

Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 16 June 2020



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

The Leader: Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Barry Dobson, The Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for Communities

Councillor Dr Peter Moseley, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations

Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

Councillor Adam Stokes, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Bob Adams

Councillor Ashley Baxter

Councillor Phil Dilks

Councillor Jacky Smith

Councillor Lee Steptoe

Councillor Mark Whittington

Councillor Ray Wootten

Officers

Chief Executive (Karen Bradford)

Strategic Director, Growth (Paul Thomas)

Strategic Director, Commercial & Operational (Gary Smith)

Strategic Director, Transformation & Change (Lee Sirdifield)

Assistant Chief Executive, Housing Delivery (Ken Lyon)

Interim Director of Finance (Richard Wyles)

Director of Law & Governance (Shahin Ismail)

Assistant Director, Housing (Harry Rai)

InvestSK, Chief Executive (Steve Bowyer)

Head of Regeneration and Visitor Economy, InvestSK (Liz Bates)

Head of Governance (Jo Toomey)

Scrutiny Officer (Zena West)

Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

At the last meeting of the Cabinet on 17 March 2020 the Leader of the Council revised his Scheme of Delegation to enable him to take all Key Decisions of the Council during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, which would normally have been taken by the Cabinet. The Leader stated that he was withdrawing those arrangements made at the March meeting. His revised Scheme of Delegation re granted authority to individual Cabinet Members when sitting together as a collective body to make Key Decisions.

91. Register of attendance and apologies for absence

All Cabinet Members were present.

92. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record of the decisions taken.

93. Disclosure of Interests (if any)

No interests were disclosed.

94. Future High Street Fund

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented his report on the Future High Street Fund which recommended the submission of a Business Case on 31 July 2020 for projects in Grantham.

Lincolnshire County Council had classed Grantham as the “Hub for Lincolnshire” due to its infrastructure. A bid had been prepared in consultation with a consultancy company to apply for a £10 million grant to regenerate the town. The area that the bid covered ran from the train station approach into the town centre and up Westgate including the George Centre and Westgate Hall.

The aim was to make Grantham a more attractive place to work, live and visit. Grantham was well situated with the train infrastructure to support a strong commercial environment and encourage people to the town. The Deputy Leader referred Members to the appendices attached to the report highlighting how areas such as Westgate were proposed to be developed and work that was being undertaken with Lincolnshire County Council to help keep large vehicles out of the town centre. Officers who helped put the report together were thanked, as well as Councillors who had contributed to the document including the Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy and the Cabinet Member for Communities. The Leader made reference to how the different sectors had been highlighted within the document and the engagement and research that had been undertaken to produce the document.

A question was asked about the figures contained within the main body of the report in relation to funding. The original proposal was for works with an estimated value of £27 million, bidding for a contribution from the Future High Street Fund of £12 million. Feedback on the draft bid indicated that it would have the greatest chance of success

if the total valued contribution was below £10 million. Members also asked about the Council's contribution; the match-funding from the Council related to revenue costs associated with the bid and were unlikely to change. The total contribution required from the Council would be confirmed at the meeting on 16 July 2020.

On being put to the vote, it was **AGREED** that the Cabinet:

1. Approves the submission of the Future High Street Business Case.
2. Recommends that Council approves its financial contribution to the delivery of the Future High Street Scheme, as outlined in the Future High Street Fund report.
3. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Growth in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Interim Director of Finance, to make any minor amendments to the bid as required prior to submission.

95. Programme of Meetings 2020/21

The Chief Executive presented her report on the draft Programme of Meetings for 2020/21 and referred to the addendum that had been circulated to the Cabinet Members on 12 June 2020 updating the programme following further feedback from Members. She thanked Members for their input in developing the draft programme of meetings and stated that partner organisations had been contacted to avoid the need to reschedule meetings; conference dates and commitments had also been taken into consideration. The programme would usually be agreed at the Annual Council meeting. As the meeting was not taking place until September 2020, the recommendation was that Cabinet recommended that the Council adopt the draft programme of meetings 2020/21 at its meeting on 16 July 2020.

