



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Report of: The Chairmen of the Overview
and Scrutiny Committees

Annual Report 2024-2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 During 2024/2025 South Kesteven District Council had five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each comprising nine members of the Council.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are responsible for discharging the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the discharge of functions under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, which require councils to put arrangements in place to designate a committee as a crime and disorder scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring the Council's performance, considering its decisions, questioning how those decisions are made and recommending improvements. The committees may also undertake external scrutiny to examine wider issues that affect the District.

2. Role of Scrutiny

- 2.1 There are four key functions of scrutiny:
 - 2.1.1 To provide a "critical friend" challenge to the Cabinet as well as external authorities and agencies
 - Challenge by scrutiny should be constructive, robust and purposeful
 - Scrutiny should work effectively with the Cabinet and senior management
 - Scrutiny should provide an effective mechanism for the Cabinet to demonstrate public accountability
 - 2.1.2 To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
 - Scrutiny should take a community leadership role by focusing on issues of public concern
 - Scrutiny should have a constructive relationship with the press and media
 - Scrutiny should create the conditions for plural views and concerns to be considered
 - 2.1.3 Scrutiny members should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
 - Scrutiny should operate with political impartiality
 - Scrutiny should have ownership of its work programme
 - Scrutiny members should have a worthwhile and fulfilling role
 - 2.1.4 Scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services
 - Scrutiny should have access to timely and accurate performance information
 - The scrutiny work programme should be balanced, well co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes
 - Scrutiny work should be carried out with strategic objectives in mind
 - Scrutiny should contribute to improving local public services

3. Budget Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Bridget Ley

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Gareth Knight

- 3.1 The Budget Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 14 January 2025 to consider the budget proposals for 2025/2026.
- 3.2 The Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered revenue and capital budgets associated with the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. It also included:
- Funding position for the General Fund
 - General Fund proposals
 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
 - Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2027/28
 - Capital Financing
 - Reserves and Balances
- 3.3 Other considerations included:
- The timetable for the setting of Council Tax and budgets for 2025/2026
 - The net cost of services for 2025/2026
 - Fees and charges including changes to car parking tariffs.
 - Cost and Minimum Revenue Pressures, which included the current costs of St. Martin's Park and the Depot.
 - Backlog maintenance to Council assets (including leisure centres and car parks)
 - HRA right to buys
 - AN increase to the homelessness budget.
- 3.4 As part of its recommendations, the Committee expressed its support for the proposals in the Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development's report in respect of the General Fund (both Revenue and Capital) and the Housing Revenue Account (again, Revenue and Capital). The Committee also recommended to Cabinet the proposed Band D 3% increase in Council Tax.

4. Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Murray Turner

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Barry Dobson

During the 2024/2025 municipal year, the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on six occasions. Several update reports and reports for information were considered by the Committee. There were a number of performance reports on LeisureSK Limited throughout the year. An additional meeting focussing on LeisureSK Limited was held on 3 September 2024 and contained information relating to anticipated expenditure, cashflow, and a timeline for 2025/2026 budget information.

A summary of other key items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Play Area Strategy

- 4.1 The Committee considered the Play Area Strategy for South Kesteven. The Strategy would allow the Council to prioritise those areas that required capital investment whilst allowing work to continue with external stakeholders to identify funding opportunities. It was confirmed that there was £100,000 being allocated to the finance portfolio to be invested in replacement equipment.

As part of the Play Area Strategy the Committee scrutinised an action Plan to work alongside the Strategy, which was endorsed at their meeting on 3 September 2024.

The Committee recommended the overall Play Area Strategy to Cabinet.

Cultural Strategy

- 4.2 Since its adoption in July 2023, significant progress had been made towards delivering the strategy's objectives guided by key performance indicators. Members were informed of several achievements of the Strategy to date, such as the money raised by the 'Pay It Forward' Scheme.
- 4.3 Several ideas were put forward for cultural events in the district, such as a pop up cinema, a free-thinking festival, and a reinvention of the former Gravity Fields Festival.

