

Minutes

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Wednesday, 5 July 2023, 2.00 pm

**Council Chamber – South Kesteven
House, St.Peter's Hill, Grantham.
NG31 6PZ**

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Steven Cunningham (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Ray Wootten

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Cabinet Member for People and Communities)

Other Members present

Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Ian Selby

Officers

Richard Wyles (Chief Finance Officer, S151 Officer)
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director of Growth and Culture)
Craig Spence (Acting Director of Housing)
Anne-Marie Coulthard (Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection)
Adrian Ash (Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection)
Debbie Roberts (Head of Policy, Performance and Corporate Projects)
Claire Moses (Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service)
Carol Drury (Community Engagement Manager)
James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

1. Public Speaking

Question received from a member of the public in relation to agenda item 7:

“According to Government guidance, the Council must consult with the Police and Crime Commissioner of the area before making a PSPO. It was queried as to whether this had been done.”

The Public Protection Manager confirmed via email that the purpose of the report within the agenda pack was to seek consultation on this matter.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Virginia Moran and Councillor Habib Rahman.

Councillor Charmaine Morgan substituted Councillor Virginia Moran.

3. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

4. Minutes from the meeting held on 16 March 2023

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were a correct and accurate record.

5. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

There were no announcements or updates.

6. End of year Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

The Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance presented the report that built on historical reports to provide an update on performance to the end of the 2022/2023 financial year. It incorporated the changes recommended by the last KPI review to outline areas of the council's performance which were successful and to advise where challenges may lay.

Appendix A within the report outlined the overall performance against the original actions, as well as specific performance against the sub measures contained within those. Specific commentary was provided for each action, and summarised as follows:

- Four of the actions are rated Green. These are actions which are on or above target as planned.

- One action was rated as Amber, these are those off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement is delayed but with resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.
- One action was rated as Red, this is falling significantly below target.

One Member raised a query on extending the provision of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras within certain areas of the District using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection confirmed that the current proposal for CCTV was to upgrade the existing cameras rather than adding any additional cameras at this time.

The Police and Crime Commissioner was preparing a report in relation to CCTV across Lincolnshire regarding location and provision, however this report would not include any provision or funding for additional cameras. It would seek to identify existing and potential opportunities.

It was suggested that the Committee receive a report in the future on CCTV.

Members congratulated Officers on securing funding of £284,000 to change the historic analogue CCTV system to digital.

Another Member raised concern on the significant increase in anti-social behaviour at the parks in Grantham.

An explanation was requested as to why priority number 10, protecting our most vulnerable residents with robust, safeguarding processes, was rated red.

The Acting Director of Housing confirmed there had been a high staff turnover, over the last 12-18 months. All new starters had been issued with online training packages. It was emphasised that Line Managers should be ensuring their team complete the safeguarding training in a timely manner.

Safeguarding sessions had also been undertaken for elected Members through the induction process, where 57% of Members attended.

Concern was raised on the data sharing of information between the Council's Housing Department and the Local Policing Team regarding protection orders.

The Council had liaised with the Police around reinforcing partnership working with the use of the case management system, E-Cins. Monthly meetings also took place where all ongoing anti-social behaviour cases were discussed and logged onto the system.

A Member queried whether all existing staff employed by the Council had received relevant training, particularly Officers that visit properties and possible vulnerable residents.

The Acting Director of Housing clarified that all Housing Officers, Assistants and Trade workers had received their Prevent and Safeguarding training to ensure full awareness of their responsibilities. Over 85% of the current safeguarding referrals made by the Council had come from the Housing department in the past 24 months. A Domestic Abuse Officer had recently been employed to identify and tackle any potential safeguarding issues.

It was questioned whether staff were expected to complete training annually or whether it was enrolling training only.

It was highlighted that every new starter completed their training within the first six months of their employment. Staff are then required to complete further refresher training every 24 months.

A Member queried as to why the induction training had a timescale of six months, rather than the first few days of employment. It was suggested that an induction programme before commencing a new role would seem sensible.

There was a more urgent dispatch of training for front line Officers of the Council. The current training offering was a best-practice online course and not all employees were working online, which allowed them the caveat of six months to complete the training. New employees were reminded of the completion of training at induction.

Clarification was sought around the safeguarding of residents in the District living in private rented accommodation. For which it was confirmed the same principles applied to the safeguarding of residents living in private rented accommodation.

