

Meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Monday, 15 January 2024, 10.00 am

Committee Members present

Councillor Bridget Ley (Chairman)

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing

Councillor Helen Crawford

Councillor Ben Green

Councillor Tim Harrison

Councillor Graham Jeal

Councillor Robert Leadenham

Councillor Lee Steptoe

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Richard Cleaver (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Ashley Baxter (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Councillor Phil Dilks (Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning)

Councillor Philip Knowles (Cabinet Member for Governance and Licensing)

Councillor Rhea Rayside (Cabinet Member for People and Communities)

Councillor Paul Stokes (Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure)

Other Members present

Councillor Paul Fellows

Councillor Habibur Rahman

Officers present

Karen Bradford (Chief Executive)

Richard Wyles (Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer)

Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director for Growth and Culture)

Nick Thacker (Interim Head of Service, Housing)

Debbie Roberts (Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance)

James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Alice Atkins (Corporate Projects Officer)

Sarah Downs (Democratic Services Officer)

54. Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman proposed a change to the order of agenda items, moving agenda item 8 – St Martin’s Park, Stamford Redevelopment Project to the final item, following agenda item 10 – an update on the Grantham Future High Streets Fund.

This was seconded and **AGREED**.

Following nominations, it was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that Councillor Lee Steptoe act as Vice-Chairman for today’s meeting.

55. Public Speaking

No comments from members of the public were received.

56. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors’ Gloria Johnson and Murray Turner.

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing substituted for Councillor Turner and Councillor Graham Jeal substituted for Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Helen Crawford represented the South Kesteven Coalition Group.

The Deputy Leader confirmed apologies from Councillor Virginia Moran.

57. Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures of interest were received.

58. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that the minutes from the meeting held on 28 November 2023 were a correct record.

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

There were none.

60. Updates from previous meeting

The Chairman confirmed that the action arising from the previous meeting of 28 November 2023 to arrange an additional meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee was complete as todays meeting represented the additional committee requested.

61. Mid-Term Key Performance Indicators 2023/2024

The report was introduced by the Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance.

The South Kesteven Corporate Plan 2020-23 was approved by Council on 1 October 2020. It was agreed by the Council that actions, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets would be developed by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee, which would retain oversight of the performance management arrangements at a strategic level. These actions and indicators were presented to this committee and agreed on 23 February 2021.

The Year End report for 2022/23 was presented to the Committee on 27 June 2023 and outlined the performance against the Corporate Plan for the previous financial year. This report built on these historical reports to provide an update on performance to the mid-year point of the 2023/24 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.

2023/2024 was the final year of monitoring these existing KPIs. A refresh of the Corporate Plan was currently underway. All Members had the opportunity to engage in the development of the new Corporate Plan, which will be adopted in January 2024. To accompany the new Corporate Plan, a new suite of KPIs will be developed to reflect the priorities, ambitions and actions of the new Plan. These KPIs were to be approved by each Committee and reporting was to commence from April 2024.

- 7 of the actions were rated Green. These were actions which were on or above target as planned. Included within these were 'healthy and strong communities' and 'investing in high quality leisure facilities across the District.'
- 2 actions were rated as Amber, these were those off target by less than 10% or where milestone achievement was delayed but with resolution in place to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe. It was noted that within 'the delivery of growth in the economy' 2 actions were items at today's Committee – St Martin's Park, Stamford and delivery of the Heritage Action Zone Project.

The Director of Growth and Culture had provided extended commentary on the KPIs for The Grantham Future High Streets Fund and the Heritage Action Zone in the covering report.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- There were a number of KPIs recorded as 'not reported'. Why was this?

- The Council was significantly below target for protecting the most vulnerable residents with safeguarding processes as well as meeting the Housing needs of residents. How could this be improved?
- The Southern Urban extension project was still very much in prospect, shouldn't this still be a current KPI?

The Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance informed Members that the Corporate Plan had been in place for some time and a lot of the original targets had been completed or superseded with other KPIs more fit for purpose during the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The Officer confirmed that the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were responsible for the KPIs relevant to vulnerable residents and the safeguarding processes. An update was to be heard at their next committee meeting. The Housing KPIs were to be heard at the next Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2024.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the KPIs were linked to the Corporate Plan and its objectives. The Committee had an opportunity to review the KPIs moving forward in preparation of the next Plan.

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED**:

That the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1. Reviewed and scrutinised the performance against the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes.**
- 2. Used this report to inform and support the ongoing work programme of the Committee.**

62. Grantham Future High Streets Fund Update

On 19 September 2023, the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee were provided with an update on the Grantham Future High Streets Fund programme which highlighted rising costs in relation to construction and infrastructure works. Committee Members requested for an additional update report to be presented to the November meeting.

The Leader of the Council provided an update to the Committee.

An agreement held between South Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council regarding the public realm schemes had been confirmed at an estimated cost of £1.8 million for the Market Place Scheme and a scaled down Station Approach Scheme estimated at £0.6 million. The report also gave Members an update on the strategic site acquisition element of the Programme. Legal Advisors had stated that due to the shortened timeframe there was no prospect of acquiring the site utilising compulsory purchase powers. Consideration

had been made as to whether the project could be achievable in the context of programme extension, however, this was unfortunately not the case.

'Since the report was published in November 2023, the Council was given the option by the Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities to relocate approximately £2.1 million of funding to the undeliverable strategic site acquisition project, to deliver the Station Approach Project in full, allowing both schemes to be delivered as originally envisaged, which would maximise delivery and prevent a return of funding to Central Government.

Members of the Programme Board had since met with Lincolnshire County Council and the County Council had since provided a high-level update delivery plan for the public realm projects. Furthermore, an additional project had been identified through which we could utilise the reallocated funding. This was around capital works to bring back toilets in the Market Place that had been closed for over 10 years, in order to support the vitality of the area. This project had been estimated at a maximum of £90,000. The Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities were supportive of the project in principle and a formal request to proceed with the works had been submitted.

As the project budget had changed significantly, this had been subject to both the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities' project adjustment request process and their agreement to extend the programme period. These requests had now been submitted. Should the programme extension request be approved, this would extend the programme period by six months to September 2024 and the delivery period by 12 months to April 2025.

The Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities had confirmed that approval was likely, which would allow the Council time to complete both major public realm projects by March 2025. The project adjustment request also requested the removal of the strategic site acquisition from the Future High Streets Fund's programme. The Council awaited a decision regarding this and requested reallocation of funding.

The report also updated Members on the Upper Floor Grants Programme. Since the previous meeting of the Committee, the very late withdrawals of both the application at St Peter's Walk and at 40 Westgate, Grantham left 6 grants unallocated. These had now been relocated to the applicant for 9 -10 High Street. In the week following the publication of the report, the applicant for 4 units at 90 Westgate had also withdrawn from the programme. Officers were able to reallocate 2 of the grants to the 9-10 High Street applicant and were currently working to reallocate the remaining 2. They were likely able to do so in the context of a programme extension.

At present, no full applications had yet been submitted. However, these were expected to come through in the coming weeks. Funding for the largest application was due to be heard at the February 2024 meeting of Cabinet. Conversations between officers and applicants were ongoing to ensure that deadlines were met.

The report also detailed a forward plan for the Grantham Town Team as agreed by the combined Grantham Heritage Action Zone and Future High Street Fund Programme Board. Due to significant gaps in staffing levels and vacant Grantham Engagement Manager post, there had been a natural pause in the progress of the Grantham Town Team. As such, Members and officers involved in the delivery of the project had been able to reflect on feedback regarding its operation. It had been agreed that both the membership and terms of reference of the Town Team required considerable improvement, including a key qualifying criteria that Members must be willing for their involvement in the Town Team to be in the public domain. The Programme Board aimed to meet imminently to draft and agree a terms of reference for the Town Team and criteria for membership. Following this and the appointment of a new Grantham Engagement Manager, the Town Team will be relaunched.'