Markets

- 4.4 A review of South Kesteven's Council-led markets was considered at the meeting held on 4 February 2025.
- 4.5 The Committee were informed that a grant of £58,200 had been awarded to improve markets through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and this funding would cover a number of areas, such as stall covers, gazebos, wheeled cages, a stage, road closure barriers and signage and many other items.
- 4.6 A number of queries were raised by committee members, on the subjects of market stalls, market/high street loyalty cards and the financial position of markets.

Grantham Town FC

- 4.7 The Deputy Leader of the Council presented a report providing Committee with an update on the ongoing lease negotiations between the Council and Grantham Town Football Club. Discussions had been ongoing since the expiry of the previous lease on 31 December 2021.
- 4.8 The Committee supported a lease arrangement to be entered into with Grantham Town FC, predicated on understanding their future ambitions in terms of community activity and resulting benefits to the Council and wider town.

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021-2026

- 4.9 The report gave an overview of the work undertaken to support the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Physical activity initiatives for Council employees were facilitated throughout the year with opportunities such as an indoor cycling session in September 2024, an annual five-a-side tournament in December 2024, and a 'Step into 2025' steps challenge held in January 2025.
- 4.10 A full and detailed breakdown was also given of the work undertaken with the Council's leisure provider LeisureSK Limited to deliver the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Such instances included wellbeing walks, half-term swim crash courses, Fighting Fit Cancer Rehabilitation classes, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) swimming lessons.
- 4.11 Members praised the work of the Wellbeing team and noted that 30% of SKDC staff members had reported physical or mental health struggles. Members also raised questions about the GP Referral Scheme and whether it could be explored elsewhere in the district.

LeisureSK Ltd. Progress on Actions Requested by Cabinet

- 4.12 Members considered an update on the progress made with the actions requested by Cabinet in relation to LeisureSK Ltd, including an update on the leisure management options appraisal which was being undertaken.
- 4.13 Members of LeisureSK Ltd. answered a range of questions from members of the Committee. Further information was highlighted at the meeting:
- Administration support provided by SKDC was in place for LeisureSK Ltd. – however if this was no longer required it could be withdrawn. It remained the case that SKDC and LeisureSK wanted to work together.
 - The Leader of the Council had written to the Board, predominantly over concerns with cashflow. A mitigation plan had been requested.
 - The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture attended LeisureSK Ltd. Board meetings as an observer.
- 4.14 The Committee continued to receive regular updates on the progress of Leisure SK Ltd, and later in the year went onto recommend a budget to Leisure SK Ltd. and endorsed their business plan after an informative debate.

Support for Sports Clubs across South Kesteven

- 4.15 The report outlined that the Council had provided financial support to the following sports clubs through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve their club facilities:
- Barkston and Syston Cricket Club - £4,000
 - Barkston and Syston Playing Field - £6,000
 - Fulbeck Sport and Social Club - £4,910
 - Grantham Squash and Fitness Club - £35,000
 - Uffington Cricket Club - £8,000
 - Harrowby United FC - £65,000

- The Rippingale Jubilee Playing Field Trust - £20,000

4.16 Through the Council's leisure provider, LeisureSK Limited, there were 50 affiliated clubs which have regular bookings at the centres across the district, covering Netball to Marshall Arts.

4.17 Furthermore, the Council worked closely with organisations such as Positive Futures, Inspire+, and Active Lincolnshire to promote initiatives with the aim of increasing the physical activity of levels of younger people through sport and 5 activity opportunities. Such initiatives were regularly promoted by the Council's website and social media platforms.

4.18 During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The impact of 'peppercorn rents' as an indirect form of support. The Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place) confirmed that these arrangements would not be classed as a direct subsidy as the organisations were responsible for maintenance and costs.
- Whether there was scope to increase the amount of sports clubs regularly making bookings with the Council facilities. The Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team Leader noted that 50 clubs was a positive amount and some facilities, such as Bourne, were regularly at full capacity of bookings.
- It was queried whether there was a directory of all sports clubs across the district. It was confirmed that no such directory was published but attention was drawn to the activity finder on the Council's website which was managed by Active Lincolnshire.
- The suggestion was made to invite Chairman and volunteers of all sports clubs across the district to an open forum to workshop how SKDC could best offer support.
- Clarification was sought whether central government could be urged to make sport and leisure statutory services considering the positive physical and mental health benefits. It was confirmed that such representations were being made to central government.
- Attention was drawn to the work of the Dysart Park Family Day.

5. Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Ian Selby

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Emma Baker

During the 2024/2025 municipal year, the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions, and there were two further Joint Meetings involving its members. During the year, the Committee was visited by several members of the public, representatives from Rowleys Commercial Energy Assessment Limited and representatives from Lincolnshire County Council (who answered queries related to flooding). A number of update reports and reports for information were considered by the Committee; a summary of other items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Disposal of Vapes

- 5.1 Members considered an update on the sale and disposal of disposable vapes at their meeting in June 2024.
- 5.2 Officers were working with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) on an interim solution where they received SKDC's waste at their site. There was confidence on introducing this from September 2025; however, collection would not commence before it was ready. There was also the possibility of funding from Government.
- 5.3 The battery collection scheme would require education materials for residents. Councils had responded to Government to say that funding for this scheme was insufficient.

Twin Stream Update

- 5.4 Members considered an update on the roll out of the twin stream project and the timelines for the reintroduction of contamination monitoring process for the dry mixed recycling (DMR) bins.
- 5.5 Questions and comments raised by the Committee and officers present included:
- Contamination rates were present in around 30% of bins collected.
 - Alongside a proactive educational campaign, a 'tag and take' exercise had been undertaken to highlight to residents the problematic items in their recycling waste; this included paper and card. This was paused in February 2024 due to a number of issues.
 - When bins were rejected from w/c 10 June there would be a comprehensive rejection tab. A public apology for any mistakes made by the Cabinet Member was contained within the minutes of Full Council on 29 February 2024.
 - The legislative requirements for recycling were vague; when something was 'recyclable' this simply meant that it could be recycled anywhere within Europe. If residents were still not sure after reading guidance from the Council on whether their packaging was recyclable, then they should use the black bin rather than potentially contaminate their recycling bin.
 - It was pleasing to see the provision of additional staff training and resources. Resources and time would also be used to educate members of the public as to what they could or could not place into their bin.
 - Not all waste in a black bin went to landfill, as some of it was sent to the local Energy from Waste plant.

Carbon Emissions

- 5.6 Members of the Committee received an update on the Council's carbon emissions for 2023/2024, and progress made towards a 30% reduction target.
- 5.7 Questions and comments raised by the Committee included:
- A query was raised on whether carbon efficient LED lights had been installed in Welham Street, Grantham car park.
 - Members discussed the difficulties of reducing carbon emissions on the Council's waste freighters. Electric waste freighters had a short radius before requiring recharging which would be more challenging for South Kesteven as a rural District

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

5.8 Members highlighted the impressive work undertaken by the Waste team.

Bulky Waste Collection Service

5.9 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.

5.10 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 and would increase revenue for the Council whilst addressing a growing public demand.

5.11 Questions and comments raised by the Committee included:

- 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.
- Could smaller items be taken on the day of the bulky item collection for an additional fee?
- the accuracy of the fuel calculation and whether the vehicles were being ran as efficiently as possible.
- Facilitation of a public skip.
- A suggestion of increasing fines as a deterrent.

5.12 The Committee suggested the inclusion of an additional vehicle and crew to be put into the budget setting process.

Re-wilding Ambitions

5.13 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.

5.14 At their meeting in October 2024 the Committee agreed to endorse the Council's plan to adopt rewilding initiatives on trial sites; to recommend to capture learning and apply to future rewilding plans; and; receive a future report on the outcome of the trial and future plans.

Green Fleet Strategy Update

5.15 At the time of the report's publication, the fleet was made up of over 150 vehicles which were used across multiple service areas including Housing, Waste and Street Scene.

Varied in size and type, the vehicles covered everything from basic cars through to refuse collection vehicles. These vehicles were vital to the delivery of effective and efficient services in a district which was both large and predominantly rural.

- 5.16 Members of the Committee were encouraged that SKDC was being proactive and welcomed the consideration of alternative fuel sources.
- 5.17 Also suggested was a establishing a fuel reduction target, and to take learning from work that other Council's had carried out on the same issue.
- 5.18 Members agreed to recommend the Strategy to Cabinet for approval.

