

MINUTES

Full Council

Thursday, 30 September 2021, 13:00

Meres Leisure Centre, Trent Road,
Grantham. NG31 7XQ



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Present

Councillor Breda-Rae Griffin (Chairman)

Councillor Ian Stokes (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Bob Adams

Councillor Ashley Baxter

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing

Councillor Mrs Pam Bosworth

Councillor Robert Broughton

Councillor George Chivers

Councillor Kelham Cooke

Councillor John Cottier

Councillor Helen Crawford

Councillor John Dawson

Councillor Barry Dobson

Councillor Phil Dilks

Councillor Paul Fellows

Councillor Jan Hansen

Councillor Graham Jeal

Councillor Gloria Johnson

Councillor Anna Kelly

Councillor Philip Knowles

Councillor Annie Mason

Councillor Penny Milnes

Councillor Virginia Moran

Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Councillor Dr Peter Moseley

Councillor Robert Reid

Councillor Nick Robins

Councillor Penny Robins

Councillor Susan Sandall

Councillor Ian Selby

Councillor Jacky Smith

Councillor Mrs Judy Smith

Councillor Lee Steptoe

Councillor Judy Stevens

Councillor Adam Stokes

Councillor Jill Thomas

Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew

Councillor Sarah Trotter

Councillor Dean Ward

Councillor Hannah Westropp

Councillor Hilary Westropp

Councillor Amanda Wheeler

Councillor Mark Whittington

Councillor Jane Wood

Councillor Paul Wood

Councillor Sue Woolley

Councillor Linda Wootten

Councillor Ray Wootten

Officers in attendance

Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive)

Andrew Cotton (Director for Housing and Property)

Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director for Growth and Culture)

Gary Smith (Director for Commercial and Operations)

Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)

Richard Wyles (Assistant Director of Finance (s151 Officer))

Graham Watts (Head of Democratic Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer))

Shelley Thirkell (Acting Principal Democratic Services Officer)

Sam Selby (Cabinet and Member Development Officer)

Anita Eckersley (Civic and Member Support Officer)
Vicky Gisby (Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive)
Louise Field (Executive Assistant to the Leader of the Council)
Patrick Astill (Communications)
Alice Atkins (Local Government Association Graduate Trainee)

29. Public Open Forum

No questions or statements were received.

30. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bellamy, Louise Clack, Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown, Jane Kingman, Matthew Lee and Nikki Manterfield.

31. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Ashley Baxter noted for openness and transparency that his family were frequent users of the Deepings Leisure Centre and his daughter was a Member of the Deepings Swimming Club.

No other interests were disclosed.

32. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements and were delighted that, since the lifting of restrictions put in place due to the pandemic, she was able to attend many more events.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that it had recently been drawn to his attention that notices for public meetings had not been displayed on the public notice board at the Council Offices, as had been previous practice prior to the pandemic and periods of lockdown. He provided Council with the assurance that sufficient notice of the date, time and business to be transacted for the Council's meetings held since the commencement of the pandemic had been given, but that the good practice of placing a hard copy of the agenda pages on the public notice board for all future meetings would be re-instated.

It was confirmed that a notice for the current meeting and other scheduled meetings where the agenda had been published, were currently on display on the public notice board.

Members thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for highlighting the matter and his reassurance that best practice would resume.

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 and the following observations were made:

- Councillor Penny Robins advised that she did not ask question 6, under minute number 20 – Members' Open Questions.
- Councillor Philip Knowles advised that he did ask question 6 under minute number 20 – Members' Open Questions and requested that it be amended to reflect this.
- Councillor Philip Knowles also advised that the minute text under that item, nor who the question was addressed to, was correct.

Full Council discussed the content of question 6, it was proposed and seconded that approval of the minutes be deferred until the 25 November meeting of full Council, to allow officers to provide more accurate wording.

Following a vote, it was **AGREED**.

DECISION:

That approval of the 15 July 2021 full Council minutes be deferred until the 25 November meeting, to allow officers to provide more accurate wording.

34. Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 2 September 2021

Members considered the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 2, September 2021.

Thanks were given to the officers who had provided a revised set of minutes.