The current percentage of trained staff (37%) was discussed. It was queried as to whether the target of 100% could be reached and if so, the timescale of this.

It was confirmed that the completion target was 100% for all staff. The percentage had increased at the end of 2022 to approximately 70% completion. The aim was to have 100% of staff trained on a rolling basis, however staff turn around may affect the completion percentage. Further reporting frequency had been requested to ensure that staff can be reminded of completion.

A Member queried whether staff were given time out of their working day to complete the training and whether there had been any issues surrounding access.

The Acting Director of Housing clarified that those Officers who did not utilise a laptop during their day-to-day duties, would be given time within their first two weeks of employment to complete the training within the office.

It was hoped that all staff would be trained by the end of the calendar year.

The Chairman reiterated the importance of elected Members completing their safeguarding training.

A Member queried the 'not-reported' KPI's set out in the report.

The Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance clarified that the KPI's 'not-reported' were those completed, amended during the Corporate Plan period or incorporated to other KPI's. Other KPI's within the report were the responsibility of other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

AGREED:

- 1. To review and scrutinise the performance against the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.**
- 2. Use the report to inform and support ongoing work programme.**

7. Review of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities presented the report. The purpose of the report was to consider the existing Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) within South Kesteven with a recommendation to extend them by a further period of three years.

The Committee were also requested to consider amending the Dog Exclusion PSPO to further include other enclosed play areas in the Recreation Ground, Stamford.

The report requested consideration for a new PSPO for vehicle nuisance and anti-social behaviour to cover the area of Bath Row, Station Road car park and the Meadows area of Stamford. This PSPO would be for the duration of three years.

There was one alcohol control PSPO which covered all of the towns within the District and a dog exclusion PSPO which included all enclosed play areas in the District. There was a dog fouling PSPO which covered the whole District and a dog on lead by order PSPO which covered the whole District and included a requirement for dogs to be kept on a lead within The Spinney, Market Deeping.

One Member raised a query on how many Enforcement Officers were able to enforce dog fouling and provide a sanction.

The Assistant Director for Operations and Public Protection noted that there was not a designated Officer that dealt with dog fouling. There were 5 Officers that worked within the neighbourhoods team, who would actively patrol areas where complaints of dog fouling were received and engage with dog walkers. Any breaches of the PSPO's would result in a fixed penalty notice of £100.

A Member sought clarification on whether funding was put towards dog bins by Parish Council's. It was suggested that more dog bins be provided in the rural areas, due to a lack of Enforcement Officer presence in the rural parts of the District.

It was confirmed the Council does not provide specific dog waste bins. Instead, people may put their dog waste into any litter bin. Some parishes had chosen to provide specific dog waste bins, which they fund and service entirely at their own cost, and were responsible for emptying those dog bins.

In 2022, Cabinet adopted the Litter Bin Policy, which was available to view on the Council's website. Officer's urged Parish Council's to review the requirements for a bin to be provided.

It was suggested that current Council employees could become trained to issue fixed penalty notices, however, training was complicated and required a lot of knowledge on the law.

A Member highlighted that there were popular, public/pedestrian routes in Grantham that had no dog or litter bins available.

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities stated that adding more bins would add further cost to the Council. It was emphasised that dog owners should be more responsible.

A query was raised on why the water area of Wyndham Park, Grantham was not covered by the PSPO. It was noted that at Dysart Park, Grantham, one of the play areas was covered by a PSPO, however, the other was not.

It was further queried as to how many fixed penalty notices had been issued in the last year.

The Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection encouraged all Ward Members to take part in the consultation to provide feedback.

There had been no fixed penalty notices issued for offences in relation to the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in the last three years.

A Ward Member asked the Committee to consider adding the following enclosed play areas within the consultation process:

- Harrier Way (North of Towngate West) in Market Deeping

- Charter Avenue in Market Deeping

The Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection requested that the Parish Council responded to the consultation and the Council would look into adding the play areas into the PSPO area.

It was clarified that a PSPO could be considered for any public space, however, if not owned by the Council, permission would need to be given by the landowner for the PSPO to be granted. The Council can still enforce on a PSPO providing the landowner agreed, in accordance with a clause within the order.

Further clarification was sought as to why the bowling green and tennis courts and other play areas in Grantham had not been included under PSPO's.

