

Minutes

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 7 October 2024, 2.00 pm

Council Chamber – South Kesteven
House, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham.
NG31 6PZ



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Ian Selby (Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Tim Harrison

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhys Baker (Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste)
Councillor Philip Knowles (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Cabinet Member for People and Communities)

Other Members present

Councillor Matthew Bailey

Officers

Graham Watts (Assistant Director for Governance and Public Protection)
Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director for Leisure, Culture and Place)
Debbie Roberts ((Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance)
Kay Boasman (Head of Waste Management and Market Services)
Serena Brown (Sustainability and Climate Change Manager)
Andrew Igoea (Tree Project Officer)
Louise Case (Sustainability Projects Support Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

17. Public Speaking

Mr Peter Bell made the following points of information in a statement:

- *Version 4 of the Animal Welfare Licensing Policy was now on the Council's website.
Following previous concerns over paragraphs previously raised with the Committee.*

Officers suggested that Mr Bell engaged with other parties outside of the Council to receive their views.

- Mr Bell had joined the Institute for Licensing as an associate member and had taken a day's training on animal welfare licensing enforcement, alongside other Officer's from different Council's. Another attendee at the training sought advice on the interpretation of a 'fit and proper person', as part of the policy.*
- Mr Bell had also engaged with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Penal Affairs. A secretary of the Group stated the matter would be referred to a meeting of the group when it reconvened later in the year.*
- The NGO's, Howard League and a charity called Unlock, supported leavers from prisons into employment. Policies were being reviewed for Council's within the area.*
- Mr Bell had previously engaged with the Monitoring Officer and provided detailed feedback on whether he felt Public Space Protection Orders were legal. It appeared that current PSPO's backdated to previous criminal offences, which gave the impression they were unenforceable and illegal documents.*
- Mr Bell confirmed he would bring an update back to the Committee in the future on these matters.*

18. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Steven Cunnington.

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor Steven Cunnington.

19. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

20. Minutes from the meeting held on 4 June 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

21. Updates from the previous meeting

All actions were complete.

One Member queried the start date of construction for the Council's new Depot.

The Depot project fell into the remit of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where they received an update at every meeting.

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

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste notified the Committee of a recent meeting with Lincolnshire Waste Partnership who provided a detailed report. A brief was being worked on to provide to the Committee for review.

A letter in regard to the A1 road had not yet been sent, however, it had been drafted and was due to be sent in the coming days. The letter would be sent out to the Committee for comment.

The Council was due to attend a reception in Westminster to discuss flood response and internal drainage boards.

The liveries on the four new freighters had been discussed, to which three had been confirmed. The last one was out for a public poll to enhance the publicity and exposure that the causes deserve.

23. Waste Policy, Battery Collection and Disposal of Vapes - Verbal Update

The Head of Waste Management and Market Services provided a verbal update:

'The first part of this update covers the household battery collection service, which was introduced on Monday 16th September 2024. The first three weeks of the service have been a success with almost 750kgs of batteries being collected in week one. Feedback on social media and through our customer services team has been positive and the number of batteries collected is now starting to level out at around 75kgs per day as was expected.

Moving forward, we hope to enhance the service further by including disposable vapes within the scope of the battery collections. Once the variation to the depot site permit has been approved by the Environment Agency, we will be able to roll this out and appropriate communications will be released at that time.

The final part of this update relates to the waste policy, which requires amending due to multiple recent service changes including twin stream and batteries. The updated waste policy was due to be reviewed at the Committee today. However, it has been agreed to delay this until the next committee to allow time for the battery roll out to settle. Now this is complete, and there are no additional operational changes required, it will be possible to bring an updated Waste Policy document to the next committee.'

One Member highlighted that they had noticed an improvement of the collection service overall for South Kesteven.

It was highlighted that there was not a drop off point for residents to dispose of long-life battery boxes with fluorescent tubes.

The Head of Waste Management and Market Services would research into the option available for disposal of long-life battery boxes. The liquids contained within the boxes were of danger to the environment and restricted in terms of disposal.

ACTION: For the Head of Waste Management and Market Services to update the Committee via email on exploring options in disposing long-life battery boxes and LED lights,

A query was raised on whether curbside battery collection took place on certain bin days.

It was clarified that curbside battery collection would take place on every bin collection day, as long as the bag containing batteries was tied to the handles of the bin.

One Member queried whether long life bulbs could be disposed of within the silver bin.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted there were a wide variety of LED bulbs available, however, the majority used a form of mercury to generate a fluorescent effect. These were not to be recycled through the mixed dry recycling stream and came under the electrical waste regulations. The most appropriate place to dispose of LED bulbs was at a household waste recycling centre. Officers would review options on providing residents of ways to dispose such items.