The revised minutes added greater clarity to the debate, particularly in terms of the original motion proposed, associated amendments and the substantive motion, ensuring a more comprehensive and coherent record of the meeting.

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 2 September 2021 were proposed and seconded.

Following a vote, they were **AGREED** as a correct record.

DECISION:

That the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 2 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

35. Designation of Monitoring Officer

Members were presented with a report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance on the Designation of the Council's Monitoring Officer.

It was highlighted to Members that Section 5 (1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 required the Council to designate an officer as the Council's Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer may not be the Council's Chief Finance (Section 151) Officer nor the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive).

The former Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director - Law and Governance, left the Council's employment on 31 August 2021. The duties of the Monitoring Officer, for the interim period, had been undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services in his capacity as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

As per the terms of reference of the Employment Committee, proposals to appoint a new Monitoring Officer were considered at its meeting held on 22 September 2021. The Committee recommended to full Council the appointment of Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive, to the post.

Mr Robinson had previously held the post of Monitoring Officer at West Lindsey District Council for 8 years, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role.

Members commented on notable work undertaken by the Assistant Director - Law and Governance, whilst in post as Monitoring Officer. She had established the Council's partnership with Legal Services Lincolnshire, bringing a robust service to assist with the authority's legal requirements. A great deal of work had also been undertaken in commencing the review of the Council's Constitution, ensuring a clear direction was in place. Members noted their appreciation and wished for their warm wishes and thanks to be passed onto the outgoing Monitoring Officer.

Members considered the recommended appointment and the consensus was that the Deputy Chief Executive would fulfil the role thoroughly. There was an overwhelming agreement that Alan Robinson was flexible and accommodating, conducting himself with great integrity.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded.

Following a vote, it was **AGREED**.

DECISION:

That Council designated Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive, as South Kesteven District Council's Monitoring Officer from 30 September 2021.

(The Deputy Chief Executive left the meeting at 13:21 and returned at 13:28, during consideration of the above item).

36. Members' Open Questions

Question 1: Councillor Gloria Johnson to Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)

Councillor Gloria Johnson noted her shock that the Council had referred itself to the Housing Regulator, but very much appreciated that it was the correct course of action. She requested an update from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property on the progress being made, whilst working with the Regulator.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property agreed that it was disappointing the Council had needed to refer itself to the Regulator. It was however a positive step that the Council had made. There had been a significant amount of activity taking place; An improvement Plan had been embedded and was continually monitored, regular meetings between the Regulator, the Chief Executive and the Director for Housing and Property were taking place.

The Cabinet Member was also pleased to advise that the Fire Safety Management Plan was now in place. Fire Risk Assessments were being completed, with 99.2% compliance. Only a few were outstanding due to access issues for those properties, legal proceedings were underway to ensure access could be granted.

The Housing Regulator had informed the Chief Executive that South Kesteven District Council had made a mammoth achievement so far.

Question 2: Councillor Mark Whittington to Councillor Adam Stokes (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

Councillor Mark Whittington enquired whether it had been investigated how much the cost of an independent inquiry into the Deepings Leisure Centre would likely be and how any such inquiry would be funded.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources noted that it was difficult to assess the cost of an inquiry until the scope of such an inquiry had been agreed. He advised that there was no allocated budget for such an inquiry, costs would have to be sourced where there would be no adverse impact on any established budgets.

Question 3: Councillor Ray Wootten to Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of the Council)

Councillor Ray Wootten asked The Leader whether he agreed with and welcomed, the proposed change to the model Members' Code of Conduct to include abuse on social media.

The Leader stated that he did agree with and welcomed the proposed change to the model Member's Code of Conduct. The Leader expressed that by adopting the Local Government Association's model Code of Conduct, the Council could ensure a robust system was in place in terms of addressing poor behaviour.

Question 4: Councillor Paul Wood to Councillor Dr Peter Moseley (Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations)

Councillor Paul Wood asked the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations about an illegal dumping site at Long Bennington. He was aware that there was currently a multi-agency approach and requested an update on what work was being undertaken.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations advised that the Environment Agency was taking the lead and South Kesteven District Council were offering their support, via the Environmental Health Team.

