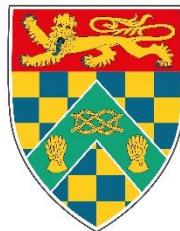


Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 14 May 2024



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Date of publication: 22 May 2024.

**Call in expires 30 May and decisions
can be implemented on 31 May
(provided there is no call-in).**

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Richard Cleaver, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Councillor Rhea Rayside, Cabinet Member for People and Communities

Councillor Paul Stokes, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison

Councillor Ian Selby

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing

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

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place

Nick Hibberd, Head of Economic Development and Inward Investment

Chris Prime, Communications Manager

Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

Molly-Mae Taylor, Communications Officer

113. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

114. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

115. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

116. Housing Stock Condition Survey Contract Award

Purpose of report

To obtain approval to enter into a contract with Impart Links Ltd. for the provision of Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) to dwellings that formed part of South Kesteven District Council's housing stock.

Decision

That Cabinet approves the award of a contract to Impart Links Ltd. for the provision of stock conditions surveys and EPCs for a period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year, with a maximum contract value of £281,000.

Alternative options considered and rejected

An alternative option would have been to keep the works in house and utilise Council staff to complete the stock condition surveys. Due to existing service delivery pressures, this would have caused extensive delay to the surveys and was therefore not considered an appropriate option.

Reasons for decision

The proposed contract award to Impart Links Ltd had followed a compliant procurement process and would ensure the Council's annual target of 1,000 re-inspection surveys was met.

The Council had a duty to comply with the 'Decent Homes Standard' as well as an aspiration to adhere to best practice where practical.

117. Trees and Woodland Strategy 2024-2034

Purpose of report

To ask Cabinet to approve the South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the new South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 – 2034.
2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environment and Waste to make minor amendments to the document, as necessary, before final publication.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council could have decided not to have a Trees and Woodlands Strategy. However, such a decision would not align with the Council's commitment to delivering on the ambitions set out in its adopted Climate Action Strategy and on new duties for biodiversity improvements. The results of the public consultation (Appendix 5 of the report) also demonstrated a clear desire from residents for the Council to develop a strategic approach to the management of its tree assets.

Reasons for decisions

The Trees and Woodlands Strategy would inform how the Council would protect and enhance the district's tree population, with specific reference to tree preservation orders, development control and tree canopy cover increase through public and partnership engagement. In doing so, the Strategy would play a key role in the Council's ambitions to increase biodiversity.

Climate change was an issue that the Council was attempting to tackle now; trees and woodland played a pivotal role in cutting carbon emissions. Lincolnshire saw some of the lowest levels of tree cover in England, although this was expected given the agricultural land use in the County.

Some areas of the District may not be appropriate for tree planting but the Strategy still represented a significant opportunity to increase tree cover. The Strategy was developed with the support of Treconomics, who had worked with other local authorities.

The public consultation on the Strategy closed in February 2024, with approximately 900 responses. 99% of these respondents agreed that trees and woodlands were valuable assets, and 96% agreed that planting, maintaining and protecting trees was a worthwhile investment.

The Council had a dedicated Tree Officer whose role was to find funding opportunities and work with communities.

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Strategy in March 2024, and subsequently endorsed it and recommended it to Cabinet.

Members commended the report and emphasised that hedgerows and hedge-laying were also key elements in tackling climate change. They also highlighted the healthy response to the public consultation which demonstrated a pattern of higher engagement with consultations in recent times.

118. Cessation of the HelloSK App

Purpose of report

To provide an update regarding the Hello SK app and to make a decision regarding the cessation of its use.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the cessation of the use of the Hello SK app.
2. Encourages officers to work in partnership with Destination Lincolnshire on some of the features of the app to offset their loss.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The initial set up of the Hello SK app was fully funded through the Government's 'Welcome Back Fund' to support the re-opening of the high street in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic. However, the app had proven to not be financially self-sustaining. Therefore the 'do nothing' option had been discounted.

The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) would have an impact upon the Council's planned Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy. Members may wish to consider supporting Officers in developing areas to replace some of the Hello SK app activity.

Reasons for decision

Despite the initial opportunities offered in the aftermath of the pandemic, it was difficult to justify the continued use of, or further investment in, the Hello SK app because it no longer provided an appropriate Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR).

A strategy to replace the app activity should be developed through the creation of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy in the context of the newly formed Destination Lincolnshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

It was also recommended that officers initiated partnership activities with Destination Lincolnshire to offset some of the features of the Hello SK app. Working with Destination Lincolnshire would help offset the loss of some of the features of the Hello SK app.

During debate, the following points were highlighted:

- A company called Bubltown was used for procurement of the Hello SK app through a one-off payment of £50,000. It was suggested by Bubltown that the app would become financially self-sustaining – this had not been the case.
- Revenue had not performed at the level forecast. Bubltown had asked the Council to consider paying for use of the app on a regular basis.
- Despite the attempts to invigorate the use and functionality of the app, as of January 2024 the Hello SK app had been downloaded by 1,436 consumers and contained 211 business profiles from across South Kesteven. These numbers were insufficient to generate the necessary revenue, and therefore did not justify continuation of the scheme. However, the cessation did not go against the Council's targets for economic development.
- There were a small number of businesses that were using the app to its fullest extent. Where this was the case the Council would like to continue to promote events for these businesses where possible.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Board had considered a bid for UKSPF monies from Destination Lincolnshire at their meeting on 13 May 2024.

The cessation of the Hello SK app was considered and subsequently endorsed by the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in March 2024.

119. Cabinet's Forward Plan

The item 'Lease to Grantham Town Football Club' would now move to July 2024 on the Forward Plan as the relevant information for the report had not yet been received.

The remainder of the Forward Plan was noted.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture announced that the Council had secured a further £3,587,500 for energy efficiency upgrades at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre.

The money, from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c, would pay for a new low-carbon heating system, with an additional £492,500 coming from the Council's own budget.

The utility costs for Grantham Meres Leisure Centre were substantial and had increased significantly since 2021. This funding would allow for design and installation of a new low-carbon heating system to replace the existing gas boilers that were old and inefficient, and helping ensure the long-term sustainability of the Meres.

Once in place the upgraded heating system would reduce carbon emissions from the site by more than 550 tonnes of carbon per year, which equated to 8% of the Council's total carbon emissions and a quarter of the Council's carbon reduction target of at least 30% by 2030.

Cabinet Members congratulated those officers involved with the bid for their persistence in looking to secure the funding.

The Leader of the Council gave the opportunity to those present to ask questions of Cabinet Members, but there were none forthcoming.

The meeting closed at 2:38pm.