Waste Policy Update

- 5.19 The purpose of the report was to codify operational changes within the service area that had been implemented over the previous year. The policies outlined within the report were all agreed and existing working practices.
- 5.20 Members discussed the updated Waste Policy, and made the following comments/suggestions:
 - Concerns over bins and sacks being left on narrow pavements.
 - Confirmation that residents with waste sacks rather than bins would be able to dispose of batteries
 - Confirmation that missed bins would be rectified within 5 days.
- 5.21 The Committee recommended the updated Waste Policy to Cabinet for approval.

6. Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Bridget Ley

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Gareth Knight

During the 2024/2025 municipal year, the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven occasions. The Committee as part of its remit considered several Financial Update and Budget Monitoring reports. In addition, there were regular updates on progress at the new Waste Depot on Turnpike Close and the development at St. Martin's Park, the UKSPF Programme and the East Midlands Building Consultancy, and reports related to the setting of the budget were considered by the Committee. Budgetary reports included information on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

A summary of other items considered by the Committee is set out below:

Council Tax Support Scheme - Veterans

- 6.1 This report arose from an earlier request to explore the feasibility of providing Council Tax relief to employed veterans residing in Band A properties. The financial implications on SKDC, Lincolnshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner were considered.

- 6.2 During discussion, Members raised the following points:
- Councils were not obliged to give financial aid to veterans, but they should always be treated with fairness and respect in the community, the economy and society.
 - Information was available on the Council's website regarding the support available to Armed Forces veterans and their families.
 - Lincolnshire County Council had raised concerns around the introduction of a veterans' scheme as part of their consultation response in 2023.

- 6.3 The Committee, on a split vote requested that no further work was undertaken on the development of a Council Tax Support Scheme for veterans.

Grantham High Street Heritage Action Zone Completion Report

- 6.4 The report outlined successes, challenges and lessons learnt from the delivery of the programme and the additional associated cultural programme funded by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which ran from 2021 to March 2024.

- 6.5 During discussion, Members raised the following points:
- It was pleasing that measures had been put into place aiming to prevent professional bidders securing grants ahead of independent traders.
 - Concerns were raised on the current situation at the George Shopping Centre in Grantham, with regard to its high number of vacant units.

- 6.6 The Committee endorsed the report and were invited to share any comments with the Programme Board.

Grantham Future High Streets Fund/Market Place Footfall Activity/Grantham Town Centre Action Plan

- 6.7 The Future High Streets Fund, Grantham Town Centre Action Plan and Footfall activity was considered on several occasions through 24/25. In January 2025, the Grantham Town Centre Action Plan was endorsed.

- 6.8 The Market Place, Grantham works started on site on 7 May 2024 and included the reconstruction of the road from a tarmac surface to York stone sett paving, whilst also raising the current road height to deliver a single level structured and interconnected space. The scheme was scheduled to conclude on 19 August 2024. The contractors have mobilised which had caused some consternation among shopkeepers who feel that the works were having a detrimental effect on businesses. The reports of reduced footfall were potentially overstated, as presented in the graphs shown to the Committee. The report was centred around mitigation and action to be taken during the works and following the works.

- 6.9 Members raised the following points during their discussions on this topic:
- A high number of people seemed to have passed through Grantham in the month of March, queries were raised as to how sensitive the technology capturing this information was. It was however noted that the technology used was the best available.

- It was highlighted the geofence of the Grantham town centre included 2 large supermarkets, the residential area from the train station to the A52. It was felt the geofence boundaries needed altering.
- It was clarified that the town centre geofence included the railway station, meaning commuters were accounted within the footfall.
- The narrow Westgate Grantham market had a total of 152,000 visits a month, meaning under 5,000 per day, which equated to 500 an hour for 10 hours of the day.
- Progress had been made with a loyalty card scheme, which was due to be launched on the 1 October 2024.
- Discussion took place on the make of the Town Team and how its membership had been decided upon.
- It was queried and confirmed that an option considered was for SKDC to offer an initial rent-free four-week period for stall holders at Grantham market as an attempt to secure more stallholders at the market and subsequently increase footfall.
- There was reasonable coverage of public transport across the District, however, certain areas did suffer more than others. There was limiting 8 funding for the short term period, therefore, subsidising and planning bus routes was not within the action plan at present but would be considered in the future.
- Several units had been addressed in the report which had previously been vacant: the bookshop, cafes and other businesses which were seeking to bring business to Grantham.
- A Grantham Member stated they had monitored void retail units. In and around the centre of Grantham, 3 shops had been lost in over a year and a half, however, 12 shops had been occupied.

