



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**Finance, Economic Development and
Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

10 November 2020

Report of: Councillor Kelham Cooke
The Leader of the Council



Covid-19 Recovery and Quarter Two 2020/21 Performance

This paper details South Kesteven District Council's performance in key service areas as the pandemic continues.

It also sets out performance reporting for quarter two of 2020/21. It shows the Council's performance data in dashboard format for the service areas agreed by committee members.

Report Author

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Corporate Priority:

Competitiveness

Decision type:

Administrative

Wards:

All Wards

Reviewed by:

Elaine Pepper, Head of Organisational Development

23 October 2020

Approved by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer

26 October 2020

Signed off by:

Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council

30 October 2020

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- Note the content of the report outlining the progress of the Council's activities in line with Covid-19 recovery.**

2. Note quarter two performance results shown in dashboard format for the key services.

1 South Kesteven Recovery to Covid-19

- 1.1 On June 16, Cabinet agreed a framework for setting out a recovery plan from the effects of Covid-19 that mirror that of the new corporate plan. The previous report taken to the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee included how the Council performed in relation to activities set out in the recovery plan during quarter one. This report will provide an updated position on actions progressed during quarter two.
- 1.2 To deliver growth of our economy the Council have committed to support businesses in our district during recovery of Covid-19.
- The re-opening of our high streets has been a success. Businesses have been supported by the various signage and advice to the public displayed in our town centres. InvestSK has continued to maintain a detailed dialogue with businesses, on safe re-opening, being Covid-19 compliant and future plans. There are excellent examples of businesses diversifying their offer and developing new lines as a result of the changing needs of the customer base. This has ranged from taking high street retailing on-line to using engineering and manufacturing equipment to produce PPE for supply direct to the NHS.
 - InvestSK has a virtual business briefing planned in early November 2020 following the success of the meetings held in June and September. This will continue the theme of skills for the workforce focusing on further education, bridging the gap between school and the workplace.
 - The government grant schemes have now closed (as of 30th September 2020). The Small Business and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grants successfully supported 2,315 businesses in the district with a total of £28.16 million awarded. The Local Authority Discretionary Grant fund supported a further 251 businesses allocating £1.54m to local businesses in meeting the criteria.
- 1.3 Recommencement of housing management services continues, addressing the backlog of routine repairs so South Kesteven District Council are providing housing that meets the needs of our residents.
- Housing officers are now dealing with anti-social behaviour cases urgent and non-urgent. Allocations from the register and the tenancy support service for housing has been successfully implemented with follow up visits commenced. Sheltered housing is continuing to be monitored with the communal areas not operational due to Covid-19.
 - The housing repairs service continues to face challenges from the impact of Covid-19. There is still some supply chain disruption for core materials.
 - There has been a phased response approach to the housing repairs, this response is being monitored and will remain at the current service level due to the high risk based on government guidance and local health intelligence. The Covid-19 risk assessment has been adjusted to allow work to be undertaken, addresses the backlog of routine repairs.
 - During quarter two 3,206 repair jobs were raised, including 122 emergency repairs. A total of 3,042 repair jobs were completed (95% completion rate). The remaining 164 jobs fall into other completion criteria, planned to be completed in October 2020 or identified as exceeding four hours which require further planning via split attendance and or external intervention.

- 1.4 Maintaining and building on strong relations with the voluntary sector and other partnership agencies is an objective of the Covid-19 recovery plan.
- Connection between the Council and the voluntary and community sector remain strong through the SK Community Hub and pre-existing networks. Officers remain in close contact with groups supporting communities on the ground e.g. Foodbanks, befrienders, Good Neighbour schemes etc.
 - A review of the Council's community funding opportunities has been undertaken. A workshop was held with members of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 July 2020 which was followed up with a report presented at the Committee's meeting on 10 September 2020. The recommendations from the workshop and meeting have been incorporated into a subsequent report to Cabinet which asks that Members agree to changes to eligibility, a reduction in maximum grant allowance and draw-down time and the introduction of a new category to support the priorities of mental health, social/rural isolation and loneliness. This report went to Cabinet on 13 October 2020.
- 1.5 The recovery plan seeks to maintain a clean and sustainable environment with the gradual resumption of Environmental Health 'normal' services.
- Businesses can download posters and materials on the Council's dedicated Covid-19 business support page on the SKDC website.
 - Additional staffing capacity has been bought in to utilise the government test and trace support grant. There have been 555 Covid-19 related complaints and requests for advice from businesses, employees and the public. 70 visits to premises to assess "Covid-19 secure" compliance and eight enforcement notices served for Covid-19 related issues.
 - Environmental services continue to work with Public Health England on workplace related outbreaks.
 - Renewals for all licence types continue to be processed to ensure businesses can continue to operate.
- 1.6 Following the national steep rise in Covid-19 cases the Council took the decision to move from the 'recovery' phase back into the 'response' phase on the 28 September 2020. Areas of work continuing to support this include:
- Development of the Local Outbreak Management Plan which was approved by the Lincolnshire Outbreak Management Board. Early outbreak management information has been created for a range of specific situations where outbreaks could occur to support businesses or organisations to deal with an outbreak.
 - Work has taken place across a range of health and social care organisations, in order to ensure that, the national Test and Trace programme meets the needs of the local population and support any local response.
 - District Councils, Trading Standards, Lincolnshire County Council, Police and other agencies are working together to ensure consistent enforcement practices across the county.

