

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

**Wednesday, 12 March 2025, 10.00
am**

Committee Members present	Officers
Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)	Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Councillor Pam Byrd	Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer
Councillor James Denniston	Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Councillor Richard Dixon-Warren	Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection
Councillor Robert Leadenham	Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community)
Councillor Habibur Rahman	Peter Harrison, Safer Streets Co-Ordinator
Councillor Phil Dilks	James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Councillor Virginia Moran	Andrew Beaver, Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing)
Councillor Tim Harrison	Mark Hillson, Police Inspector
Councillor Bridget Ley	Patrick Astill, Senior Communications Officer
Cabinet Members	Stella Darker, Cost of Living Co-Ordinator
Councillor Phil Dilks	Funmi Reilly, Cost of Living Co-Ordinator
Councillor Virginia Moran	Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

123. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

124. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Vanessa Smith and Steven Cunnington, substituted by Councillors Bridget Ley and Tim Harrison respectively.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Philip Knowles in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licencing.

125. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

126. Minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2025

Councillor Tim Harrison noted that he was a substitute at the 13 February 2025 meeting, rather than a visiting Member.

With this amendment incorporated, the minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2025 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

127. Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 9 December 2024

The minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 9 December 2024 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

128. Updates from the previous meeting

The Chairman noted that all outstanding tasks had been completed prior to the meeting and she had received a letter from the Lincolnshire Police acknowledging the Committees previous support.

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

The Leader of the Council notified attendees that the new CCTV site was now operational, as was the 'Fix My Street' feature, allowing residents to report static issues within the district such as deceased animals or graffiti.

The Leader also explained that the Street Scene team had assisted in collecting over two tons of litter from the A1.

130. Crime Disorder, Local Partnership Working and CCTV Update (Presentation)

Following an introduction by the joint-portfolio holders, the Cabinet Members for Planning and Housing, the Crime Disorder, Local Partnership Working and CCTV Update presentation was presented by the following individuals:

- Head of Service (Housing),
- Head of Service (Public Protection),
- Police Inspector Hillson,
- Safer Streets Co-Ordinator.

The presentation comprised of the following information:

- Multi-agency work being undertaken in forums such as the Vulnerable Adults Panel (VAP), Joint Agency Meetings (JAM), and Missing And Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings.
- Enforcement action undertaken and the process for doing so. This outlined the number of enforcement actions undertaken with 45 unacceptable behaviour warning letters and 6 full closure orders issued.
- Tools and powers afforded to local services by the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Case studies of local instances of crime that required enforcement action.
- An overview of Crime Data in South Kesteven, differentiating the figures for different types of crime.
- Youth Crime and the Young Person Protocol (effectively the approach for dealing with underage anti-social behaviour (ASB)).
- The role of the Joint Diversionary Panel and the resolutions available.
- The role and achievements of the Safer Streets team.
- The Head Of Service (Public Protection) noted that she would arrange an invite for Members to view the new CCTV Centre.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Police Inspector Hillson confirmed that the crime data statistics showed a 50% increase in rape cases as a result of increased numbers of domestic abuse victims reporting instances.
- Police Inspector Hillson also confirmed that theft from the person cases has increased in Stamford from 7 cases in the year to January 2024 to 20 in the year to January 2025. This was therefore not as drastic as the 185.7% increase initially appears and could be the result of a single prolific offender.

- It was queried what the usual outcome was of the offenses outlined within the crime rate statistics. It was confirmed that being charged was the most likely outcome.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on crime rates was queried. It was confirmed that crime rates dipped, but ASB increased significantly due to disagreements between individuals about following Covid restrictions.
- It was confirmed that there was a Performance Officer employed within the Police force to analyze crime and identify trends.
- Some Members voiced concerns about the impact of Lincolnshire Police being placed in special measures by the Home Office, particularly on the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). With this in mind, it was queried and confirmed that there were no longer any PCSOs based in the south of the South Kesteven district.
- It was confirmed that there was no indication from central Government that funding for Safer Streets would continue following the end of March 2025. As a result, alternative funding was being pursued but was yet to be secured.
- A Member confirmed that the feedback from their residents had been overwhelmingly positive about the Safer Streets Team.
- The new CCTV Centre was confirmed to have 161 cameras across the district with 38 in Grantham.
- Members encouraged raising awareness of the Joint Diversionary Panel.

Members noted the Crime Disorder, Local Partnership Working and CCTV Update.

131. Cost of Living Team update

The Cost of Living Team update was presented by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

The aim of the Cost of Living Team was to enable the Council's most vulnerable residents get access to varying financial support that was provided by the Government and other organisations.

