



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 17 March 2025

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Tenancy Services Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report provides an overview of the current workings of South Kesteven District Council's Tenancy Services Team. It details the key tasks undertaken by the team and highlights their continued hard work and dedication to ensure effective tenancy sustainment, compliance, and tenant and resident support.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Housing Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	(All Wards);

1. 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 direct financial implications arising from this report but there is a budget in place within the HRA to delivery tenancy Services and costs are being contained within this budget.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance (deputy s151 officer)

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 This report is for information only.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Tenancy Services Team plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance with tenancy agreements and housing policies whilst ensuring that tenants receive the necessary support to sustain their tenancies. The team's work includes direct tenant engagement, enforcement of tenancy conditions, and collaboration with internal and external partners to provide a holistic approach to housing management.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The Tenancy Services team consists of the Tenancy Services Manager, Tenancy Services Team Leader, 6 Housing Officers and 3 Housing Assistants. The Council also has 2 Tenancy Support Officers who provide additional one to one support to tenants who are identified as requiring this level of service.
- 3.2. In addition to this team, the Council also has a Sheltered Housing Team which consists of a Sheltered Housing Manager, the Sheltered Housing Team Leader, 2 Sheltered housing Officers and 3 Caretakers.
- 3.3. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the areas of works the team are responsible for delivering.

Tenancy and Estate Management

- 3.4. SKDC has a housing stock of just below 6,000 properties, so each Housing Officer is responsible for providing tenancy services to approximately 1,000 properties.
- 3.5. The team are responsible for conducting tenancy sign-ups for applicants who have been successful with securing a property through our choice-based lettings system. During the sign-up process officers will ensure tenants understand their tenancy agreement, rights, and responsibilities.
- 3.6. The team receive succession requests, where a tenant has passed away and a family member applies to take over the tenancy. The approval process for this function is set out in Government legislation and detailed in the Tenancy Management Policy so the team are responsible for ensuring the Council are legally compliant.
- 3.7. The team process mutual exchange requests, where tenants have applied to swap properties. The team visit each property and using their knowledge of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, identify if the properties are in satisfactory condition so that the mutual can go ahead in accordance with Appendix 2 of the Tenancy Management Policy.
- 3.8. The team conduct tenancy fraud investigations such as subletting and abandonment to ensure any tenancy breaches are dealt with efficiently and effectively.
- 3.9. Table 1 shows the quantity of work undertaken in these areas by the team between November 2024 and January 2025.

Table 1: Work Undertaken by Tenancy Services

	Of which	Nov	Dec	Jan
Number of sign ups		26	27	25
Number of terminations		25	28	19
Number of Right to buys		40	24	3
Number of successions		6	12	4
Number of Mutual exchanges		6	2	3
Number of tenancy checks (visits)		24	18	13
	6 weeks	16	8	3

	9 months	8	10	10
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Rent Arrears and Financial Inclusion

- 3.10. The Housing Officers work closely with the Council's Income Recovery team to monitor rent accounts and assist with providing early intervention for arrears.
- 3.11. Tenancy Support Officers assist tenants with budgeting, benefits applications, and accessing discretionary housing payments. Officers also provide a signposting service to the Council's Cost of Living Team, external partners and support agencies to ensure that tenants are able to access all of the support which is available which will assist them with sustaining their tenancy.
- 3.12. The Council's Rent team initiate legal proceedings in relation to rent arrears where necessary, and the Housing Officers assist with this process. The Council's aim is to ensure that tenants are able to sustain their tenancies by ensuring all the relevant support is in place. However, if this is not successful, and rent arrears are not addressed by the tenant this can lead to possession proceedings and eviction enforcement.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- 3.13. A large proportion of Housing Officer time is spent on ASB Case Management. This involves investigating complaints of anti-social behaviour and taking appropriate enforcement action. Table 2 provides information regarding the ASB cases the team are managing.

Table 2: Number of ASB Cases

	Nov	Dec	Jan
Number of ASB cases	9	9	15
Number of new ASB reports	4	3	7

- 3.14. Although the number of cases is low in comparison to the Council's total housing stock, the complexity of the cases mean that each case requires a significant amount of work, including working closely in partnership with police colleagues.
- 3.15. There are several powers and tools available to the Council as a social landlord which can help with tackling issues of ASB. These are detailed in our Landlord Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which can be found at the following link: [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.indd](#). Paragraph 3.20 of this report provides details of two of the tools which are available to the Council when responding to issues of ASB.

3.16. If enforcement action is taken on the grounds of ASB, a substantial amount of evidence needs to be collated to present to the courts to demonstrate a breach of tenancy. It is therefore essential that residents and tenants report all incidents of ASB to the Council.