It was **AGREED**:

That the Cabinet recommends that the Council adopts the updated draft programme of meetings for 2020/21 at its next ordinary meeting on 16 July 2020 under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

96. COVID-19 - Financial Impact

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources presented a report to Cabinet on the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A financial impact report had been presented to the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 May 2020. A further update would be presented to this Committee on 30 June 2020 with the latest information.

The report highlighted the key budget income areas being impacted and the forecasting in place, cashflow modelling and proactive work being undertaken to protect the Council. The report also included commentary on collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates, together with the Lincolnshire Business Rate Pooling arrangements and the modelling for any reduction in the Business Rate

base. South Kesteven's profile showed that it was at a lower risk than some of its neighbouring authorities due to the diverse businesses within its area. The report also listed the costs incurred by the Council in its response to COVID-19. The Leisure provider details were contained within exempt Appendix D to the report. The report also gave details of the two tranches of funding grant received from Government (totalling £1,480,912) to help offset some of the funding shortfalls. To date, the Council had passed on £27 million in business grants, awarded £17 million as part of the extended retail relief scheme and awarded grants to over 2,800 working age council tax support claimants, reducing their council tax bills by £150.

Since the report had been published a further 58 employees from the Arts Centres had been furloughed, which would save an average of £29,000 each month. The income cashflow and risk register had been circulated to other senior finance colleagues across Lincolnshire to ensure a consistent approach and share best practice. Although the total financial cost was unknown, modelling showed income losses of £3.8 million. It was expected that this should be offset by reductions in expenditure such as the furlough of staff, income received in the form of Government grants and use of the budget stabilizing reserve that had been put in place in March 2020.

A further financial report would be presented to the July Cabinet meeting with a further review to Cabinet, at its meeting on 8 September 2020 recommending a revised budget for consideration at the Council meeting on 17 September 2020. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources endorsed the recommendations as outlined within the report. It was noted that the report had been compiled with caution scenarios due to the uncertainty of the situation.

On being put to the vote it was **AGREED** that the Cabinet:

1. Notes the current financial position for 2020/21 and the actions being taken as detailed within the Financial Impact Report.
2. Agrees to continue to monitor the current 2020/21 financial position and recommend amendments to the budget framework at its meeting on 8 September 2020 for consideration by Council on 17 September 2020.
3. Agrees to suspend car parking charges until 1 August 2020 at all Council operated pay and display car parks.
4. Agrees to continue the remuneration bonus payment of £50 to drivers, operatives, team leaders, supervisors, vehicle fitters and support staff working within the street scene service (together with any staff seconded to the service during the COVID-19 response period) for the period up to and including 30 September 2020. The bonus payment received by part-time and casual staff will be on a pro rata basis.
5. Agrees to re-introduce the billing of rent to the SMEs (small, medium enterprises) that occupy Council premises from 1 July 2020 and delegate authority to the Interim Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet

Member for Finance and Resources, to suspend rents for individual tenant businesses that meet criteria in relation to hardship.

97. COVID-19 SKDC Response - Position Statement

The Leader of the Council presented his report which gave a position statement on South Kesteven District Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated he was proud of the response of the Council and the community, adding that the support received from staff, communities and Members from across the Council had been outstanding. The Leader placed on record his gratitude.

Over the last 12 weeks significant changes had been made to the way services had been delivered and communities supported. The report detailed the response of the Council and its partners and, the current position in respect of the Council's response to COVID-19. The report also formally recognised the response from community groups, charities and volunteers, and parish and town councils. It also identified lessons that could be learnt from the crisis moving forward to the restart and recovery phases. At the start of the crisis the Council had three clear priorities:

- To protect the health of staff, Members and residents
- To maintain the Council's critical services
- To support local businesses

Highlights of the report included:

- Facilitating over 400 staff working from home, protecting the health of both staff and residents.
- Staff being redeployed to new services such as the Community Hub and the befriending service.
- Maintaining waste collection, urgent housing needs and emergency housing repairs services
- Distribution of grants totalling more than £27 million to 2,200 businesses.
- 900 local businesses which had received business rate relief.

