Decision

Local Government Reorganisation - Government Decision

Part 4 of the –(4) Cabinet Procedure Rules section 7.6 of the Constitution states that The Leader may put on the agenda of any Cabinet meeting any matter that they wish, whether or not authority has been delegated to Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or any Cabinet Member or Officer in respect of that matter. The Proper Officer will comply with the Leader’s requests in this respect.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for HR and Economic Development reported that on the 16 June 2026 the Government had announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation in Lincolnshire. At Full Council on the 16 June 2026, it was apparent that the consensus amongst all groups was disappointment in the Governments proposals. Since the decision, several Councillors had raised concerns about the decision and were keen for the Council to consider its position in terms of potentially challenging the decision; challenging through lobbying, through advice and legally challenging if necessary.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance to urgently obtain independent specialist legal advice on the Government’s decision and the process by which it was reached.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to seek from Government the reasons, evidence, comparative assessment and consultation analysis underpinning its decision.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to engage with affected local authorities, Members of Parliament and other relevant stakeholders regarding the Government’s decision and any shared concerns arising from it.**
- 4. Request that as soon as feasible following receipt of independent specialist legal advice, the Director of Law and Governance reports back to Cabinet on the options available to the Council in respect of challenging the Governments decision on Local Government Reorganisation.**

The following points were highlighted during the debate:

- The Governments decision was not in the best interests of the residents of South Kesteven or those in the south Lincolnshire.
- A reserve of £200,000 to be called the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Reserve be proposed to the General Fund Provisional Outturn Report 2025/26 report (at agenda item 14) in readiness for presentation to Governance and Audit Committee with an additional.
- The draft Structural Changes Order (SCO) were due to be received by the Council on the 21 July 2026 and the decision by the outgoing Secretary of State was binding. Warding arrangements were still to be finalised by which would clarify the number of members for Unitary Authority 1 and Unitary Authority 2.
- The motion proposed at Council on the 16 July 2026 to call an Extraordinary Council meeting was withdrawn by the member who proposed the motion in light of the above recommendations.

30. Designation of Air Quality Management Area Order 2026

The Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement submitted his report which sought Cabinet approval for the Air Quality Management Area Order 2026, superseding the Air Quality Management Area Order 2013. It was noted that the report would be reported to a future meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

Approves the designation of an Air Quality Management Area Order 2026 to replace any previous Orders under Environment Act 1995 Part IV Section 83(1) to ensure South Kesteven District Council meets its statutory requirements in relation to Air Quality.

Reasons for the decision

There have been no reported exceedances of the National Air Quality Objectives for the NO₂ 1 hourly mean objective of 200µg/m³ for the last 8 years. Air quality continues to improve in respect of NO₂ within the district; the AQMA Statutory guidance requires the reviewing and removal of the hourly mean from the AQMA as it is no longer required.

Other options considered

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To not approve the designation and the existing Order. However, the preferred option is option 1, as the current designation is no longer meeting the statutory requirements and requires varying by way of a new designation to remedy this.

31. Housing Revenue Account Provisional Outturn Report 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Finance elaborated on the report that provided details of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn position 2025/26 and covered the Revenue Budget, Capital Programmes and Reserves overview. It was explained that the repairs backlog has significantly reduced during the current year. It was noted that with regards to the capital programme, budgets were set during the budget setting process and but there could be movements depending on the condition and life of the assets.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Reviews the provisional Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Outturn position and the supporting appendices for the financial year 2025/26.**
- 2. Notes the revenue and capital budget carry forwards in para 3.5 and para 4.8 of the report, respectively.**

Reasons for the decision

It is important that Cabinet are aware of the financial position of the Housing Revenue Account to ensure they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council. Effective budget management is critical to ensuring financial resources are spent in line with the budget and are targeted towards the Council's priorities. The report provides an overview of the provisional Housing Revenue Account outturn financial position for 2025/26.

Other options considered

Cabinet have oversight of the Council's budgets and therefore, the option of not producing a provisional outturn report was discounted.

32. General Fund Provisional Outturn Report 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report that provided Cabinet with details of the General Fund provisional outturn position for the Financial Year 2025/26, and covered the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and a Reserves overview. It was explained that the report had been discussed at the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the day where members had commented that the administration had handled the budget very well.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Review the provisional General Fund Revenue and Capital Outturn position including the supporting appendices for the financial year 2025/26.**
- 2. Note the revenue and capital budget carry forwards in Appendix B and C of the report.**
- 3. Endorse the proposed reserve movements in table 3 of the report in readiness for presentation to Governance and Audit Committee with an additional reserve of £200,000 to be called the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Reserve.**

Reasons for the decision

It is important that members were aware of the financial position of the General Fund to ensure they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council. Effective budget management is critical to ensuring financial resources are spent in line with the budget and are targeted towards the Council's priorities.

The report provides an overview of the provisional General Fund outturn financial position for 2025/26.

Other options considered

Cabinet have oversight of the Council's budgets and therefore, the option of not producing a provisional outturn report was discounted.

33. Use of Head of Paid Service Emergency Powers

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the use of Emergency Powers by the Head of Paid Service.

Reasons for the decision

To note the report as is required by the relevant provision in the constitution.

34. Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers

RESOLVED:

That the decisions taken using delegated powers were noted.

35. Cabinet Forward Plan

RESOLVED:

The Forward Plan of Key and Non-Key decisions was noted.

36. Open Questions from Councillors

In response to a question asked by Councillor Tim Harrison, the Leader of the Council stated that if there was a recommendation to 'note' a report that was not satisfactory, an alternative recommendation would be put forward.

The meeting closed at 6.44pm