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- Was there a drawing of the Market Place Scheme? There were queries over the parking area outside the Recruitment Agency potentially being levelled and confirmation was requested.
- Were both pieces of work expected to be completed by April 2025?
- What was the cost to the taxpayer for the formal launch of the Town Team at the Angel and Royal Hotel and what was the rationale for not having the membership of the Town Team or the invitee list not in the public domain in the first instance?

The Chief Executive informed Members an email had been received from Lincolnshire County Council confirming the cost of the additional part of the work, was as much as completing the whole project and therefore not contained within the budget. Lincolnshire County Council had also expressed concerns over the number of utilities in the area. This had been challenged by South Kesteven District Council and a further response was awaited.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the expected completion of both schemes was April 2025.

The Director of Growth and Culture informed Members the costs for the Town Team launch at the Angel & Royal in Grantham would be circulated. A decision was taken to not disclose names of membership at the time, as consent had not been obtained at the outset. Hence the recommendation in the reshaped Grantham Town Team for that to be a condition of involvement.

ACTION:

To circulate the cost in relation to the launch of the Grantham Town Team on 6 September 2023.

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Considered the report and pass comments for feedback to the combined Grantham Heritage Action Zone and Future High Street Fund Programme Board.
- 2) Added an update on the Grantham Future High Streets Fund programme to the Work Programme.

63. St. Martin's Park Redevelopment Project, Stamford

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, recommending that:

The Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the progress made regarding the delivery of the St Martins Park, Stamford development.
2. Reviewed the options that were currently available for the next phase of the project.
3. Recommended to Council a preferred way forward based on the options set out in this report.

South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) acquired in March 2019 land and buildings of the former 'Cummins' factory site which had previously provided employment for up to 500 people on Barnack Rd, Stamford. The site was positioned on the edge of Stamford, to the southeast of the town centre and was originally purchased by the Council for the growth and regeneration of Stamford and to ensure the site was not used for the building of residential homes but instead attracting jobs to replace those lost when the former factory site closed.

To secure the site, the Council paid above the asking price for a quick purchase as it was originally intended to build out the scheme itself hence an agreement to some terms imposed by Cummings, the vendor of the site. The Council agreed that it would enter into a collaboration agreement with Burghley to include commercial mixed use, a retirement village as well as residential homes. Burghley owned the neighbouring land, formerly allocated for employment usage. Outline planning consent had been obtained.

A marketing campaign sought to secure potential developers and 3 developers were shortlisted. Surveys and agents reports had been obtained. Within the collaboration agreement, each landowner bears the cost of remediation work to their site and the Council was required to demolish and remediate the factory buildings. The Council appointed G F Tomlinson to deliverdemolish all 24 buildings on the former factory site, completing in December 2022.

Following demolition, the Council were fully able to assess the remediation works that were required and this was found to be more than originally expected with 2 plumes on site requiring the Environment Agency to approve the remediation strategy of how this was to be done and test afterwards. The Council asked the developers to consider undertaking these works with the cost coming from the end of receipt of the Council's side of the site.

At 10.35, it was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that the meeting continue with the exclusion of the press and public.

Under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public may be excluded from the meeting during any listed items of business, on the grounds that if they were to be present, exempt information could be disclosed to them as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act.

64. Work Programme 2023 - 2024

The Committee considered the Work Programme 2023-2024.

The Maintenance Strategy and Condition Survey item was **AGREED** to be moved to the meeting in May 2024. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed the survey was to be more in-depth, hence the requirement for bringing the report to a later meeting. The Officer confirmed a report on the Council Tax Discount Scheme for Veterans was to be heard at the 20 February meeting.

The Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance confirmed that the new Draft KPIs would be on the agenda for 20 February 2024.

A Member requested a breakdown of the Grantham Market costings. The Deputy Executive agreed to send the information after the meeting.

65. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstance decides is urgent

66. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12:30.