The Cabinet recognised Members' contributions to the response by their increased Ward Member Grant scheme allowance to help support communities during the crisis and volunteering for the befriending service.

Communication from the Council had been clear with a special version of SKToday giving details of services available and contact details. Social media activity had increased by 155% since the start of the lockdown. Daily e-mails had been sent to staff providing updates and giving support while Members received twice weekly e-mails keeping them informed about what was happening.

Customer Service officers continued to work remotely supported by the IT team, which had also helped support the running of virtual meetings. The Leader stated that he hoped remote meetings would continue after the COVID-19 response period.

Close partnership working had been carried out with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum, across councils and across the region. The Cabinet recognised that while

there was still further work to do and the crisis had not yet finished, the Council would learn from the lessons to date.

Members of the Cabinet commented on the challenging and unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members expressed their thanks for the work that had been undertaken by communities, volunteers, members of staff and Members, noting the work of the Leader and the Chief Executive during this period.

A minute's silence was held for those who had lost their lives during the COVID-19 crisis in the district.

The Cabinet noted:

1. The response of South Kesteven District Council and partners to the COVID-19 crisis and the current position of the Council with regards to the response, recovery and delivery of its priorities
2. The exceptional role of the voluntary and community sector and residents' groups in achieving the delivery of the priorities during this period
3. The initial lessons learnt from this report and the intention to carry out a full review of the response as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan

98. COVID-19 SKDC - Recovery Plan

The Leader of the Council presented his report which detailed a framework for developing a recovery plan from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial response to the pandemic had been reactive but there was recognition that it was important for the district to recover and thrive in the coming months. In addition to meeting the three key priorities outlined in the COVID-19 SKDC Response – Position Statement report, progress had also been made on other key projects, such as St Martins Park, the leisure programme and the housing and planning programmes, the timescales for which had been adapted.

Alongside the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, the Council was developing a Corporate Plan and a revised Budgetary Framework. All three documents would be presented to Cabinet and Council in September 2020.

The framework for recovery was based on four phases:

- **Response** – the immediate, primarily emergency / reactive tasks happening as the pandemic developed (e.g. closing public buildings, staff working from home, initial business grant distribution)
- **Restart** – the phased re-opening of operations (sports facilities, supporting wider businesses to re-open, arts activities) based on the five key themes within the report (vibrant and resilient economy, housing that meets the needs of our residents, strong communities with high quality facilities, a clean and sustainable environment and a high performing Council)

- **Recover** – stimulating activities to spark wider businesses (sector specific support where necessary and appropriate, focus of InvestSK)
- **Reshape** – revising the Council's long-term plans to incorporate wider changes in behaviours and its role in community leadership (greater digital service offering, increased working from home, embedding carbon reduction into new ways of working)

When services were looking to move to the next phase it was important that a review and reset was undertaken to look at risks, opportunities and lessons learnt to shape the future direction. Timescales had not been included due to the uncertainty at the present time. Appendices 1 to 5 detailed activities that the Council would be undertaking to support residents and businesses.

There had been a significant impact on finances due to COVID-19. It would be necessary to amend the budget approved in March 2020; an amended budget would be presented in September 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations made reference to the first virtual climate change task and finish group, which 25 people had attended. The Council's carbon footprint was put at 7,600 tonnes however this was before buildings were closed. The Cabinet Member stated that the Big Clean would be re-established and hoped that the best kept village could be reintroduced. Cabinet Members also noted that the electric charging points in Welham Street car park were due to be connected by Western Power.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning spoke about continuing to support tenants including those in housing need and in sheltered housing. The homeless had been supported by the allocation of temporary accommodation. Housing Management had been restarted and work was continuing on housing repairs. The development of Council owned sites would be progressed, the Blessed Hugh More site was currently subject to consultation. The performance and delivery of the housing service was also being reviewed. The Local Plan review was being progressed, together with a review of the Council's growth function.

