

MINUTES

**FULL COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 15 JULY 2021
1.00 PM**



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**THE MERES LEISURE CENTRE, TRENT
ROAD, GRANTHAM, NG31 7XQ**

PRESENT

Councillor Breda-Rae Griffin (Chairman)
Councillor Ian Stokes (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Bob Adams	Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Ashley Baxter	Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Mrs Pam Bosworth	Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Robert Broughton	Councillor Adam Stokes
Councillor Louise Clack	Councillor Jacky Smith
Councillor Kelham Cooke	Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor John Cottier	Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Helen Crawford	Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Phil Dilks	Councillor Jill Thomas
Councillor Barry Dobson	Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Jan Hansen	Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Graham Jeal	Councillor Dean Ward
Councillor Philip Knowles	Councillor Hannah Westropp
Councillor Matthew Lee	Councillor Hilary Westropp
Councillor Nikki Manterfield	Councillor Amanda Wheeler
Councillor Annie Mason	Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Penny Milnes	Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Virginia Moran	Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Charmaine Morgan	Councillor Linda Wootten
Councillor Dr Peter Moseley	Councillor Ray Wootten
Councillor Robert Reid	

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford (Chief Executive)
Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive)
Gary Smith (Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations)
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director for Growth and Culture)
Andrew Cotton (Director for Housing and Property)
Richard Wyles (Interim Director of Finance (s151 Officer))
Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)
Graham Watts (Head of Democratic Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer))
Shelley Thirkell (Acting Principal Democratic Officer)
Anita Eckersley (Civic and Member Services Officer)

Sam Selby (Cabinet and Member Development Assistant)
Louise Field (Executive Assistant to the Leader of the Council)
Alice Atkins (Local Government Association Graduate Trainee)

14. Public Open Forum

No questions or statements were received.

15. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bellamy, George Chivers, John Dawson, Mike Exton, Paul Fellows, Helen Goral, Gloria Johnson Rosemary Kaberry-Brown, Anna Kelly, Jane Kingman and Sue Woolley.

A member queried why the minutes of the most recent Cabinet Meeting had not been included in the agenda. It was confirmed that this practice was not a requirement set out within the Council's Constitution and had therefore not been included since December 2020. Members noted that all minutes were available to view on the SKDC Website.

16. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

17. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held 20 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held 20 May 2021 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as a correct record.

18. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements.

The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Director for Growth and Culture, Nicola McCoy-Brown, and Head of Democratic Services, Graham Watts, to their first meetings of Council.

19. Removal of allocation and use of named substitutes

Members received a report from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance on the removal of the allocation and use of named substitutes to enable political groups greater flexibility in being represented on the Council's Committees. The recommendations contained within the report were proposed and seconded.

The following amendment was proposed:

“That Council approves the proposal to allow substitutes for Committees on a cross-party basis for a trial period of 12 months. The approval of the substitution to be at the discretion of the Group Leader or the group requiring substitution.”

The amendment was seconded and a recent example was cited of a Planning Committee meeting where only five Members had been present. It was expressed that the amendment would allow for greater representation and should not be a politically charged issue.

The Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that there was no provision that could be applied legally to allow for the system of ad-hoc cross-party substitutions proposed by the amendment. He added that any decisions taken by committees whose membership was established in such a way could be open to legal challenge. The amendment was withdrawn.

An amendment was proposed which called for the issue of cross-party substitutions to be referred to the Constitution Committee for further consideration. The amendment was seconded and following a vote, the amendment was lost.

Having been proposed and seconded, the recommendation contained within the report was voted upon.

DECISION:

That the proposal to remove the allocation and use of named substitutes for Committees, and the rescindment of named substitutes made at the meeting of Council on 20 May 2021, be approved.

20. Members' Open Questions

Question 1 – Councillor Charmaine Morgan to The Leader of the Council

Councillor Morgan noted the upcoming relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions on 19 July 2021, as set out by the Government and asked how Council leadership would be protecting staff and service users following this.

The Leader of the Council advised that although some staff had returned to working in the offices, Council guidance would remain that staff should work from home where possible. Covid-19 safety measures, such as social distancing, mask wearing and sanitising of surfaces, would remain in place.

