



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 12 December 2024

Report of Councillor Rhea Rayside,
Cabinet Member for People and
Communities

SK Community Awards 2024

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a review of the SK Community Awards for 2024 from launch to the celebratory event and to seek comments and suggestions from Members on the Awards going forward.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the content of this report**
- 2. Establish a Working Group to assist in the review of the SK Community Awards**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Connecting communities

Which wards are impacted?

(All Wards);

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 and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report, which is for noting.

Completed by: Paul Sutton Interim Head of Finance (Deputy s151))

Legal and Governance

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

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The SK Community Awards are an annual initiative that celebrates the work, dedication and commitment of volunteers, community groups, charities and businesses that give back to their communities across South Kesteven.
- 2.2. The Awards, which were first introduced in 2021 as a response to upsurge in volunteering and neighbourliness during the Covid 19 Pandemic, are open annually to nominations from the general public.
- 2.3. Generally, the Awards are opened to nominations during Volunteers week (1st to 7th June annually). In 2024 however, the launch had to be pushed back to July as a result of the general election being called. Nominations remained open until the end of September.
- 2.4. Categories in the 2024 Awards were:
- **Inspirational Young Person**
 - This category was open to nominations for young people pioneering or supporting an activity or project that would make a difference in their local community. Countless young people support projects and people within their communities and get no recognition for their efforts. Nominations were confined to people aged up to 25 years.

- **Community Contribution by Business**
 - This category was open to nominations for businesses actively benefitting their local community. Eligible business could, for example, donate unsold food, sponsor a local youth football team or work to make the local area smarter, safer, healthier or more sustainable. Nominations were encouraged for all sizes of businesses that operate locally.
- **Neil Smith – Beyond the Call of Duty**
 - This award acknowledged the incredible bravery of people who take action in emergency, often life-threatening situations. It is presented in remembrance of our late colleague Neil Smith who saved his infant son's life by administering CPR. Nomination were open for anyone – whether a member of the public who responded in an emergency situation to community police officers, paramedics or ambulance crews, fire officers, a volunteer first responders or doctors.
- **Community in Bloom**
 - Our towns and villages are a huge asset to the district but who keeps them looking so lovely, putting in time and effort? This award recognised the places that are kept colourful and well cared for through community commitment to planting and neatness.
- **Judy Smith – Lifetime Community Champion**
 - This award honoured a popular former councillor who worked tirelessly for her community. Always the most popular category, we were again looking to celebrate an individual who has contributed a huge amount of their time and effort to a club, group, charity or organisation.

- 2.5. Submission of nominations is via the Council's website. The person nominating is asked to provide up to 250 words about their nominee to give an insight into the person and their involvement in activity within the community.
- 2.6. For those unable to access the website, hard copies of the nomination form are provided. Anyone unable to complete a form is assisted by a member of the Community Engagement Team to ensure no-one misses out on the opportunity to nominate a community champion.
- 2.7. At the close of the nomination period, the submissions are broken down into categories. Often, an individual nominee has multiple nominations. These are condensed, ensuring that all the information provided is retained to be shared with the judging panel.
- 2.8. Finalists and the ultimate winner in each category were chosen by a panel of Elected Members. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were invited to be part of the panel along with the Cabinet Member for People and Communities.

- 2.9. The judging panel meets in person to go through the nominations by category. Each panel member is given a voting slip on which they note their first, second and third choice. If, after this round of voting, there is no clear winner or runners up, the panel votes again.
- 2.10. In addition to the categories listed above, two additional awards were made this year. They were:
- Volunteer of the Year
 - Community Group of the Year
- 2.11 The recipients of these two awards were decided by the Judging Panel from amongst the people/groups nominated across all categories.
- 2.12 The three finalists in each category nominated by the public, along with the recipients of the volunteer of the year and community group of the year award were invited to attend a celebratory dinner held in Bourne in November 2024 at which the winners were announced.
- 2.13 The winners and runners up, who are invited to bring a guest with them to the Awards evening, were presented with a crystal trophy by members of the Cabinet and the Chairman of the Council.
- 2.14 The SK Community Awards are really well received by our nominees and this project and its celebratory event are an excellent way of showing Council support for the voluntary, community and business sectors of South Kesteven.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Since its introduction in 2021 there have been 343 nominations to the SK Community Awards. We should be mindful however that of that number 25% were multiple nominations for individuals across the categories. It is also seen that many of the same people are nominated year-on-year for their work in the community.
- 3.2. As mentioned in 2.2 above, the SK Community Awards were introduced as a direct result of the remarkable community support and spirit that came out of the Covid 19 pandemic. The number of nominations in the first year was high (123) but the numbers have seen a decline in the years since with only 39 unique nominations being made this year.
- 3.3 Although, over the years, some of the categories have changed (based on numbers of nominations year-on-year), the Awards have operated the same way. With declining numbers of nominations it is considered that the process should be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Whilst this report is presented for information, it is requested that the Committee forms a working group to work alongside officers and the Cabinet Member for People and Communities to review the process and make suggestions for whether any changes should be made for the 2025 SK Community Awards.
- 4.2 The working group would feed back to this Committee on its findings to allow Members to vote on recommendations made. It is suggested that the working group meet in early January 2025. This would allow time for the process to be reviewed and reported back to Rural and Communities OSC at its meeting of 13 February 2025.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. To provide information to the Committee on the SK Community Awards 2024.
- 5.2. To offer the opportunity to help shape the SK Community Awards for 2025.