2 Performance Reporting to Committee

- 2.1 An overview of performance against agreed indicators is set out below for quarter two. The performance dashboards are included in appendices 1-6. The dashboards show

performance against targets, as well as benchmarking information where available. An updated commentary also explains the performance and any associated implications.

Members should note that the data being reported on is subject to review at CMT level, as it is felt that the reporting needs to be more detailed, accurate, and should report on trends and against targets with focus then on service improvement. This is a work in progress. The complaints monitoring process is under review with the aim to provide more comprehensive feedback data on themes to highlight areas for improvements. In particular members are asked to note that the data concerning complaints (Appendix 6) currently includes figures for simple calls for service, and omits data relating to stages 2 and 3 of the complaints process. This is being looked at for future performance reports.

- Appendix 1-3 shows performance data for Revenues. Non-domestic rates, council tax and rents end of quarter two performance position is included in Section 3 of this report.
- Appendix 4 shows that planning applications processing times for 'major', 'minor' and 'other' applications were all above the national target. The above figures have been achieved largely using extensions of time utilised to manage increased workload and reduced capacity. Average days of determination remains high due to the following factors including: Reduced capacity, changes to the constitution meaning all majors must be determined by Planning Committee and complexities of some major applications.
- Appendix 5 shows 266 dwellings have been completed by quarter two which is below what the Council would usually expect. The lower delivery rate is due to the impact of Covid-19 on the housing market. The Local Plan identifies land to provide 53% of housing in Grantham, 18% in Stamford, 7% in Bourne, 8% in The Deepings and 14% in the villages. Total completions in the 4 main towns account for 92% of completions and 4% in the larger villages. Of the 266 dwellings completed by quarter two 2020, 20 dwellings are affordable housing, completed in Grantham, Stamford and Market Deeping. 55% of the total completions for the year so far have been in Grantham. There have been no council homes completed in April-September 2020.
- A follow up action following quarter one reporting in relation to number of council houses built confirmed:
 - 14 council houses were built between 1 April 2019-31 March 2020
 - Kinoulton Court (10)
 - Earlesfield Lane (4)
- Appendix 6 shows stage one complaints received. Quarter two has seen an increase of 7% from 256 in 19/20 to 275 in 20/21. Of the 275 complaints received the highest volume is from Street Care service at 72% of the total complaints (197 complaints). It is important to remember this service has the highest volume of resident interactions.

2.2 Previous presentations of this report have included a waste performance dashboard. Following a workshop held 15 September 2020 the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested alterations to the format of that dashboard. These include:

- Additional historic data
- Improved Benchmarking
- Additional waste composition data

As this area falls under the remit of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with agreement of Chairman Cllr Jeal, this dashboard will be reported in future directly to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Online presentation of the dashboard will continue in line with that committees reporting cycle.

3 Covid-19 Impact on Revenues Performance

- 3.1 Since the start of Covid-19 and the impact of the lockdown from 23 March 2020, there has been significant changes to the collection profile primarily as a result of the temporary suspension of recovery action. During this suspension period the Council teams have focused more specifically on providing support and advice to residents and businesses in a targeted way.
- 3.2 All recovery action that the Council would normally act upon, had been suspended since March 2020, so during the period April – June 2020 the Council would usually have sent 1,117 council tax reminders and 1,308 business rates reminders. Formal recovery has now been reinstated with reminders being issued from 7 September 2020 onwards.
- 3.3 Collection performance to end of September 2020 and shows an overall positive collection position and is very much in line with neighbouring authorities:

20/21	Council Tax	Business Rates	Rents
Annual collection rate	Target is 19/20 actual which is 98.68%	Target is 19/20 actual which is 99.16%	98.50%
Target Collection rate to end of September 2020	56.74%	57.81%	48.45%
Actual collection rate to end of September 2020	55.86%	54.97%	48.29%

Council Tax collection

- 3.4 Collection is only below profiled target by 0.88% which equates to £752,459 whilst the net liability has increased by £2,847,724. During the lockdown for Covid-19 the deferral requests for council tax collection from April and May to later in the year, totalled £242,000 during quarter one. There have been minimal further requests for deferrals.
- 3.5 There has also been an increase in direct debit cancellations of £254,000. There is a remaining amount of £422,296 from additional CTS hardship – which will help with collection (0.49% of net collectable).
- 3.6 The recommencement of recovery actions will now allow the team to continue to support residents and attempt to achieve the collection volumes to March 2021.