The Cabinet Member for Communities stated that the recovery plan was an excellent starting point and that a review and a reset needed to be carried out between each of the phases. The Council needed to capitalise on what had been achieved with communities and the relationships made during the crisis.

The Deputy Leader stated that across all the Cabinet portfolios, the Council wanted to deliver growth for the economy, to have strong communities with high quality facilities and a clean and sustainable environment.

The Chief Executive stated that it was a comprehensive restart plan and thanked Cabinet Members for their input. Work had been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team on populating the actions for each of the five outcomes shown at Appendices 1 to 5 of the report.

On being put to the vote it was **AGREED** that:

The Cabinet approves the framework for developing a COVID-19 Recovery Plan and notes the upcoming activities in the “Restart” phase of the framework.

99. Matters Referred to Cabinet by the Council or Overview & Scrutiny Committees

No matters had been referred to the Cabinet by the Council or the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

100. Representations and questions from Non-Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council made a statement in relation to Grantham Hospital. At the January meeting of Council, it was noted that there were many issues that affected Grantham and the wider district. One of the main issues was the need for 24/7 urgent care provision in the largest town within South Kesteven. The Council was supporting growth within the district to develop communities in a dynamic and sustainable way. It was therefore considered essential that health provision supported the existing and expanding communities and provided a high quality accessible health care service for the residents of South Kesteven.

United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust (ULHT) had announced temporary changes to the services that would be provided on the Grantham Hospital site. Some of the proposals were welcomed, such as the provision of cancer care treatments and the provision of some elective surgery at Grantham hospital, together with the separation of COVID-19 and non COVID-19 issues.

The Leader stated that any proposals for the hospital needed to reflect future needs as well as current demands, which at present they did not. Conversations had been held with both Gareth Davies MP and Caroline Johnson MP who would continue to lobby for a health care provision for existing and the future needs of the district. A special Council meeting would be held to discuss the proposed changes to Grantham hospital and the views of the Council would be presented to the ULHT Board and its Chief Executive, Andrew Morgan.

A Member, not on the Cabinet, wished to place on record thanks and appreciation to the NHS not only in Grantham, but nationwide, for the professional way in which they had served everyone, putting their lives at risk on a daily basis. The Member then spoke about the decision made last week by the ULHT Board to downgrade Grantham Hospital’s accident and emergency department to an urgent treatment centre from 22 June 2020 and a COVID-19 green hospital.

The Member agreed that those with cancer on the waiting list should be treated as soon as possible but was very concerned about the loss of the accident and emergency department on a temporary basis until 31 March 2021 and felt that it would not recover. Hospital staff had raised concerns with the Member that services would be lost “by the backdoor”. During a radio interview in April, ULHT’s Chief Executive, Andrew Morgan had stated that the Trust was not looking to downgrade the site “by the backdoor”. Grantham Hospital’s accident and emergency department had been closed at night since 16 August 2016 and it was felt that the temporary changed would become permanent.

At a recent meeting the Chief Executive of ULHT had stated that it was the responsibility of Lincolnshire CCG to make changes. ULHT figures stated that 19% of patients (4,603) would have to travel to Lincoln or Boston, where waiting figures for the ULHT were one of the worst recorded in England for dealing with patients within a four-hour period.

It was noted that Councillors and campaigners had made their voices known over the four-year period since the temporary closure of the accident and emergency department with rallies, motions at Council and protests. The non-Cabinet Member asked if the Cabinet would consider sending a letter to John Turner, Chief Operating Officer for the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care acknowledging the need for cancer patients to be seen and treated quickly but that Grantham hospital should be reinstated back to its current position and a public consultation held on the hospital's future as soon as possible.

The Leader stated that he would be happy to send a letter and referred to the extraordinary Council meeting. Following that meeting a strong letter needed to be sent and signed by the Chairman of the Council and himself as Leader. The Leader raised concerns about the relocation of staff affected by the current proposals and temporary changes being made elsewhere in the country which were for much shorter periods of time. He did not consider finance should be an issue as the Government had written off a £345 million of hospital debt.

