

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Thursday, 13 February 2025, 10.00
am

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Pam Byrd
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren
Councillor Robert Leadenhamb
Councillor Habibur Rahman
Councillor Peter Stephens

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Bethany Goodman, Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead
Debbie Nicholls, Armed Forces Covenant Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Paul Stokes

Other Members present

Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Tim Harrison

Others present

Steve Batchelor, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partner
Paul Drury, Armed Forces Officer for Lincolnshire

109. Public Speaking

There were none.

110. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Dennison, substituted by Councillor Charmaine Morgan.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Cunnington, substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vanessa Smith and Councillor Richard Cleaver in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement.

111. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

112. Minutes from the meeting held on 12 December 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 12 December 2024 were proposed, seconded and AGREED as an accurate record.

113. Updates from the previous meeting

The Chairman noted that they had been waiting for the 2025-26 budget to be approved before completing the action of writing a letter of support to the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police.

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

There were none.

115. Road Safety & Speeding in Communities Presentation

The Road Safety & Speeding in Communities Presentation was presented by the representative from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.

The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership consisted of the following agencies:

- Lincolnshire Police
- Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)
- Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Service
- National Highways.

The presentation encapsulated the following information:

- 433 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) in Lincolnshire in 2024. Casualties were more likely to be male and the highest risk motorists were young drivers, mature drivers or two-wheeled motor drivers.
- The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership facilitated a scheme named 'Operation Snap' where members of the public could send digital footage of dangerous or illegal instances on public roads. It was confirmed that 2105 submissions were received during 2024. 909 offences were processed and on 601 occasions drivers were sent warning letters with still images of the footage.
- The presentation outlined the instances in which mobile speed cameras could be installed.
- The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership also ran a scheme named the Community Speed Watch. This consisted of 288 current members and 1382 trained volunteers.
- The presentation concluded by outlining the aim of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership to be to 'create a new, ambitious, collaborative Road Safety Strategy for Lincolnshire that commits everyone in the road safety system to preventing death and serious injury on the roads beyond 2025.'

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- How to secure electronic vehicle-activated speed alert signs in high risk areas of SKDC. The representative from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership clarified that the funding model for this needed to be reviewed as it had previously fallen to Parish Councils to fund. The representative agreed to speak to the relevant Member outside of the meeting.
- Whether support could be offered to LCC with imposing urban 20mph zones and enforcing zig-zag line no-stop zones outside schools. The representative confirmed that they were working with LCC to try and enforce some zig-zag line zones and that the imposition of 20mph zones needed to be targeted rather than a blanket policy. However, the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership supported LCC in pursuing this.
- Whether preventative measures could be undertaken at locations where there had been accidents, but nobody had been killed or seriously injured. The representative confirmed that the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership's limited resources had to be focused on areas at the highest level of danger.
- A Member informed the Committee that they were in the process of establishing a Road Safety Partnership for South Kesteven. This was to be a non-political body that was open to all members and officers and had been backed by the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership. The Member clarified that six individuals had signed up so far and a minimum of three people were needed per-team, per-session. An email

was to be sent to all members, and the request was made that the Town Council was included.

- The issue was identified of driver's frustration when driving behind slow-moving vehicles. This was noted to be a matter of driver education.
- It was noted that during the 2024 Forbidden Forest event, 7920 vehicles were recorded as travelling through Denton, 56 of which were exceeding the speed limit.
- It was queried whether the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership was consulted on planning applications and whether their advice was reviewed retrospectively when the physical impact of new developments was known. The representative confirmed that the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership were not always consulted in the planning process. It was only in cases where the Highways Agency had specifically requested the involvement of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.

Councillor Graham Jeal entered the Chamber.

116. South Kesteven Agricultural Sector

The South Kesteven Agricultural Sector report was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The report sought to inform the Committee on the sector's value to the local economy, the challenges facing the sector and the policy context for state support.