It was noted that when the PSPO's were originally put into place, it included traditional children's play area with play equipment. It was predominantly enclosed play areas with play equipment, unless other open spaces had been requested to be added by other parties.

The Committee could request to include other open spaces within the consultation, otherwise any areas picked up throughout the consultation process would be considered as part of the adoption process by Cabinet.

The Public Speaker arrived at the meeting late, the Chairman agreed for their statement to be heard. The Public Speaker's concern was around the tennis courts in Stamford being included within a PSPO and it was felt this had been driven by Stamford Town Council.

The Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities confirmed that the PSPO on the tennis courts in Stamford had been proposed due to a resident allowing their dog to walk on the tennis courts and occasionally not picking up dog waste. There was a 'no dog walking measure' on the tennis courts, therefore, Stamford Town Council had requested the PSPO to further protect the area.

The Assistant Director for Operations and Public Protection informed the Committee that dependent on the acceptance of the recommendation, that a 4-week public consultation would take place in respect of the PSPO's.

A Member raised concern that a PSPO was possibly being put into place for one individual.

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED that the Committee:

1. **Considers the continuation of the existing Spaces Protection Orders.**
2. **Considers the proposed amendment to the existing Public Space Protection Order (Dog Exclusion) to include additional areas at the Recreation Ground, Stamford.**

3. **Considers the request for a new Public Space Protection Order for vehicle related nuisance and anti-social behaviour covering the following areas within Stamford: the Station Road car park (also known as Cattle Market), The Meadows and Bath Row car park.**
4. **Recommends the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities Commercial and Operations that statutory consultation be undertaken in respect of the above.**

8. Customer Service Update

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service presented the report. It provided the Committee with the outturn position for 2022/2023 regarding customer interactions and call handling as at 31 March 2023.

The report also provided an update regarding the review of the Customer Experience Strategy and various projects undertaken by the service. The Customer Service Team handled customer interactions in various ways for 15 service areas, as well as public enquiries.

During 2022/2023 there were 211,292 interactions which included telephone calls, emails and in-person. The interactions were due to be analysed further, with specific focus on the 'apply for it', 'pay for it' and 'report it' web pages to determine which areas channel shift had been successful.

The level of call handling by the Customer Service Team was monitored on a weekly basis with the percentage of calls handled as at the 31 March 2023 being 87%. This had further increased to 89% as at the end of June 2023.

The Customer Service Team had seen a reduction in staffing levels due to a number of resignations over recent months. The reason for the resignations were varied, with five being due to progression into other service areas within the Council and external career progression.

All vacancies had been recruited to and the training of new staff would take between six-nine months to complete.

To support the improvement of call handling, the team had implemented the introduction of the new telephony solution, enabling all staff to set-up voicemail and call forwarding.

In October 2023, a virtual operator solution would be introduced, replacing the current 'press 1, press 2' process. The system would work via voice activation and speech recognition, asking the caller to state which service or Officer they require by name. The call would then be transferred immediately in the call queue or directly to the Officer. If the virtual operator was unable to successfully understand the caller on two occasions, the call would then be transferred immediately to a switchboard operator.

A further update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members thanked the Customer Service team for their continuous work.

A Member raised concern in the reduction of overall amenity space at the customer service centre. It was queried how long the customer service staff would continue to operate from the Guildhall, Grantham, as this was understood to be a temporary measure.

Further concern was raised on possible disturbance of colleagues when members of the public were visiting the desk and the privacy of residents visiting, was discussed.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service highlighted that the time frame of the temporary measure was unknown. The provision of service was continuously under review. Minimal feedback had been received from customers and staff on the temporary accommodation measures.

It was noted that customer services staff working in the Guildhall, Grantham supported and provided a service to the customer, where the customer was a priority. Staff had the opportunity to undertake 'back-office work' when a colleague was dealing with a customer to prevent being disturbed. Staff may also book a desk at the Picture House from 1pm onwards, due to the 'walk-in' hours of Customer Services, where they could undertake their day-to-day work.

The 'walk-in' customer service centre had another room to protect the privacy of customers that could be utilised at request.

Concern was raised on the 20% reduction in total interactions with the general public from 2019/2020 to 2022/2023, which was almost all driven by in-person interactions. It was questioned as to how confident Officers were that the 20% reduction had not led to vulnerable people in the community not receiving the information they required.

