

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 11 JANUARY 2024

1.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Gloria Johnson Chairman
Councillor Paul Fellows Vice-Chairman

Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Rhys Baker
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor David Bellamy
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Patsy Ellis
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Bridget Ley

Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Sue Woolley

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Nicola McCoy-Brown, Director of Growth and Culture
Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance and ICT) and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer

67. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Steve Cunningham
Councillor Ben Green
Councillor Jane Kingman
Councillor Zoe Lane
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Rob Shorrock
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Murray Turner

68. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

69. Public Open Forum

No questions had been received from members of the public.

70. Devolution

Members considered a briefing on the devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire, provisionally agreed between the Government and the local authorities of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC), and North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) on 22 November 2023.

Council Procedure Rule 14.4 allowed for speeches of no more than 5 minutes in length. However, Council consented to allow flexibility with this time limit.

In moving amended recommendations, the Leader of the Council highlighted the following points:

- There was no direct question about the position of an elected Mayor within the consultation. Many residents felt that in terms of local democracy that the establishment of a Mayor was a further layer of bureaucracy.

- The sums of money available to Greater Lincolnshire as a result of the devolution proposal, as well as the documentation and aspirations of the proposed deal were not substantial enough to warrant a change in the way Greater Lincolnshire was governed.

Note: Councillor Vanessa Smith arrived at the meeting.

- Whilst the powers available to South Kesteven District Council remained intact despite the devolution proposal, it would have meant the loss of a direct link to Government due to having a new position of elected Mayor for Greater Lincolnshire.

The amended motion was seconded.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- Residents of South Kesteven had not taken part in a democratic vote on whether they supported or rejected the way in which they were governed.
- South Kesteven District Council were not guaranteed a permanent seat at meetings under the proposed deal, as there were only 4 seats available to the 7 district, borough and city councils across Lincolnshire.
- Last time a similar proposal was considered for devolution, there was a county-wide consultation and in every one of the 7 district, borough and city councils the majority of respondents rejected devolution and said 'no' to a directly elected Mayor. The strongest rejection came from South Kesteven.
- It was unclear how much of the proposed funding would be received by South Kesteven.
- If the devolution deal did not proceed, then the funding available would be lost to the Greater County of Lincolnshire.
- As many residents as possible should be encouraged to express their views on the topic by taking part in the consultation. Although all residents would have the opportunity to engage with the consultation, it was thought that many would not understand what was happening to the governance of the County; i.e. adding a further layer of governance that was not required.
- Any deal was a compromise, and it was possible that more money for the County, and therefore the District would be available in future years.
- Placing a large amount of power within a directly elected Mayor undermined democracy.
- Greater Lincolnshire was too large for one person to effectively govern; this model of governance was more suitable for a large city, or smaller area.
- The question within the devolution consultation could have been more specific to the proposals on offer.
- The devolution deal on offer was not perfect and had many faults; however, South Kesteven had recently devolved powers to Grantham Town Council. There was a long-term investment promise of £720 million to drive economic growth. The deal on offer was a Tier 3 deal; by agreeing to proceed with

devolution this could be a stepping stone to gaining access to higher tiers of funding.

- If South Kesteven wanted to fund large projects then surely having extra funding available through devolution would be a benefit economically to the District.
- South Kesteven was a fairly affluent District; it was far from guaranteed that any money being offered by a new authority would end up within South Kesteven.
- Whilst devolution involved the transfer of powers to a lower level of governance, it was a worry that this devolution offer was the first step in re-organising governance across Lincolnshire.

Having been proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

DECISION:

That Full Council:

1. Notes the progress on the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution as part of the 'Level three deal' offer from the Government.
2. Requests officers collaborate with other district councils and prepare a report and recommendations on the establishment of a Joint Committee for district councils, for presentation to Council on 29 February 2024.
3. Notes that a consultation was currently taking place, which closes on 29 January 2024, on the proposed devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire and therefore invites the Council to consider its response to the consultation, on behalf of residents of South Kesteven.
4. Notes that "live" public consultation events are taking place at Wake House, Bourne 11.30am-2.30pm on 15 January, at The William Cecil Hotel, Stamford 2pm – 5pm on 16 January, and at the Jubilee Life Centre in Grantham 3pm-7pm on 18 January 2024.
5. Regrets that there will not be a permanent seat on the Combined Mayoral Authority for a South Kesteven District Council appointed representative.
6. Considers it inappropriate that the Devolution Proposal including the establishment of a directly elected mayor for Greater Lincolnshire will not be subject to approval by a local referendum.
7. Regrets that the consultation currently underway does not include a direct question about whether the County should have an elected mayor.

8. Considers that the sums of money offered to the Combined Mayoral Authority are not only too small to meet the County's needs but also too small to justify the establishment of an additional tier of local government.
9. Regrets that South Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council may be deprived of opportunities to bid for funds from central government schemes as only the Mayor may be entitled to submit bids from Lincolnshire in future.
10. Resolves to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage the residents of South Kesteven to consider the points above when deciding how to respond to the consultation.

71. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 1:53pm.