24. Progress update on upgrade of District Council Streetlights to LED units

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report regarding progress, sustainability and responsible financial management.

The report highlighted significant strides the Council had made in upgrading its streetlight assets to energy efficient LED lighting, following an increased budget allocation of £1m.

The proactive response to rising energy costs and environmental concerns demonstrated responsible financial management. The project demonstrated the Council's desire to reduce carbon and have an infrastructure network that was reliable and long-lasting.

The inclusion of dark sky accreditation emphasised the Council's commitment to reduce light pollution and potential impacts on wildlife and local communities.

South Kesteven District Council were responsible for managing a total of 3,893 streetlights within the district all of which were funded from the Council's General Fund. These lights were predominantly for providing lighting to footways, as opposed to the separate and much more significant stock of streetlights provided for highways in the district, which were managed by Lincolnshire County Council.

The anticipated completion of the project was November 2025, which ensured long-term financial savings and environmental benefits.

One Member queried whether there would be any provision for more streetlights to be installed, where needed.

The report outlined the programme being on-progress. It was questioned whether the project may complete early.

The programme of streetlight upgrades were completed on a location by location basis which ensured that an efficient process was being followed. Upgraded locations to date include:

Aisby	Gelston	Marston
Ancaster	Graby	Morton
Barkston	Hanthorpe	Old Somerby
Carlton Scroop	Heydour	Stubton
Claypole	Honington	Syston
Deeping St James	Horbling	Tallington
Dowsby	Hougham	Uffington
Dry Doddington	Langtoft	Westborough
Dunsby	Lenton	West Deeping
Foston	Long Bennington	
Frognall	Market Deeping	

Further progress was requested on LED units upgraded in the centres of Grantham, Bourne and Stamford.

ACTION: For the Sustainability and Climate Change Manager to provide a list of LED units that had been upgraded in the centres of Grantham, Bourne and Stamford.

It was confirmed that LED units had been updated in Grantham as part of the previous contract of upgrades.

The payback period originally considered in 2023 was just under five years, however, this had reduced to 3.7 years. The impact on the rise of energy prices was discussed.

Members congratulated all Officers involved.

The Chairman requested than a further update be brought back to Committee at the beginning of 2025.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste clarified that heritage lamps were more challenging and may take longer to install. It was unlikely the project would finish prior to the anticipated completion of November 2025.

It was confirmed that a 'mop-up' programme would take place following the project to ensure all works were completed, to a high standard.

That the Committee:

1. Notes the updates regarding the upgrade programme of District Council streetlights to LED.

25. Update on Carbon Emissions for 2023/24

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste presented the report which provided an update on the Council's steady progress towards achieving the carbon reduction targets, which was a 30% reduction by 2030.

Since the climate emergency declaration in 2019, the Council had focused on cutting its emissions from operations with 25.27% reduction in emissions in the 2023-24 financial year compared to the 2018-19 baseline.

Officers were thanked for compiling the figures together.

The 25.27% meant a reduction in 1920 tonnes of carbon that had not been released into the atmosphere by the Council for the financial year.

The Council were actively pursuing sustainability across buildings and vehicle operations. The report detailed showcased successes in cutting energy consumption in Council buildings, such as a 45% decrease in emissions related to electricity.

The contribution of carbon from vehicle fleets was highlighted, which was the Council's largest source of emissions. Options were being explored on decarbonising fleet vehicles in terms of utilising cleaner fuels and different vehicles.

A query was raised on whether carbon efficient LED lights had been installed in Welham Street, Grantham car park.

It was confirmed Welham Street, Grantham car park had LED lights installed.

Members discussed the difficulties of reducing carbon emissions on the Council's waste freighters. Electric waste freighters had a short radius before requiring re-charging which would be more challenging for South Kesteven as a rural District.

The use of hydrogen run vehicles was suggested.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste outlined the opportunity to explore hybrid and electric vehicles within the Council's smaller waste related fleets e.g. caged wagons. There was also the potential for tools and equipment such as hedge trimmers and road sweepers to become electric.

It was queried as to how refrigerants had been reduced by 100%.

The Sustainability Project Support Officer clarified that there had been no leaks of refrigerants within the system.

It was suggested that fuel emissions in waste freighters could be reduced by advanced driver training.

One Member queried what was being used as a substitute for CFC's (Chlorofluorocarbons) in refrigerants.

