



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 December 2023

Report of Councillor Rhea Raysia,
Cabinet Member for People and
Communities

Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

It is recommended Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Considers the Community Engagement and Development Strategy and recommends to Cabinet its adoption to complement the Council's emerging corporate priority of Connected Communities.**
2. **Following the implementation of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy this Committee agrees to receive an update every six months on the progress and delivery of the Action Plan.**

Decision Information	
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy and strong communities • High performing Council
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

Diversity and Inclusion

1.3 South Kesteven's increasingly diverse communities are at the heart of the development of a Communities Strategy. In order to be equitable and inclusive in this process, early consultation with the voluntary, community, military and faith sectors was undertaken to ensure the voice of the community was heard and included.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager.

2. Background to the Report

2.1 South Kesteven District Council recognises the importance of the network of voluntary and community groups within South Kesteven and is appreciative of their contribution and commitment to local society. This is acknowledged in the Council's current Corporate Plan in its key objectives to:

- work effectively with partners in the voluntary, private, and public sectors for the benefit of communities, and
- make best use of different funding sources to support the voluntary and community sector within the District.

2.2 The Council's commitment to continue to work with communities was further bolstered during the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in November 2021. The subsequent Feedback Report led to an Action Plan being developed to address the recommendations made.

2.3 Recommendation 8 of the LGA report concentrated on the Council's work with communities and stated we should "*...continue to deepen understanding of, and engagement with, communities and other partners to strengthen SKDC's community leadership role. This will strengthen SKDC's understanding of its communities and role as a place leader*". This is detailed in the background paper reference in paragraph 7.1 of this report.

2.4 To fulfil the Council's commitment and focus the approach of the Community Engagement Team going forward, a Community Engagement and Development Strategy has been produced, which is included in Appendix One. The strategy, Our People, Our Place, is supported by an accompanying action plan, which is included in Appendix Two.

2.5 The aim of this strategy, and the action plan which supports it, is to provide a framework to guide community engagement and development activity within South Kesteven which complements the Council's emerging Corporate Plan and its ambition for "Connected Communities" by:

- Enabling opportunities for increased public dialogue and engagement to empower and connect our communities.
- Working in partnership with the voluntary, private and public sectors to deliver effective and responsive support services to meet the needs of all our communities.

2.6 With regard to engagement with our serving and ex-military communities, the Council's signature to the Armed Forces Covenant and its Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme carries a responsibility to actively engage and advocate engagement from others. Our commitment to our Armed Forces communities is therefore reflected within the strategy and the action plan. A separate Armed Forces action plan, will be presented to this Committee on 1 February 2024.

2.7 Implementing the Community Engagement and Development Strategy will ensure we identify and record what is already being undertaken and will identify further opportunities for Community Engagement to be embedded within the Council.

2.8 The Council's role in community engagement and community development is not to tell communities what they must do, rather to support and advise in the delivery of what they want and where they want it. Therefore, a vital element in the process of developing and implementing this strategy was community consultation.

2.9 The consultation was developed in two parts – a residents' survey which was available on the Council's website and a survey for voluntary and community groups which was sent directly to the 300+ contacts the Community Engagement Team has within the District. The intention was for survey responses to help determine whether the proposed content was appropriate and relevant for stakeholders and to identify if communities felt there was anything missing. Feedback was used in the preparation of the Strategy to ensure the document reflected the needs of our communities.

2.10 The strategy is built on the themes of:

- **Community of Place:** where we live - a town, village or neighbourhood
- **Community of Interest:** what we're interested in – things or activities we like doing or are curious or concerned about
- **Community of Identity:** what makes us who we are – our culture, faith, qualities, personality traits

2.11 Content of the strategy outlines the principles under which the strategy will be delivered and the objectives to be delivered through the action plan.

2.12 Response to the consultation was higher from residents than from community groups. 77% of respondents agreed with the proposed themes of the strategy whilst 13% responded 'don't know' or did not answer. 81% agreed with the objectives and principles with 15% stating 'don't know or not providing a response.'

3. Key Considerations

3.1 Our People, Our Place is a new strategy to set the direction for how South Kesteven District Council can build on its relationship with the voluntary and community sector of the District. The document sets out the Council's community engagement and development ambitions which will contribute to the Corporate Plan and provides the framework for forthcoming, collaborative work with the communities of South Kesteven.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 Within its emerging Corporate Plan, the Council has set out its ambitions for connected communities. The development of this strategy contributes strongly to this ambition. Therefore the other options were discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 To gain endorsement for the adoption and implementation of this strategy and its accompanying action plan.

5.2. To keep Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed of progress against activity outlined in the action plan.

6. Consultation

6.1 Consultation has taken place with residents and the voluntary, community faith and military sector. Feedback received from this committee will be incorporated into the subsequent report to Cabinet which will ask for the strategy to be adopted.

7. Background Papers

7.1 [Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, Report to Cabinet, Published 29 March 2022](#)

7.2 [Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven – Consultation Brief](#)

8. Appendices

8.1 There are two appendices included within this report:

- Appendix 1:Our People, Our Place: Community Engagement and Development Strategy
- Appendix 2: Community Engagement and Development Action Plan