It was confirmed that the question would be answered in further detail at the next Committee meeting, as an analysis of the website to understand whether that 20% reduction in in-person interactions had seen an increase of interactions by 20% on the website.

That the Committee:

1. Notes the report and were invited to ask questions relating to the report.

9. SK Community Awards

The Community Engagement Manager provided a verbal update to the Committee.

For the last three years, South Kesteven District Council had celebrated those in the community that make a difference by asking the residents of South Kesteven to nominate their community champions.

This year, the Council was incorporating what had previously been the Best Kept Village competition. This category had changed to an opportunity for community nomination and given a new title – Community in Bloom. This provided the opportunity for nominations from all villages within South Kesteven.

There had also been a new award created for Urban Space. This award was open to nominations relating to any of the four towns within the District.

The other categories were:

- Inspirational Young Person (nominations for young people up to the age of 25)
- Lifetime Community Achievement (people who had given a lifetime to supporting their local community)
- Health and Wellbeing
- Business and the Community (nominations for companies showing high levels of Corporate Social Responsibility)
- Neil Smith – Beyond the Call of Duty (nominations for blue light services and individuals who have helped in an emergency)

The Council launched the awards during Volunteers Week (1-7 June 2023) and nominations were open until 24th August 2023.

The PR for the Awards had gone out in SKToday, social media and some targeted marketing relating to the Neil Smith Award (Police, Fire and Rescue, LIVES, Red Cross, St John Ambulance for example).

Information regarding categories had been sent out to all the Parish and Town Council's, with specific mention of the Community in Bloom and Urban Space awards.

At the time of the meeting, 43 nominations had been received across the categories. Unfortunately, no nominations for Community in Bloom or Urban Space had been received.

Members were urged to advertise the SK Community Awards when attending Parish or Town Council meetings.

Judging for the Awards was due to take place on Monday 11 September 2023. The judging panel was made up of Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities. This meant Member representation from Bourne, Deepings, Grantham, and Stamford. A further elected Member from a rural Ward would also be invited to participate.

Alongside Members, a previous winner and young person from the District would also be invited to be part of the judging panel.

Each finalist and a guest would be invited to a celebration event in Bourne on 27 October 2023 where the winners will be announced. The winner of each category will be presented with a crystal trophy or, in the case of the Community in Bloom and Urban Space categories, a plaque. Photographs from the evening of the winners and runners up would be published in SK Today.

A query was raised on whether the winner of the 'Best Kept Village' would receive a plaque. For which it was clarified the Community in Bloom and Urban Space categories would both receive a plaque to locate in an area of their choice.

Clarification was sought on whether the Urban Space category would include certain Council estates.

The Community Engagement Manager confirmed that estates within the town that had open spaces worthy of nomination, were eligible.

A Member questioned whether any funding support was offered to support low-income communities to assist in setting up projects to be nominated for an award.

It was confirmed there was no funding support provided by the Council in order to assist in being nominated for an award. Constituted community groups would be eligible for certain funding opportunities, however, this was not related to the Community Awards. The Community Engagement Team was always happy to assist if Members knew of groups requiring support.

10. Work Programme 2023-2024

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2023-2024.

The Chairman requested the Cost-of-living agenda item be moved to the meeting being held on 14 December 2023.

The Chairman requested the Community drop-in sessions agenda item be moved to the meeting being held on 1 February 2024.

One Member noted that minutes would be available from the September meeting of Police and Crime Panel. It was suggested whether they could be brought to the next Committee meeting for comments, feedback and noting.

The Director of Growth and Culture reminded the Committee they had discussed CCTV as a future agenda item for the December or February Committee meeting.

One Member queried whether consultations and feedback on the Acute Service Review, services for maternity at Boston Pilgrim Hospital and review of GP services could be discussed within the remit of the Committee.

It was further queried whether car parking fell into the remit of the Committee.

It was queried whether an analysis and explanation of the 20% reduction in customer service interactions would be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service clarified that the consultation was with regards to the outcome of the Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan, which was agreed at the Committee meeting on 16 March 2023. A further Customer Service Update would be brought back to Committee in November or December.

The Chairman informed the Committee that car parking fell under the remit of both Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee jointly.

11. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

There were none.

12. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 15:40.