ACTION: For the Sustainability Project Support Officer to provide an update on the lack of emissions arising from refrigerants this reporting year, and to update on what refrigerant gases were used in SKDC equipment.

Due to the increasing number of houses being built, the Council were optimising and reviewing routes that waste freighters take. External assistance was being sought for this piece of work.

Members highlighted the impressive work undertaken by the Waste staff.

That the Committee:

1. Notes the reported carbon emissions for the 2023/24 period which cover operations from South Kesteven District Council buildings and vehicles.

26. Bulky Waste Collection Service

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste presented the report that provided responsiveness to community needs and Cabinet were requesting a steer from the Committee on an option to take.

The report highlighted a persistent high demand for the bulky waste collection service, which was available to book through the Council's website at a cost of £21 per item, followed by a reduction in the next items.

At present, there was a long lead time for some collections based on disposal. The Council had 1 vehicle and 2 operatives for bulky waste. The bulky waste service occasionally struggled to keep up with requests, particularly for fridge collections in the south of the District, where there was a current 8-week wait.

The report revolved around the opportunity to expand the bulky waste service into a second vehicle and crew to reduce wait times, particularly for challenging items. The investment would enhance service efficiency, it would increase revenue for the Council whilst addressing a growing public demand.

If an additional bulky waste vehicle was purchased, it would have additional utility outside of bulky waste collections. It could be used for alternative collections, if the demand for bulky waste reduced in the future.

It was noted by a Member that bulky waste items had been found abandoned at the entrance to fields in their area, and so expanding the Bulky Waste Collection Service would likely reduce this issue. The Member also noted that given the nature of the vehicle, it could be used to support the Fly Tipping Team.

In line with the service provided by Boston Borough Council, a Member queried whether additional smaller items could be taken on the day of the bulky item collection for an additional fee. Whilst the fees charged by Boston Borough Council are only relatively small (£3 for a waste bag, £6 for a fence panel) this could be a means of additional income. The Cabinet Member stated that this had been raised during discussions with the Head of Waste and Markets and that this was under review as it would have to be sustainable.

A Member sought confirmation of the accuracy of the fuel calculation and whether the vehicles were being ran as efficiently as possible. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that this information would lie with the Officers and may need to be fed back after the meeting.

A suggestion was made to facilitate a public skip. The Cabinet Member confirmed that dialogue was ongoing with Boston Borough Council to gauge the success of their trial period for this scheme.

Clarification was sought as to whether the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste was in favour of the proposal. The Cabinet Member recognised that whilst the demand would likely be popular, it needed to be considered that the proposals may not be profitable financially. Ultimately the view on whether to include the proposal within the budget setting process, was at the discretion of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that there were 141 incidents of fly tipping in September alone and incidents peaked at 144 in July 2024. The result of which was that over the last 12 months, the internal costs of dealing with fly tipping was £88,000. Ultimately individuals were responsible for the disposal of their waste and the Cabinet Member urged the public to not take individuals pledging to clear garages for £15/20 at face value as these unlicensed schemes contribute to the high levels of fly tipping. Members of the public could contact SKDC for clarification whether an individual/firm are licensed.

The previous portfolio holder recognised this to be a long-standing issue which was financially motivated and suggested significantly increasing the fines as a deterrent.

A Member requested greater clarity on the definition of bulky waste items.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a full list of bulky waste items was on the SKDC webpage under Bulky Waste Collections.

That the Committee:

1. Consider the business case for the additional bulky waste collection vehicle and crew.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** for the inclusion of an additional vehicle and crew be put into the budget setting process.

27. Commercial Food Waste Collections

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste with the purpose of providing an overview of the opportunities and associated risks of expanding the current commercial waste collection service to include separate food waste collections.

The proposal came after the Environment Act 2021 mandated that household waste collections must begin by 31 March 2026, or by 31 March 2025 for 'prominent firms' of 11 employees or more.

It was noted that the vast majority of businesses in SKDC were microbusinesses with 10 or fewer employees. The Act mandated that for these microbusinesses the commercial food waste collection needed to begin by 31 March 2027. However, the Act did not mandate that the service needed to be provided by the Local Authority.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste conceded that he was minded to be cautious with the implementation of the scheme and he was keen to learn from the implementation at other Local Authorities to make the development as financially viable as possible.

The Chairman queried how the food waste would subsequently be disposed of following collection.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste confirmed that the waste would be taken to an anaerobic digester in North Hykeham to be converted to fertiliser. Therefore, the financial viability of the site would increase as the food waste collections continue to become mandatory in line with the Environment Act 2021.

In response to this, a Member queried whether the by-product methane could be harvested for generating electricity.