Provisional Outturn Position Report 2023/2024

- 6.10 The report provided the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee with detail of the Council's provisional outturn position for the financial year 2023/24. Throughout the financial year the Committee had been provided with regular and comprehensive budget monitoring reports which enabled members to be kept updated on what had been a particularly financially volatile year.
- 6.11 Members of the Committee raised several suggestions, such as diverting any interest rates income into the Budget Stabilisation Reserve, or Business Rate Volatility Reserve in the event of any unknown expenditures.
- 6.12 Members welcomed the balanced budget presented at the May 2024 Council AGM.

Economic Development Strategy

- 6.13 Members received a final draft of the Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028 at their meeting in September 2024. A Cabinet Member workshop had been created and all members of the Committee had been invited to take part and contribute.
- 6.14 Members received a number of clarifications within the document and asked that it be updated as and when required.
- 6.15 The document was recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Maintenance Strategy Action Plan Update

- 6.16 The Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement introduced the report which provided the Committee with progress in respect of the implementation of the Council's Maintenance Strategy Action Plan for Corporate (General Fund) Property Assets. It was stressed that the maintenance of assets was important to the Council and the Cabinet had approved proposals for a Maintenance Strategy at the meeting on 10 September 2024.
- 6.17 The Committee raised points in respect of gas consumption particularly at the bus station, "packaging" large pieces of work together, the types of building involved (Victorian and Georgian) and the capacity within the industry together with moving away from fossil fuels.
- 6.18 It was stated that "Meet the Buyer" events were being held in both Stamford and Grantham to see what local suppliers could offer although it was acknowledged that larger pieces of work would be outside the remit of small local suppliers.
- 6.19 The Committee noted the positive steps being made in respect of the Action Plan and the Maintenance Strategy.

7. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Lee Steptoe

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Zoe Lane

During the 2024/2025 municipal year, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions. Some update reports were included on most agendas, these included:

- Change4Lincs Update
- Social Housing Decarbonisation wave 2.1
- Grantham Earlesfield Project Update
- Build and Acquisition Update
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update

There have been several appearances by representatives of a Grantham-based voluntary organisation that advocates for the homeless, with points fully answered by the Cabinet Member for Housing and senior housing officers.

- 7.1 A number of policies were considered by the Committee, with many being recommended to Cabinet for adoption. The policies included:
- Empty Homes Strategy
 - Repairs and Maintenance Policy
 - Damp and Mould Policy
 - Decant Policy
 - Mobility Vehicle Policy

New Build and Acquisitions Update

- 7.2 The scheme at Swinegate, Grantham was progressing and was still on target for completion by July 2025, roofing work on the project was due to start at the end of the month.
- 7.3 The planning application for the development of 11 units at Wellington Way, Market Deeping had been submitted and was waiting to be approved following which a tender process would be undertaken to appoint a contractor.
- 7.4 The small six-unit development at Gorse Rise was due to be formally submitted to Planning by the end of the month following pre-planning advice. Again, once approved a tender process would be undertaken to appoint a contractor.
- 7.5 Site feasibility in respect of Kesteven Road, Stamford had been ongoing, the proposed scheme had been reduced to 11 units to enable more green space to be retained. Ward Councillors had been contacted in respect of the site, although no response had been received to date.
- 7.6 The remaining properties which the Council bought via the Local Authority Housing Fund for the Ukrainian and Afghan refugees were completed on 24 January 2025. The properties were located in Bourne and were in the process of being occupied and offered to tenants.
- 7.7 The first phase of the 36 houses at the David Wilson Homes development in Corby Glen had been accepted and were now fully tenanted. Work was ongoing with them to try and bring forward the other phases sooner.
- 7.8 Bourne End Road, Colsterworth presented opportunities to demolish some of the existing stock and rebuild with biodiversity properties due to the size of the plots. It was hoped that a planning application would be submitted in November 2024 once a biodiversity net gain report had been received.