As of June 2021 (latest release), there were 452 holdings in South Kesteven, farming a total area of 71,920 hectares. This equated to 12.93% of the total holdings and 14.71% of the total farmed area in Lincolnshire. Both the number of holdings and farmed land was in decline. Holdings had fallen by 4% since 2013 and 8.5% since 2021. 9.27% less land was farmed compared to 2016. These trends were mirrored regionally.

55,357 hectares, or 76% of the total South Kesteven farmed area (excluding horticultural crops) was used for arable crops (including cereals).

Only small proportions of the total farmed livestock were located in South Kesteven. Within Lincolnshire, the district was home to 11.54% of the county's cattle and 23.74% of sheep. South Kesteven's total herds and flocks were typically smaller than neighbouring districts.

Overall, the estimated total value for the agricultural sector within South Kesteven was £146.64 million (2023 prices). Of this, £108.64 million were contributed by crops and £38 million by livestock. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Primary Industries estimate was £176.24 million. That figure included agriculture, mining, energy, water and waste.

As of 2021, the sector employed 1426 people within SKDC.

The report outlined the challenges currently faced within the agricultural sector. Food production was vulnerable to a range of factors including: changes in climate and extreme weather events, prices offered by purchasers, high energy costs, international supply chains, labour shortages, biodiversity, soil and water quality, and biosecurity and animal health.

Since 2020, farming had come under particular pressure from the inflationary and supply chains crisis initially caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, then intensified by the onset of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022. Input prices for fuel, fertiliser, pesticides and feed reached near record levels, ameliorated partially by a rise in output prices.

Individuals in the agricultural sector were also at an elevated risk of developing physical and mental health issues. Citing the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) Big Farming Survey, the review noted that:

- Over a third of the farming community suffered depression and a further 30-36% of the community have notably low mental wellbeing.
- Working age 16-64-year-olds suffered from significantly lower levels of mental wellbeing and higher levels of anxiety within the farming community. This was strongly linked with not taking a break or leaving the farm, with 49% reporting that they were not taking a holiday and 20% never leaving the farm itself for any leisure purpose.
- Over 52% of the farming community were recorded as experiencing pain and discomfort every day.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members noted the valuable role played by the farming community within SKDC.
- Given the sensitive information included within subsection 3.5 of the report that individuals in the agricultural sector were at an elevated risk of developing physical or mental health issues, a Member proposed further work to be undertaken to see how best SKDC could offer appropriate support. Such support in line with intervention seen by the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network Programme delivered between LCC and Melton Borough Council. It was AGREED to add this to the Work Programme.

The Committee noted the South Kesteven Agricultural Sector report.

117. Age Friendly Communities

The Age Friendly Communities report was introduced by the Leader of the Council.

The Leader confirmed that SKDC needed to submit an application to the Centre for Ageing Better by 28 March 2025, demonstrating that a cross-council operational group had been established. Should the application be successful, production of the baseline profile would commence within the following 12 months.

The result of which was that the report recommended that the Committee vote in favour of receiving a biannual progress report under the guise of the scheduled South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Following a proposal, it was seconded and AGREED to receive six-monthly progress reports as part of the scheduled South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan update and to note the progression of the application to become part of the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities.

118. SK Community Fund - Review of Eligibility Criteria 2025

The SK Community Fund - Review of Eligibility Criteria 2025 Report was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Deputy Leader outlined that SKDC was committed to supporting voluntary and community groups and introduced the SK Community Fund in 2015 to offer grants to constituted community groups, charities and social enterprise organisations. This scheme operated under three specific strands since that time:

- Small Grants Fund: Awards of up to £2,000 for eligible groups and projects, where 100% of required funding can be applied for. Fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for small community event applications.
- Main Grants Scheme covering:
 - o Community Projects: Capital funding only. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant.
 - o Community Events: Generally capital funding, but fees for sessional workers (freelance workers, not on the usual staff of the applying group/agency) could be considered for community events. Up to 80% of required funding to a maximum of £5,000 for eligible groups and projects. 20% match funding required from the applicant.