A Member noted the financial risk of the proposal and subsequently supported the recommendation to not pursue implementation of the service at this time.

That the Committee:

1. Consider the financial implications of this opportunity and support the conclusion that introducing a commercial food waste collection service was not financially viable at this time.

28. Re-wilding Ambitions

The Rewilding – Ambitions Report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

The Council had the opportunity to implement rewilding initiatives across the open public spaces it is responsible for. Actively rewilding areas of land provided the opportunity to restore healthy ecosystems, improve biodiversity and reverse the loss of wildlife. As well as contributing to the Council's carbon efficiency targets this could also reduce the costs associated with maintaining these areas in the longer term.

The introduction of wildflower meadows on selected areas as a trial presented an opportunity to test the appetite of residents and raise awareness of the benefits of rewilding. The learning from the pilot scheme could also be evaluated to form part of the Council's future ambitions.

The Cabinet Member praised the success of the rewilding at Boothby Wildlands and cited this example of the improvement that rewilding can have on the eco-system, particularly the eco-system of insects. However, the Cabinet Member recognised the importance of dialogue with residents as rewilding efforts needed to be done in conjunction with communities.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure for the quality of the report. A Member encouraged partnership working with Parish Councils.

The Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure was happy to facilitate a site visit but suggested doing so when the sites were more developed.

ACTION: For the Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure to organise site visits on the re-wilding sites, once they were more established.

A fellow Committee Member praised the report and recommendations made, however, identified the potential future conflict between rewilding efforts and housebuilding efforts.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that the Committee:

1. Endorse the Council's plan to adopt rewilding initiatives on the trial sites which have been identified.

2. Recommend that the learning taken from the trial is captured and used to inform future rewilding plans across the district.

3. Agree to receive a future report on the outcome of the trial and future rewilding plans and initiatives.

29. Communal Recycling scoping

Councillor Matthew Bailey presented the discussion item regarding Communal Recycling scoping.

The purpose of the discussion was to review the success of the twin stream rollout, specifically with communal properties.

Councillor Matthew Bailey identified a lack of consistency across the rollout regarding the amount and colour of bins. There was also an added complication of temporary accommodation properties where there was a high turnover of residents. To try and add greater continuity across the service, the Member suggested using bags for all communal properties.

As part of the review, the Member requested clarity about the following –

- How items are appropriately recycled when they are collected in mixed recycling bags.
- Whether there were any measurements of the recycling rates of communal properties compared to standard properties.
- Were recycling bags being collected from communal properties as part of the purple-bin week service.
- Were a sufficient amount of recycling bags being issued to properties.

In response to the above queries, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted a review was already underway by the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership who scrutinised how recycling was tested for contamination by SKDC. SKDC had been liaising with Lincolnshire County Council to try and increase the presence of communal bins.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste also clarified the number of bags issued were calculated by the size of the waste that the household generated.

The Cabinet Member noted there was no waterproof bag that would be accepted. Waste was separated and the purple-lidded bin stream was sent to Kings Lynn.

One Member noted they had recently held a substantial walk around their ward with relevant Officers and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste. The purpose of this walk was to identify any deficiencies from the rollout and seek a swift resolution.

It was noted by another Member that when recycle bags were not collected due to contamination, this obstructed the already narrow pavements in areas such as Stamford.

One Member also requested the cost implication of printing the purple bin bags.

It was noted that it was fundamental for those in temporary accommodation to be educated on the regulations around bin collections in the district.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste recognised that efforts were being made to raise awareness about the correct items to put in the correct bins, however, it was axiomatic that there would be some individuals who refuse to engage. The Cabinet Member was explicit that SKDC did not have the resource or capacity to provide a mop-up system for bags that were not collected because of the lack of cooperation by individuals who did not bag the items correctly. However, this had to be balanced by the public health concern of waste items being left unattended.

The Cabinet Member noted that at 38%, the contamination rate was initially amongst the highest in the country following the rollout. In the last full month of figures, this rate had dropped significantly to 8%.

ACTION: For Communal Recycling to be added to the Work Programme for a future meeting.

30. Work Programme 2024-25

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2024-25.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing requested than an agenda item on pesticides be included on the Work Programme, for a future meeting. Members wished to prioritise this item for the December meeting.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the notice of motion on pesticides had been deferred from a previous Full Council meeting. The motion would be heard at the next meeting of Full Council on 21 November 2024.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager requested the following items to be included on the Work Programme:

- Update on the Tree Action Plan
- Update on the Climate Action Plan

31. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

There were none.

32. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:25.