Rough Sleeper Initiative Update

- 7.9 The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which provided an update on the arrangements of the Change 4 Lincs team who were hosted by the Council. The Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding was allocated by central Government and funding was secured until March 2025.
- 7.10 Following a successful bid South Kesteven District Council were awarded funding for three years from 2022 until March 2025. South Kesteven District Council hosted the Change 4 Lincs Team on behalf of, North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.
- 7.11 The below is a summary of discussion points raised by the Committee at their meeting in November 2024:
- The current geographical area covered was large and presented challenges.
 - The increase in homelessness/rough sleeping and the need for accommodation had increased costs significantly.
 - Lessons learnt with the current model would be built into the new provision.
 - Covid had impacted the initiative from when it was first set up which had affected the smooth running of the initiative from the start and had contributed to the huge overspends in the first few years.

- Due to the overspend focus had been more on support rather than accommodation with possibly more people being on the streets than the Council would have liked, this was caveated that some of the people in unsettled accommodation were reluctant to move on. People who were on the streets were more engaged to get off the streets than those who were already in some type of accommodation.
- Accommodation was not always the answer, it was stated that some of the rough sleepers had been offered accommodation but due to their own actions this accommodation had been lost.
- Many rough sleepers had complex issues and a holistic support package was required.
- Numbers of rough sleepers across the four districts were drastically different.
- When would the final arrangements be known, this was reliant on when central Government announced their plans for funding, as the funding finished in March 2025, which was a short timeframe from November the Government may roll the funding over to the next financial year.
- Funding maybe known by the end of November 2024 and the Government had indicated that they would be investing more in homelessness.
- A comprehensive spending review would be undertaken by the Government next year.
- The Government were keen to move away from “bidding” for funding to allocation.
- An example was given and it was stated that joined up support from key agencies was vital for getting people with complex needs off the streets.
- There was a Vulnerable Adults Panel which was part of a multi-agency partnership offering people bespoke support.
- How many rough sleepers were there in South Kesteven? The Head of Housing stated that she would have to come back with exact figures but she stated that a monthly return was completed and an annual count was taken every year. The annual counts had shown a clear increase and would be undertaken the following week.

Repairs Service Update

- 7.12 The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which concerned the progress made following the internal repairs service audit report that had been received in April 2024. The report stated that the Council could take partial assurance that the controls to manage this area were suitably designed, consistently applied or effective. The report identified actions that were required to strengthen the control framework.
- 7.13 There was a total of 13 actions with two advisory actions. Ten of the actions were complete with one action due to be completed by 31 March 2025. The other actions concerned a new post and upgrades to IT systems which were due to be completed by 31 March 2025.
- 7.14 A question was asked in respect of new and old repairs to which the Head of Service (Technical Services) responded. A further question was asked about who made the call in respect of simple or complex repairs and it was stated that this was done in the Repairs centre with an example given of a complex repair which required different contractors to attend. More discussion followed in respect of Damp and Mould to which the Head of Service (Technical Services) replied. It was proposed that a report would come before the Committee every three months going forward.

Riverside Heating Upgrade Works

- 7.15 The Committee considered updates on the Riverside communal heating upgrade works on several occasions through 2024/2025.
- 7.16 The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that the new boilers had been installed and had been operational since December 2024. A temporary boiler had been installed whilst the works were being undertaken to ensure that residents had access to heating and hot water.
- 7.17 The Building Management System had been installed and was expected to go live during January 2025. There were still three immersion heaters to install, these had not been done due to gaining access to properties. The flushing of the secondary system and the installation of new thermostatic controls commenced the previous week. Chemicals would be added to the system to ensure the existing pipes were in working order and to ensure that the system worked efficiently.
- 7.18 It was noted that complaints had been received from residents, the most prolific complaint was due to residents' flats being too hot. The Council's Mechanical Contractor had shown residents how to lower the temperature which would be easier once the new thermostatic controls had been installed and so far, the project had been successful.