The Leader confirmed that a protocol would be sent out and would also be available online, outlining how the Council would be operating. At the present time, in the context of rising Covid-19 cases across the Country, it was of great importance to conduct business as safely as possible.

Question 2 – Councillor Ashley Baxter to The Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Baxter noted that The Deputy Leader of the Council had recently sent a communication to residents of The Deepings explaining that the funds and land had been agreed for a new leisure centre. Clarification was sought regarding the authorisation of those funds and if the use of the land had been agreed by both the County Council and the Deepings Forum.

The Deputy Leader of the Council confirmed that discussions regarding the leisure centre were ongoing and that there was no further information at present.

Question 3 – Councillor Phil Dilks to The Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Dilks enquired as to when the new leisure centre in The Deepings would be opening.

The Deputy Leader of the Council advised that work regarding the leisure centre was ongoing and that an update would be brought to the Council later in the year.

Question 4 – Councillor Amanda Wheeler to The Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Policy

Councillor Wheeler asked a question about the development on Stamford quarry site. Councillor Wheeler queried residents of Rutland would be accessing the area, however, SKDC would not benefit from their Council Tax payments.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Policy stated that he would be happy to meet with Councillor Wheeler and discuss any concerns outside of the meeting.

Question 5 – Councillor Penny Milnes to The Leader of the Council

Councillor Milnes referred to a letter all Members had received from the Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. A concern was raised relating to the proposal to remove the rights of local residents to reject individual planning applications in their area.

The Leader agreed that the proposals needed to be considered but advised that they would ensure more engagement in local democracy, rather than less.

Question 6 – Councillor Penny Robins to The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations

Councillor Robins enquired as to why the number of gardens had reduced, yet annual costs had risen by 130%. Would The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations explain the rise in costs?

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations advised that the Housing Revenue Account covered the gardens for Council properties. The pricing had been

based on the market rate; the work was labour-intensive. He stated that differentials would be presented at the next Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that every explanation would be provided in time.

Question 7 – Councillor Paul Wood to The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations

Councillor Wood asked if there were any plans to upgrade the Council's street lighting, as most of the streetlights were not LED. Councillor Wood referred to the fact that Lincolnshire County Council had upgraded many of their streetlights and asserted that it was essential that the Council follow suit as LED lighting provided better value in the long term.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations expressed his delight that a contract had been authorised for LED streetlighting upgrades to commence across the District. This would involve a rolling programme taking place over seven years and would provide greater reduction in energy use. It also confirmed that the Council would be phasing out sodium lights that were still part of existing maintenance contracts.

Question 8 – Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing to The Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Bisnauthsing noted that it been over two years since information had been sent across Stamford regarding the opening of a new leisure centre. It was requested that The Deputy Leader of the Council set out a schedule for when the new leisure centre.

The Deputy Leader of the Council stated that due to ongoing discussions, a schedule was not able to be provided.

Question 9 – Councillor Ian Selby to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Selby noted that the 2020 The UEFA European Championship had given much pleasure to people living across the District. In response to this he asked whether the the Leader would offer his congratulations to the England Football Team and also condemn the racist abuse which some of the team had experienced. It was suggested that this could be done via a letter sent to the England Manager, Gareth Southgate.

The Leader confirmed that he would send a letter to Gareth Southgate, England Manager, to both congratulate the England Team as well as condemn the racism which some of the team had endured.

Question 10 – Councillor Ray Wootten to The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities

Councillor Wootten requested an update be provided on the SK Community Awards.

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities noted that the SK Community Awards had first launched on the first of June and that the closing date was on Sunday 18 June 2021. During that time, 108 nominations had been received from across the District. The winners were to be announced later in the year.

Question 11 – Councillor Mark Whittington to The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations

Councillor Whittington enquired as to whether there would be an update on issue of fly tipping across the District.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations noted that fly tipping incidences had decreased and hoped that would remain the case. The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations noted that he was encouraged that this matter had been widely discussed during Lincolnshire Waste Partnership meetings.

Question 12 – Councillor Lee Steptoe to The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property

Councillor Steptoe thanked the recently appointed Director for Housing and Property, stating that he had been constructive and honest about concerns around housing issues in the Grantham Earlesfield Ward.