Question 5: Councillor Phil Dilks to Councillor Barry Dobson (The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Leisure)

Councillor Phil Dilks commented that The Deepings Leisure Centre, which had been closed by the Council, was currently “left open to the elements” and may be damaged further. It was requested that it be further protected.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure advised that options were currently being considered, as part of the building survey which had been commissioned.

Question 6: Councillor Ashley Baxter to Councillor Linda Wootten (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance)

Councillor Ashley Baxter noted that the Scrutiny Review had taken place in July 2021 and Members had yet to receive a report on the outcomes. It was requested that the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance advise if she had seen the report and when it would be shared with Members.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance advised that she had not yet seen the report. Assurances were given that it would be circulated to all Members, once available.

Question 7: Councillor Ian Selby to Councillor Dr Peter Moseley (Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations)

Councillor Ian Selby made a request to the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations for a clean-up of the Harrowby Ward to be undertaken.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations advised that this was the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council and would be happy to pass the request on. He advised that it was important to pass on details of areas in need of maintenance, as the Teams at Lincolnshire County Council relied on local intelligence to know where to carry out work.

Question 8: Councillor Lee Steptoe to Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)

Councillor Lee Steptoe requested the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property confirm the number of residents that were currently on the Council House waiting list and how many new Council homes would be built during 2021/22.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property advised that there were currently 780 applications on the waiting list for a Council property. There would be 18 new Council homes being built during 2021/22.

Question 9: Councillor Amanda Wheeler to Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew (Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy)

Councillor Amanda Wheeler asked the Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy if the staff of the Council's cultural venues would be consulted as part of the Arts Review that was currently taking place.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy advised that the staff were currently being consulted. The Director of Growth and Culture alongside Human Resources had been leading the consultation.

Question 10: Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing to Councillor Annie Mason (Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities)

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing enquired with the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities, if a Covid-19 booster vaccine site had been identified within the south of the District.

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities referred to the Director for Commercial and Operations, who advised that the NHS were responsible for leading on vaccination sites.

The Director noted that residents could contact their local GP Surgery to ensure they were aware where and when booster vaccines were available.

Question 11: Councillor Charmaine Morgan to Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of the Council)

Councillor Charmaine Morgan asked The Leader of the Council if enforcement action was being taken on private landlords, where tenants were at risk.

The Leader of the Council advised that officers would be investigating such matters and would do as much as possible within the Council's powers.

Question 12: Councillor Virginia Moran to Councillor Barry Dobson (The Deputy Leader of the Council)

Councillor Virginia Moran asked The Deputy Leader if there was an update on the lift repairs at the Meres Leisure Centre. Councillor Moran noted her concern for elderly, or less able-bodied residents having to climb the stairs to use the public viewing gallery.

The Leader of the Council responded on behalf of The Deputy Leader, and advised that he would certainly look into the matter and noted that nationally there was an issue with supplies, which potentially had an impact on repair of the lift. All Councillors would be advised of the progress of the repair.

Question 13: Councillor Judy Stevens to Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of the Council)

Councillor Judy Stevens asked the Leader whether an update on the St Martin's Park Project in Stamford could be provided.

The Leader noted that an outline planning application for the St Martin's Park Project was due to be presented to the Planning Committee in October. The Leader noted that the St Martin's Park Project was a key strategic project for the Council and would deliver affordable housing, commercial space, and retirement living. The project would also provide Capital Receipts to the Council, which could contribute towards the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Question 14: Councillor Ian Stokes to Councillor Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)

Councillor Ian Stokes queried an email that had been sent to all councillors that confirmed funds had been released for the refurbishment of the Meres Leisure Centre lifts.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property responded that he had not yet seen the email in question but would comment once he had.

Question 15: Councillor Philip Knowles to Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of the Council)

Councillor Philip Knowles enquired with the Leader of the Council when meetings of full Council would return to the Council Chamber in South Kesteven House.