Other Members of the Cabinet and Council endorsed what had been said and felt that the COVID-19 pandemic was being used as a mechanism to downgrade services "by the backdoor" at Grantham hospital.

A question was asked about the date and time of the Extraordinary Council meeting and the Leader stated that Monday 29 June or Wednesday 1 July 2020 were being considered as possible dates. He stated that Members would be notified of the time and date of the meeting as soon as they had been confirmed.

A question was asked about the leisure transformation programme and the Working Groups that had been nominated by the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and the Culture and Visitor Economy OSC. These working groups had not met but the Deputy Leader had spoken to Parish Councils on the subject. Investment Plans for the Leisure Centres was on the Forward Plan to report at the September Cabinet and the non-Cabinet Member wanted to know the scrutiny path for the issue and whether consultation would take place with Ward Members. The non-Cabinet Member also asked whether a joint OSC meeting would take place between the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services OSC and the Culture and Visitor Economy OSC.

The Deputy Leader referred to his meeting at the end of January 2020 with Members for the Deepings area and the meeting he had attended with Deeping St James Parish Council. Before the September meeting of the Cabinet a meeting would be arranged with the Chairman of the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services OSC to confirm a date for a joint meeting to discuss the leisure programme and the options available to the Council. The leisure programme would require

significant investment and feedback from the joint OSC meeting would allow for the refinement of the report and future engagement and consultation with Members.

The Deputy Leader had visited all the leisure centres with Members from all groups and the proposal was to upgrade, facilities in Bourne, Grantham and Stamford and build a new centre in the Deepings. Consultation had been carried out with an architect who had undertaken design for Sport England projects and the Deputy Leader hoped to progress the issue as soon as possible.

The Leader of the Council stated that the leisure programme would be the largest expenditure that the Council would have and confirmed that engagement would take place with local Ward Members. There would be opportunity for Members to debate the issue at the joint OSC meeting, Cabinet and Council, which would make the final decision.

A further question was asked about the current position on the development of a new cycling strategy through Sustrans. A budget of £11,000 had been agreed in March 2019. The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations stated that the Council was not able to come to an agreement with Sustrans and therefore the strategy had not been progressed. The Council has continued to support Sustrans with other projects such as the crossing at Harlaxton and a project to enhance cross Grantham connectivity in partnership with the Woodland Trust. Cycling was something that would be part of the green recovery and should be directed through the Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader was asked if he would support the Members of the Planning Committee during the COVID-19 recovery plan to resume full site visits whilst acknowledging social distancing. During the height of lockdown Members had been told not to visit sites. The Member felt that this hiatus had highlighted the vital need to see a site on the ground before determining an application. The non-Cabinet Member stated that decisions made by the Planning Committee affected communities and had long term impacts and he felt that site visits should be re-introduced. The work being undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Chairman of the Planning Committee was welcomed.

The Leader said that he would support site visits if they were sensible and appropriate. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning stated that site visits were being considered and he was hopeful that they could be resumed in July 2020 for important sites. A Member who was on the Planning Committee endorsed the need for site visits to enable Members to get a feel for the area that could not be found in reports.

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

The Leader of the Council presented his report on Key and Non-Key Decisions taken since the last meeting of the Cabinet. Details during the COVID-19 response period had been reported to the meeting of Council held on 14 May 2020. Decisions taken after this period included the awarding of the Insurance Contract to Zurich Municipal from 1 July 2020 for a three-year period with the option to extend for a further two years.

102. Cabinet Forward Plan 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

Cabinet Members noted the Forward Plan for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 which was appended to the agenda. The Forward Plan gave an indication of items that would be presented to Cabinet in the next 12 months. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning indicated that there would be two further items for inclusion on the plan following the reviews taking place in planning and housing.

103. Close of meeting

Before the Leader of the Council closed the meeting, he wished to thank Councillor Chris Benn, who had recently resigned, for the work that he had done in the Glen Ward and as Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 15:45pm.