Councillor Steptoe raised a concern that over 1,500 people were currently on the waiting list to be provided with a Council House. He referred to the introduction of a Choice Based Letting Scheme, which had recently been agreed by Cabinet. It was requested that The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property explain the concept of the Choice Based Letting System to The Council.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property responded by explaining the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, stating that the purpose of introducing such a scheme was to improve how newly available social housing properties in the District were allocated. The Cabinet Member for Housing Property noted that a move to this scheme would not alleviate housing pressures but would allow for greater choice and better suitability for service users.

Question 13 – Councillor Helen Crawford to The Council

Councillor Crawford, with the Chairman's permission, expressed disappointment that only five Members of The Council out of a possible 56 had attended a recent training session on Modern Slavery. Councillor Crawford stated that it was important that everyone attend these training sessions, especially when on such crucial issues.

21. Notices of Motion given under Article 4.9 of the Council's Constitution:

22. Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities

It was proposed and seconded that the Council put the Mental Wellbeing of residents, staff, and elected members at the forefront of its agenda by signing the Mental Health Challenge for Local Authorities, as set out in the Notice of Motion.

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities provided a background to the reasons of her motion, citing poor mental health across the District and the importance of addressing this.

Councillors who had undertaken roles within the Mental Health Working Party shared their personal experiences of witnessing poor mental health and stressed the importance of the work they had been involved in.

One Member wished to draw attention to the causes of poor mental wellbeing, referring to issues such as poverty, poor housing, and lack of access to paid work. One Member commented that mental wellbeing began with how Councillors conducted themselves in the chamber, on social media and in meetings.

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

That the Council believed:

- As a local authority, it had a crucial role to play in improving the mental wellbeing for everyone in the community.
- Mental wellbeing should be a priority across all the Authority's areas of responsibility, including, housing, community safety, engagement, planning and leisure.
- All elected members in the community and in casework roles, could play a positive role in championing mental wellbeing on an individual and strategic basis.

That the Council resolved to:

- Sign up to the Mental Health Challenge for Local Authorities.
- Appoint an elected member as the Council's 'Mental Health Champion'.
- Identify a member of staff within the Council to act as 'Lead Officer' for mental health and wellbeing.
- Form a working party made up of cross-party members and officers to meet every 8 weeks, and that all members and officers, would take a lead role and ownership of activity.

That the Council would also:

- Support positive mental wellbeing in the community, including neighbourhoods and workplaces.
- Support positive mental wellbeing within its own workforce and elected members.
- Consider mental wellbeing in decision making and policy.
- Work with local partners including Lincolnshire County Council and the Voluntary Sector.
- Engage with Lincolnshire County Council strategy and activity and the Joint Health & Wellbeing Board for Lincolnshire.

The Council noted that:

- The Joint Health and Wellbeing Board for Lincolnshire played an active role in the health and wellbeing of the District and it was vital that as the Council moved forward that any activities, projects or interventions promoted locally were mindful of the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and complemented the work of the Council's County partners.
- Mental Health issues for Adults and Children are within the remit of Health partners.
- The Authority's role within the challenge would specifically focus on mental wellbeing and wellness.

23. Councillor Louise Clack

It was proposed and seconded that the Council resolved to ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on South Kesteven District land and wrote to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land, as set out in the Notice of Motion.

The proposer of the motion provided a background to the reasons for her motion, stressing that although the Authority did not have the power to change central legislation, it had the power to ban the practice within the District and send a message that animal welfare was an issue of concern for South Kesteven District Council.

The giving away of goldfish as prizes was debated, reference was made to the point that goldfish were bred by specialist suppliers, under a strict code, with fines enforced should these rules be breached. One Member argued that showmen were honourable people and had the blessing of the RSPCA with regards to animal welfare. Other Members argued that current legislation was outdated, and any form of animal welfare abuse should be legislated against.

On being put to a free vote, it was **AGREED:**

That the Council:

- Was concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding animals given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in the UK – and noted the issue predominantly concerns goldfish.
- Was concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes.
- Recognised that many cases of animals being given as prizes may go unreported each year.
- Supported a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on South Kesteven District Council owned land.

The Council resolved to:

- Ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on South Kesteven District land.
- Write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land – Councillor Louise Clack to action this.

24. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 15:29.