The Leader of the Council advised that the ventilation in the Council Chamber was being investigated. As there were 56 Members of full Council, ventilation was key to ensure a comfortable and environment for all, particularly in the context of Covid-19. It was hoped that the next scheduled meeting on 25 November 2021 would return to the Council Chamber once a decision had been taken. That decision would be communicated to Members, in due course.

Question 16: Councillor Anna Kelly to Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew (Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy)

Councillor Anna Kelly asked The Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy if there would be an SK Grant for the light show in February 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy confirmed that the Community Grant had not been withdrawn, to the best of her knowledge.

Question 17: Councillor Kelham Cooke to Councillor Paul Wood (Leader of the Independent Group)

The Leader of the Council asked the Leader of the Independent Group if he would agree to condemn any poor behaviour from Members. That all officers and Members should be treated by Members with respect.

The Leader of the Independent Group agreed with The Leader's comments.

Question 18: Councillor Sue Woolley to Councillor Dr Peter Moseley (Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations)

Councillor Sue Woolley asked The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations if the recent fuel crisis within the UK was having an impact on the SKDC household waste collection services.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations advised that there were currently sufficient fuel supplies to continue with the services. Officers had liaised with suppliers to ensure that no issues would arise.

37. Membership of Committees

Following the resignation of Councillor Helen Goral and the recent passing of Councillor Mike Exton, there was a requirement to appoint a Conservative Group Member, to each of the following Committees:

- Constitution Committee
- Planning Committee
- Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader of the Council made the following proposals:

- Constitution Committee – Councillor Ray Wooten, to be appointed as Vice Chairman
- Planning Committee – Councillor Judy Stevens

- Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Be deferred until after the by-election, when the current vacancy would be considered further and filled.

The proposals were seconded.

Following a vote, the proposals were **AGREED**:

DECISIONS:

1. **That the following Committee vacancies be filled as follows:**
 - **Constitution Committee – Councillor Ray Wootten as Vice Chairman**
 - **Planning Committee – Councillor Judy Stevens**
2. **That the vacancy on the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be left vacant until after the scheduled by-election had taken place.**

38. Review of the Council's Constitution

The Chairman of the Constitution Committee presented full Council with a report on the review of the Council's Constitution.

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty upon Local Authorities operating Executive Arrangements to maintain a document that set out how the Council operated, how decisions were made and rules and procedures which were followed to ensure that these were efficient and transparent. A model Constitution was made available for Councils to adopt and amend to reflect the individual characteristics of their area.

The Chairman of the Constitution Committee encouraged non-committee members to attend meetings of the Constitution Committee, as their input would be invaluable.

It was noted that the outcome of the Planning Services Review had been anticipated to be considered by full Council in November 2021. After an informal meeting of Planning Committee, it had been decided that further work was to be undertaken before any recommendations were put forward for inclusion within the Council's Constitution. A date for a further informal meeting of the Planning Committee would be confirmed in due course.

Members were impressed with the comprehensive report and agreed that the current Constitution was not a "user friendly" document. The proposed new structure was much more logical and would provide greater transparency.

It was requested that a timetable of the review and how all Members could be involved be communicated. The Head of Democratic Services drew Members' attention to the table at item 1.10 of the report, this advised the proposed timescale

for the review and opportunities in which all Members could be involved in the process.

Members of the Constitution Committee advised that they had been provided with a draft copy of the Constitution in its proposed new format. They agreed a great deal of work would need to be undertaken to ensure Members were aware of what exactly the changes were by demonstrating the proposals alongside the current document.

The recommendations of the report were proposed and seconded.

Following a vote, they were **AGREED**.

DECISIONS:

That Council:

- 1. Approved, in principle, the revised format of the Council's Constitution based on seven main sections as set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report.**
- 2. Approved the proposed process to be followed for undertaking and implementing a comprehensive review of the Council's Constitution, commencing with a review of the proposed "Responsibility for Functions" section, to include Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules.**
- 3. Approved the proposed engagement with elected members and senior officers as part of the review and respective proposed timescales as set out in paragraph 1.10 of the report.**

(14:24 The Chairman called a brief recess after consideration of the above item, the meeting reconvened at 14:50).

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

(a) Councillor Graham Jeal

The motion, as set out in the agenda, was proposed and seconded.