Following a temporary initial period funding was secured to allow the Cost of Living Team to become a permanent feature as of 1 April 2025. The two existing officers were both successful in their expressions of interest and secured the roles permanently. The Cost of Living Team was to be renamed the Welfare and Financial Advice Team in its new incarnation.

During the initial period, the funding was broken into two cohorts, £223,371 during HSF5 (1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024) and £259,754.87 during HSF6 (1 October 2024 – 31 March 2025).

Of the £223,371 funding available during HSF5, £220,471 was utilized. The remaining funds were used for individuals who would have been eligible retrospectively.

Of the £259,754.87 funding available during HSF6, £127,181.80 was utilized up to 21 February 2025.

Of the residents who were supported via the referral and HSF process, a total of £118,791 of additional wrap-around financial support was identified by the team. As a result, the residents received additional financial support through a variety of avenues such as Discretionary Housing Payment, Foodbank vouchers, reduction in council tax, funding towards the purchasing of goods (through referral to third party), or a reduction in utility bills.

The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community) advised the 'TBC' figures in paragraph 2.12 had been provided and would be issued within the minutes as follows:

District Area	% allocation of funding		Allocation (£)	
	HSF5	HSF6	HSF5	HSF6
Boston	10%	10%	£157,720.60	£185,539.13
City of Lincoln	16%	16%	£252,352.96	£296,862.61
East Lindsey	24%	24%	£378,529.45	£445,293.91
North Kesteven	11%	11%	£173,492.66	£204,093.04
South Holland	12%	12%	£189,264.72	£222,646.96
South Kesteven	14%	14%	£223,371	£259,754.78
West Lindsey	13%	13%	£205,036.78	£241,200.87
Total	100%	100%	£1,579,768.17	£1,855,391.30

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Members praised the work of the Cost of Living Team and the positive impact that it had on vulnerable residents.
- As of the date of the meeting, it was confirmed that £166,244 worth of vouchers had been issued by the Cost of Living Team.
- It was queried what level of funding would be available following 1 April 2025. It was only known that nationally there was £1 billion allocated to be shared between the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- It was confirmed that this funding was guaranteed.

The Cost of Living Team update was noted by the Committee.

132. Customer Service Update Q3 2024/25

The Customer Service Update Q3 2024/25 was presented by the Leader of the Council.

The Leader outlined that SKDC had received the equivalent of one enquiry per resident in Quarter Three, with 1.3 Million contacts via digital channels from Quarter One to Quarter Three.

From April 2024 - December 2024, 83% of calls were handled (answered) with 17% of calls being abandoned. This was a slight reduction from December 2023 of 84% handled and 16% abandoned. It was noted that abandoned calls was not necessarily negative as this could be individuals choosing to make contact via the website after hearing the automated advice.

The Leader advised that the Fix My Street feature was now available and would be incorporated onto the website. This feature enabled residents to report issues in the district such as fly tipping or graffiti.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service and Community) confirmed their satisfaction with the call handling rate given that they would normally aim for 80% and they had received few complaints regarding abandoned calls. However, they did note that there was no specified optimal level and that this would be an outcome of the Customer Experience Strategy consultation.
- The Leader outlined that benchmarking data was currently being gathered, with the Council issuing a Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests to forty Councils to inquire about Customer Service performance.

The Customer Service Update Q3 2024/25 was noted by the Committee.

133. Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation

The Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation was presented by the Leader of the Council.

During 2024, the Customer Service Management team undertook a series of workshops with officers from all service areas, to review the existing strategy and discuss what they knew about their customer. The workshops have helped to form the scope of the consultation to refresh the existing strategy for 2025 to 2029.

The public consultation was undertaken for the period 10 March to 7 April 2025 and was undertaken with a variety of stakeholders to understand how they interact or would choose to interact with the Council.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Find out how people contact South Kesteven District Council (SKDC), why they contact the Council and how often.
- Establish what was important to people when contacting the Council.
- Understand what was most in need of improvement.
- Use this information to draw up SKDC's Service Standards, Customer Charter & Commitments and also what the Council expected from customers.
- Measure degree of support for strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes.

It was confirmed that 379 responses had been received prior to the meeting.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Why only 39,133 calls had been handled by the switchboard when 95,547 calls had been received via the Customer Service Centre. It was confirmed that this disparity accounted for direct calls that had not gone via the switchboard.

The Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation was noted by the Committee.

134. Work Programme 2024 - 2025

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

There was no other business.

The Chairman concluded the meeting at 11.43 am.