



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

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

3 May 2022

**Report of:** Councillor Linda Wootten

Cabinet Member for Corporate  
Governance and Licensing



## Update on Local Authority Searches

To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update regarding Local Land Charges performance.

### Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
<b>Administrative</b>	<b>Administrative</b>	<b>All Wards</b>

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Melanie Jordan, Land Charges Coordinator	20 April 2022
<b>Approved by:</b>	Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	21 April 2022
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Linda Wootten, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing	21 April 2022

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. Notes the update regarding Local Authority searches.
2. Considers whether any further monitoring or update reports are required.

# 1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 The Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report at its meeting on 7 September 2021 which provided the Committee with an opportunity to monitor performance indicators relating to Local Authority searches.
- 1.2 As reported at the meeting on 7 September 2021, at the end of April 2021 the average turnaround time for searches was an average of 22 days for a Full Official search and at its highest had reached 32 days mainly due to staff holidays and sickness. The Council's turnaround target is ten days.
- 1.3 Immediate measures were put in place when the service transferred to the Governance function of the Council in May 2021 under the Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate to clear the backlog, with turnaround times having improved significantly. Details of the monthly average turnaround times for Full Official searches since the last meeting of this Committee are as follows:
  - September: 9 days
  - October: 3 days
  - November: 3 days
  - December: 5 days
  - January: 4 days
  - February: 6 days
  - March: 12 days
- 1.4 The Team has worked incredibly hard to maintain an exceptional level of performance, in some cases showing significant overperformance, particularly during the period October – February. Peaks in the submission of applications and lack of resilience in the resourcing of the team to sufficiently cover periods of annual leave and other absences has led to a higher average turnaround rate for March. It is worth noting that the temporary additional resources that were allocated to the Local Land Charges Team ceased at the end of December 2021 and a budget bid was submitted as part of the Council's budget for 2022/23 to provide a more sustainable resource model for the team.
- 1.5 Recruitment for one and a half fulltime equivalent vacant posts is now in the process of being undertaken which will provide much more capacity and resilience within the team, which currently consists of only two fulltime equivalent posts. This will have a significant impact on turnaround times and the general performance of the team.
- 1.6 A review of the Council's processes and systems via support from a neighbouring Local Authority has been undertaken which has identified improvements, particularly in respect of the utilisation of mapping software which is in the process of being updated and improved to ensure much better integration.
- 1.7 Improvements to efficiency can also be achieved by updating the Total Land Charges system. Software updates are in the process of being costed and implemented.
- 1.8 Alongside the Team's day to day responsibilities, a significant and complex ongoing project is the migration of data to HM Land Registry which continues to be delivered in accordance with a prescribed timetable.

## **2 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny**

2.1 No further consultation has taken place on the content of this report.

## **3 Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The recent restructure identified the need for additional resource to be added to this service area which is being undertaken.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer**

## **4 Legal and Governance Implications**

4.1 There are no legal and governance implications arising from this report

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer**

## **5 Risk and Mitigation**

5.1 Risks relate to the reputation of the Team and wider Council with regard to turnaround times. Additional resources allocated to the team, as accounted for in the Council's budget for 2022/23, should ensure that the turnaround target of ten days can be maintained.

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

6.1 Automation and good e-systems will reduce the usage of paper.