Councillor Graham Jeal highlighted to Members that Grantham had 'Charter Trustees' and was not a Town Council. This was a very unusual arrangement and he felt that a Governance Review of Grantham would allow the residents of Grantham to decide if they wished to change from Charter Trustees to a Town Council.

Members debated the proposal and the following points were made:

- A Town Council would enable decisions about Grantham to be taken by representatives, elected by the residents of Grantham.
- Ensured greater and more transparent democracy.

- Would bring Grantham in line with most other local Councils who followed the Local Government Act 1972.
- Provide a more familiar model of Governance for the residents of Grantham.
- Allow local representatives and residents to have an input into planning applications.
- Clarity on the costs of a potential Town Council would need to be provided as part of a Governance review, so that residents could make an informed decision.

The proposer of the motion clarified that the motion was to commence a Community Governance Review and not to establish a Grantham Town Council. The outcome of the review would inform the Council if the residents of Grantham wished to support the establishment of a Town Council.

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

Councillor Ian Selby requested that his vote FOR the proposal be recorded.

DECISION:

That the Council approves the commencement of a Community Governance Review in relation to the establishment of a Town Council for Grantham.

(b) Councillor Charmaine Morgan

The motion, as set out in the agenda, was proposed and seconded.

Councillor Charmaine Morgan urged Members to support her proposal as it was important to all Members and residents to do as much as possible to maintain High Streets.

During debate of the proposal the following points were raised:

- South Kesteven District Council had been proactive in the regeneration of the high street, with a successful bid for £5million from the Future High Streets Fund.
- Great support from InvestSK Ltd to seek further bids had been received.
- Work was being undertaken to encourage a pedestrian area within Grantham Town Centre.
- The Government review of Business Rates was integral, Members felt it was prudent to wait for the outcome, which was anticipated to be in late 2022.
- The proposal did highlight a huge national issue with many challenges.
- With families finding costs continually rising, the cheaper option, which was often by making an online purchase was the more cost effective one.

On being put to the vote, the proposal was **LOST**.

(c) Councillor Ashley Baxter

Councillor Ashley Baxter withdrew his motion.

(d) Councillor Phil Dilks

The motion, as set out in the agenda, was proposed and seconded.

Councillor Phil Dilks stated that the Council should learn from the Deepings Leisure Centre currently being in an unusable condition and an independent inquiry would achieve that.

During debate, the following points were raised:

- Some Members felt that the current situation could have been avoided as questions surrounding the integrity of the building had been asked over a number of years.
- To put in place an inquiry at the present time would not be appropriate as work was to be undertaken to survey the building, to establish its current condition – funds had been allocated to the survey and architects had been commissioned
- Options were being considered to refurbish the building and officers were working hard to look at possibilities, depending on the outcome of the survey.
- The current leisure market was struggling and South Kesteven was fortunate enough to have 4 leisure centres.
- Disappointment that previous promises made for a new leisure centre in the Deepings had not been fulfilled.
- Queries around the allocated funds for the architect's survey, which appeared to be excessive.

A request was made that a recorded vote be taken on the proposal. As the request was supported by ten or more Members of the Council, in accordance with Article 4.13.4 of the Council's Constitution, a recorded vote was taken.

For: Councillors Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Phil Dilks, Paul Fellows, Jan Hansen, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Penny Milnes, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Lee Steptoe, Amanda Wheeler, Jane Wood and Paul Wood. (14)

Against: Councillors Mrs Pam Bosworth, Kelham Cooke, John Cottier, Helen Crawford, John Dawson, Barry Dobson, Breda-Rae Griffin, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Annie Mason, Dr Peter Moseley, Robert Reid, Nick Robins, Penny Robins, Susan Sandall, Jacky Smith, Mrs Judy Smith, Judy Stevens,

Adam Stokes, Ian Stokes, Jill Thomas, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Sarah Trotter, Dean Ward, Hannah Westropp, Hilary Westropp, Mark Whittington, Sue Woolley, Linda Wootten and Ray Wootten. (30)

Abstain: Councillors Bob Broughton, Ian Selby (2)

The vote was **LOST**.

40. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:17.