Enforcement of Tenancy Conditions

3.17. The team are responsible for investigating and taking action for breaches of tenancy. This includes unauthorised alterations, property misuse, and overcrowding, as well as ASB as detailed above.

3.18. Managing the legal process to secure evictions due to tenancy breaches is another significant part of the Tenancy Services role. As previously detailed, the legal process requires a substantial amount of evidence be gathered to demonstrate breaches. The Council are a partner of Legal Services Lincolnshire who provide the required legal support to the team.

3.19. Table 3 details the number of legal cases the team have been processing between November 2024 and January 2025.

Table 3: Legal Cases

	Of which	Nov	Dec	Jan
Number of active Legal cases		10	10	4
Number of evictions		2	0	1
Number of notices issued		16	2	1
	NTQ	4	2	1
	CPNw	1	0	0
	CPN	0	0	0
	NOSP	11	0	0

3.20. A description of the abbreviations included in table 3 is as follows:

- NTQ = Notice to quit. This is a notice served to an individual residing in a council property who has no legal rights to remain there (for example someone who has been unable to succeed a tenancy following the passing of the tenant)
- CPNw = This is a Community Protection Notice Warning and can be issued to an individual who may persistently be demonstrating examples of anti-social behaviour, as a warning than an official Community Protection Notice (CPN) could follow.

- CPN = This is the Community Protection Notice that follows the warning. Breaching this notice is a criminal offence.
- NOSP = Notice of Seeking Possession. This is a notice served to a tenant to advise that the Council are commencing legal proceedings to gain possession of the property. This is used where we can demonstrate a breach of the tenancy conditions.

Tenancy Sustainment and Support

- 3.21. As detailed earlier the Council has 2 Tenancy Support Officers whose main responsibility is to provide help and support to tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- 3.22. This service is crucial to help tenants remain in their home. There could be a range of very complex reasons why a tenant might be struggling to sustain their tenancy, such as a sudden change in income, mental health issues, drug or alcohol issues or trauma.
- 3.23. Examples of support the team provide include:
- Assist with managing financial affairs and income maximisation, ensuring customers are receiving the correct benefits, setting up claims and general budget management.
 - Support customers with challenging physical or mental health issues and/or learning difficulties regarding managing a tenancy or property
 - Assist with hoarding cases and provide action plans for tenants to reduce clutter and mitigate health and safety risks
 - Assist people with addiction or substance misuse issues who are in arrears or having problems managing their property due to these issues.
 - Help with transition of former homeless/temporary accommodation customers moving into general needs stock for the first time
 - Liaise with third party agencies, for example, social services, mental health teams, addiction support services and charities to ensure that wraparound support is provided to help and assist vulnerable tenants.
 - Work closely with the Cost of Living team to ensure that any tenants impacted by the cost of living crisis are fully supported to address this. Options of income maximisation are also explored to ensure tenants are receiving all income they may be entitled to.
 - Report and respond to safeguarding issues arising as part of their work.
- 3.24. Currently the team have 33 active support cases and there continues to be a significant demand for this service. It is for this reason that a budget bid for an additional Tenancy Support officer was submitted and approved at Full Council on 27 February 2025. This post will be recruited to in the new financial year.

Sheltered Housing Team

- 3.25. The Council's Sheltered Housing team are responsible for providing support to tenants in the 30 sheltered housing schemes across the district.
- 3.26. Properties in the scheme are fitted with a lifeline pull cord system. The Council has a contract in place with Tunstall, who provide the equipment and will contact tenants if the alarm is activated, they will assess the situation and transfer emergencies to the Sheltered Housing team and emergency services if required.
- 3.27. The team are responsible for completing Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan forms (PEEP) for all tenants as its likely that some in our sheltered scheme many struggle to evacuate themselves in an emergency.
- 3.28. The team also maintain the communal rooms in the schemes, ensuring tenants have access to them events that are booked in the rooms or that they are able to access the space should they need to use it.
- 3.29. The team are responsible for conducting regular fire alarm tests to ensure all systems are in full working order.
- 3.30. The team visit schemes on a weekly basis to ensure tenants are safe and supported and know who to contact if they have any issues. Regular tenant meetings are held which gives residents the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have.

Summary

- 3.31. The Tenancy Services Team plays a critical role in supporting tenants and maintaining sustainable communities. Despite challenges, the team continues to deliver essential services to ensure tenancy compliance and tenant and resident well-being. The teams hard work and dedication ensure that the Council has a compliant housing management function at South Kesteven District Council.