	Collection %	Net liability (£)	Total net receipt (£)
September 2020	55.86	85,506,708	47,760,261
September 2019	56.74	82,658,984	46,900,656
Difference	-0.88	+2,847,724	+859,605

Council Tax Support

- 3.7 As a result of Covid-19, South Kesteven have seen an increase in the number of residents in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS). The number of those in receipt has increased by 540 since 1 April 2020, resulting in an increase cost to the scheme of £388,939. The cost of the scheme is shared between South Kesteven District Council and the precepting authorities – Lincolnshire County Council and Peterborough City Council.
- 3.8 The Council Tax Support Scheme is currently being reviewed for 2021/22 with financial modelling being undertaken for proposed changes to the maximum entitlement. Currently, the entitlement is capped at 80% of the Council Tax liability.

Business Rates (NDR)

- 3.9 Although it is extremely difficult to compare NDR performance this year with no formal recovery actions since April 2020 compared to the Council's usual activity last year, as at 30 September 2020, our collection rate was 54.97% which is £13,070,962 of the £24 million (roughly £2.18 million for each of the 6 months) – which leaves £10,707,393 to collect between now and 31 March 2021– which is £1.78 million per month.

	Collection %	Total net liability (£)	Total net receipt (£)
September 2020	54.97	23,778,355	13,071,554
September 2019	57.81	43,180,023	24,962,102
Difference	-2.84	-19,401,668	-11,890,548

- 3.10 For business rates, a total £20.7 million has been awarded in Expanded Retail Discount to 978 businesses and nursery relief (for registered childcare providers to 30 nurseries totalling £305,000).

Rents

- 3.11 Rents also had no formal recovery since March with all court action suspended. However proactive contact has been provided to tenants by the Council to provide support, assistance, signposting, DHP allocation of £83,461 for 20/21 and the awards to date provided (£69,219 already paid and £14,242 committed to 31 March 2021).
- 3.12 There will be ongoing challenges for recovery of rents for the rest of 20/21. This includes an increase in former tenant arrears of £30,814 (currently £897,304).

- 3.13 Rent collection for quarter two was only below 2019/20 target by 0.16% (an increase from quarter one of just 0.01%). The actual rent collected was £12,378,850 against a target of £12,420,704. Officers are continuing to undertake detailed analysis of the rent income streams – which includes direct debits, DWP payments, Allpay, Housing Benefit and many more to understand fluctuations within each income stream.

Test and Trace self-isolation payment scheme

- 3.14 The Government has set up a new Test and Trace Support Payment scheme of a £500 lump sum payment to support those that cannot work during their self-isolation period.
- 3.15 To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, you must have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because you have tested positive for Coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive; be employed or self-employed; be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and be currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.
- 3.16 The scheme has so far had 73 applications (12 October to 20 October 2020) in SKDC with 8 successfully validated and paid as part of the mandatory scheme within the 3 day turn around. Those that are not eligible for the mandatory scheme will be considered for a discretionary scheme. SKDC have funding for £46,000 (92 payments) for the mandatory scheme and £27,700 (55 payment) in the discretionary scheme.

4 Key Terms and Definitions

4.1 Benchmarking groups

Where possible benchmarking groups have been selected to provide context to South Kesteven's performance figures. The benchmarking datasets are explained below:

- Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates: The benchmarking groups for these measures are provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Authorities are matched against a range of different measure to ensure near statistical neighbour comparisons are possible.
- Waste: This group compares performance against the members of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership who operate under the same contractual obligations.
- Rents: Benchmarking for this area is currently under review to ensure that the authority is compared with similar organisations and that a meaningful comparison can be undertaken. This will be included in future reports once the review has been completed.

4.2 Definitions

The dashboards seek to present information in plain English. However, a small number of technical terms are still used. These are explained below.

- Major applications are those for more than 10 dwellings or over 1,000 sqm non-residential floorspace.
- Non-major applications are those which include householder, minor and other types of applications.
- Minor applications are those for less than 10 dwellings or below a floorspace of 1,000 sqm for non-residential development. It includes applications for change of use.

- Other applications include householders, listed building consent and advertisement consent applications.
- Non-Recyclables includes crisp packets, contaminated paper/card and wood, alongside hazardous materials such as batteries, liquids and nappies.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The financial considerations where appropriate are referenced throughout this report.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Head of Finance

6 Legal and Governance Implications

6.1 Regular reporting on agreed performance dashboards is to be welcomed from a governance point of view, as it provides a transparent mechanism for reporting on performance.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

7 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

7.1 There are no issues relating to equality and diversity or safeguarding resulting from this report. Any issues that do arise relating to individual items will be addressed as required.

8 Risk and Mitigation

8.1 The contents of this report do not expose the authority to any additional risks.

9 Community Safety Implications

9.1 None

10 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?

10.1 The contents of this report do not have a direct impact on the council's carbon emissions or the carbon emissions of the wider district.

11 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Rents Performance Dashboard

Appendix 2 – Council Tax Performance Dashboard

Appendix 3 – Non-Domestic Rates Performance Dashboard

Appendix 4 – Planning Process Performance Dashboard

Appendix 5 – House Builds Performance Dashboard

Appendix 6 – Complaints Performance Dashboard

Report Timeline:	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	Not Applicable
	Previously Considered by: Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22 September 2020
	Final Decision date	Not Applicable