When the SK Community Fund was first established, grants were available to groups or organisations that required people to pay a membership fee in order

to participate, such as local sports clubs, scouts, guides etc. This eligibility was removed in 2019 on recommendation from the elected Members who held the delegation for decision making in regard to awarding grants through the SK Community Fund. Members at the time felt that sufficient revenue should be being made from membership fees to sustain the operation of the group/club.

The report outlined that the evidence from working directly with these types of groups subsequently disproved this. Whilst some groups/clubs could sustain their basic function, there was no space for development or growth without the means of attracting additional, external funding.

It was therefore proposed that membership groups that provide activities accessible to a wide community of people (i.e. not closed community groups such as residents' groups, patient participation groups etc) had eligibility to apply to the SK Community Fund re-instated.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members noted that they were aware of such community groups that were struggling financially, and that community groups were a particularly vital aspect of society at the current time.
- It was identified that reinstating this eligibility would not only offer financial support but would be a statement of support from SKDC.

It was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to recommend the approval of the changes proposed by the Deputy Leader.

119. Community Awards Working Group - Verbal Update

Building on the SK Community Awards 2024 report presented to the Committee at the 12 December 2024 meeting, the Community Engagement Manager delivered the verbal update on the Community Awards Working Group.

The group had been formed at the 12 December 2024 meeting in order to review the SK Community Awards, looking specifically at the categories, publicity, judging, launch date and the format/event.

Contrary to the suggestion made by a Member at the 12 December 2024 meeting, the Community Engagement Manager confirmed that the awards would continue with the current model of nominees rather than seeking a Community Champion per ward. This was due to financial constraints.

The Community Engagement Manager outlined the proposal that the launch date and event date be changed. Currently the Awards were launched in volunteers week (1 – 7 June) and the celebration event held in October/November. The suggestion put forward was that future awards be launched in October with the event being held in volunteers week. The

suggestion was also made that the full Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee should make up on the judging panel.

For the 2026 awards presentation, the Community Engagement Manager confirmed that they were exploring the opportunity to hold the event in a marquee in a public park. This was being considered as a measure to involve more members of the public and to raise awareness.

120. Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024

The Leader of the Council left the Chamber.

The Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024 was presented by the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Armed Forces Covenant Officer.

The report confirmed that there were 8693 military veterans residing within SKDC, constituting 7.37% of the population aged 16 or over. The Committee were reminded that SKDC were the only local authority to be a Gold Award holder in Lincolnshire under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer for Lincolnshire, Paul Drury, was present and was introduced to the Committee. The request was made for the Mr Drury to provide an update to the Committee at a future meeting.

As a Member of the Committee, the Lead Member for Armed Forces was present and thanked the officers involved for the production of a quality report document and their work to secure project funding of £150,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund to commemorate airborne forces presence in the district in 1944.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Whether officers had approached travel agents in Poland and the United States of America that had military links to SKDC. The Armed Forces Covenant Officer confirmed that officers would be attending the upcoming Travel & Tourism Show at the National Executive Centre (NEC) and had also been engaging with Visit Lincolnshire, an organisation with a significant U.S. market.
- It was noted that SKDC were engaging with the National Trust to hold an event at Grantham House for the upcoming Victory in Europe (VE) Day anniversary. SKDC were also considering options to host an event for Victory over Japan (VJ) Day.

The Committee noted the Armed Forces Covenant Update 2024 report.

121. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

The request was made to add an Age Friendly Communities Update to the Work Programme for the 12 March 2025 meeting (formally 20 March 2025).

It was noted that the following scheduled items would be moved to unscheduled due to the upcoming Purdah period:

- Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2028
- LCC Health Scrutiny Committee Update
- South Kesteven Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Update

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

There was none.

This page is intentionally left blank