



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Cabinet

6 February 2024

Report of Councillor Rhea Rayside
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

To consider a recommendation made by the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the draft Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place (2024 – 2027) be formally adopted along with its accompanying draft Action Plan.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the adoption of the Community Engagement and Development Strategy (2024 to 2027) to underpin the corporate priority of Connecting Communities.
2. Endorses a six-monthly update is provided to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing progress and delivery of the Action Plan which accompanies the Community Engagement and Development Strategy.

Decision Information	
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Healthy and strong communities
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

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

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

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance & ICT) and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

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

Completed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

Diversity and Inclusion

1.3 South Kesteven's increasingly diverse communities are at the heart of community engagement and development. In order to be equitable and inclusive in the process of developing the Council's first Community Engagement and Development Strategy, 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 Corporate Plan.

2.2 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.

2.3 The aim of this strategy, and the action plan which supports it, is to provide a framework to guide engagement with and development of the voluntary and community sector within South Kesteven which complements the Council's Corporate Plan and its ambition for "Connecting 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.

2.4 The generic term voluntary and community sector encompasses any group or organisation run by, or with volunteers. This includes (but is not limited to) faith groups, food support groups/agencies; arts, cultural, civic and heritage groups; community venues; hobby groups; parent/teacher associations; scouts, guides and cadet groups; nature, parks, play areas and woodland groups; charities, amateur sports groups; Rotary and Lions groups; support groups, veterans groups and youth groups.

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 A report was taken to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2023 outlining the proposal to develop a Community Engagement and

Development Strategy. The report sought the comments of the Committee and its endorsement of a public consultation exercise into the proposed principles and themes. The Committee was supportive of the proposals. This can be viewed in the background papers at section 7 of this report.

- 2.8 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. Consultees were asked to consider the proposed principles and themes.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 Feedback was used in the preparation of the Strategy to ensure the document reflected the needs of our communities.
- 2.11 Following the consultation period a draft strategy and action plan were developed and presented to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th December 2023. At this meeting, Members of the Committee recommended to Cabinet the adoption of Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven (Appendix A - below) and also agreed to six monthly updates on the progress of the strategy's accompanying Action Plan (Appendix B – below).
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 The strategy also outlines the four principles under which the Action Plan was developed and will be delivered. These are:
 - Building Capacity
 - Addressing Needs
 - Mutual Support
 - Strengthening Cohesion

2.14 Adopting and implementing the Community Engagement and Development Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan 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.

3. Key Considerations

3.1 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.

3.2 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 7.3 of this report.

3.3 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 Corporate Plan, the Council has set out its ambition for *connecting communities*. The development of this strategy contributes strongly to this ambition. Therefore the other options were discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 At the meeting of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 March 2023, Members considered a report outlining a proposal to develop a Community Engagement and Development Strategy. Members of the Committee endorsed the commencement of the community consultation and the subsequent development of a strategy for the District. At its meeting of 14 December 2023, Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented with a further report detailing the work undertaken to develop the draft Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place and its Action Plan. Following debate, a recommendation to Cabinet was made that the Strategy should be formally adopted.

5.2 Should this recommendation be accepted, Members of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed to receive six monthly updates on the progress and delivery of the Action Plan contained within the draft Cultural Strategy.

6. Consultation

6.1 Information relating to consultation undertaken in the development of this strategy is outlined in the body of this report.

7. Background Papers

7.1 Minutes of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 16 March can be found online at:

[Printed minutes 16th-Mar-2023 14.00 Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)

7.2 Details of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 14 December can be found online at:

[Agenda for Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 14th December, 2023, 2.00 pm | South Kesteven District Council](#)

7.3 The report resulting from the Local Government Peer Challenge November 2021 can be found online at:

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

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Our People, Our Place – A Community Engagement and Development Strategy for South Kesteven 2024-2027 (Draft).

8.2 Appendix B: Community Engagement and Development Action Plan (Draft).