Stock Condition Surveys

- 7.19 A target of 1,759 stock condition surveys had been set for 2024/25, at the end of February 2025, 1,617 surveys had been completed. Of those properties surveyed a total of 67 had failed the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System risk assessment of which 33 were category 1. All those needing remedial works had been booked in with the repairs team.
- 7.20 Questions were asked about whether there was any commonality in respect of those who had Category 1 failures and whether the same contractor carried out the EPC surveys for consistency to which the Head of Service (Technical) responded. A comment was made about including voids in the 97.9% figure why were they voids and not let to which the Head of Service (Technical) stated that it could be that they were being brought up to the decent homes standard and required the relevant checks to be carried out and were not strictly part of the stock condition survey but were undertaken as two separate pieces of work. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that currently there were 66 major voids which accounted for 1% of the Council's housing stock which were included in the data shown.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

- 7.21 The Committee received the results of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey at their meeting held in March 2025.
- 7.22 The survey allowed tenants to scrutinise the Council's performance, provided information on where services could be improved and provided information to the Regulator regarding how far the Council was meeting the outcomes of the consumer standards.
- 7.23 549 complete responses had been received which was comparable with the previous year.

8. Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor Nikki Manterfield

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Steven Cunnington

During the 2024/2025 municipal year, the Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions.

The Committee received a number of standing updates throughout the year on topics such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding, the SK Community Fund, Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, Cost of Living and Customer Services.

A summary of other items considered by the Committee is set out below.

Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Position Statement

- 8.1 The document had been produced to provide background on the Council's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and its Equality Objectives. It also provided a profile of the District and demographics – this was made up of information gathered within the 2021 national Census and Office for National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates and provided an insight into how the Council had continued to support its staff and customers. The Annual Position Statement outlined workforce statistics. These statistics had been used, where possible, to provide a comparison with the District's demographic.
- 8.2 Members highlighted issues for those without internet access, questions over the implementation of objectives in the Annual Position Statement and public awareness of the Annual Position Statement.
- 8.3 The Committee agreed to recommend the publication of the Annual Position Statement to the Cabinet Member for People and Communities.

Youth Council

- 8.4 The Youth Council Update was presented by the Cabinet Member for People and Communities. The Youth Council was formed in July 2023 and consisted of Members between the ages of 11 and 19. The three priorities identified by Members of the Youth Council were Mental Health & support available, Climate change/sustainability and Entrepreneurship of young people.
- 8.5 Members praised the work carried out by the Youth Council and registered their interest in attending meetings of the Youth Council where possible.

Road Safety and Speeding

- 8.6 At its meeting in February the Committee held a presentation with a representative from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.

8.7 During discussions, Members asked the following questions:

- How to secure electronic vehicle-activated speed alert signs in high risk areas of SKDC.
- Whether support could be offered to LCC with imposing urban 20mph zones and enforcing zig-zag line no-stop zones outside schools.
- Whether preventative measures could be undertaken at locations where there had been accidents, but nobody had been killed or seriously injured.
- 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.
- 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.

Crime Disorder Local Partnership Working and CCTV Update

- 8.8 The Committee received a presentation from Inspector Hillson from Lincolnshire Police at their March meeting.
- 8.9 Inspector Hillson discussed statistics related to theft and domestic abuse victims.
- 8.10 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). It was queried and confirmed that there were no longer any PCSOs based in the south of the South Kesteven district.
- 8.11 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.
- 8.12 A Member confirmed that the feedback from their residents had been overwhelmingly positive about the Safer Streets Team.
- 8.13 The new CCTV Centre was confirmed to have 161 cameras across the district with 38 in Grantham.

9 Joint Committees

9.1 There were two Joint Scrutiny meetings held in year:

- **Joint Meeting of the Environment and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (9 December 2024).** This was a meeting looking at Planning issues, specifically Planning policy, an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement,

Revisions and Amendments to Planning Applications and an Extensions of Time Procedure and an Authority Monitoring Report.

- **Joint Meeting of the Environment and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (4 March 2025).** This meeting looked at the use of pesticides within South Kesteven. Recommendations were made to the Cabinet Member responsible for Environment and Waste.