

Customer Experience Strategy

2025-
2029



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Foreword

"Here at South Kesteven District Council, our customers are at the heart of what we do. This might be face-to-face assistance at our dedicated customer service points, when people get in touch directly by phone or email, if our tenants need guidance at their council property or sheltered accommodation – or simply how we relate to businesses, customers and community groups during the normal course of our work.

A great customer experience doesn't just happen though.

Everyone in our organisation must understand their role, responsibility and accountability. This results in a culture that takes customers' needs and satisfaction into account during all of our decision making, strategy development and action across all departments.

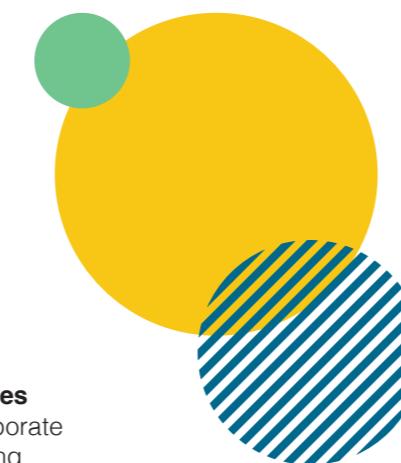
We therefore have training and guidance – and now this overarching strategy, a document created after consulting with you, the public.

It sets out our ambitions, as well as our priorities to develop and improve as we move forward.

We always welcome feedback on all of your interactions with the SKDC, and our contact details are on the back page."



Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing



Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 04 |
| Consultation | 05 |
| A service in numbers | 07 |
| Alignment across the organisation | 08 |
| Vision 2025 to 2029 | 09 |
| Customer Charter: Our responsibilities to our customers | 10 |
| Customer Charter: What we would like from our customers | 11 |
| Service Standards | 12 |
| Priority 1: Access to multiple service channels | 13 |
| Priority 2: Accessibility and Inclusion | 14 |
| Priority 3: Our commitment to good communication | 15 |
| Priority 4: Regular staff training | 16 |
| Priority 5: Technology | 17 |



Introduction

The strategy supports Priority 5 in our Corporate Plan: Effective Council. The mission for this priority in the corporate plan is:

"to deliver trusted high quality and value-for-money services that fulfil the needs and expectations of all our residents"

The ambitions within this priority, which will be incorporated into our strategy are to:

- **Provide excellent, value-for-money and financially sustainable services**
- **Actively and effectively engage with and listen to our residents, placing their needs and concerns at the heart of everything we do**
- **Through #TEAMSK retain a highly skilled, empowered, motivated and professional workforce**

Where we are now

We know that to improve our customers experience, we need to be honest and look at the way the service is currently provided, and how we can move forward to make positive changes for the Council and its customers.

In doing this, we have looked at the culture of the organisation, the way in which we use data and the technology currently available across multiple service areas.

We want to be able to positively move forward and make improvements in these three key areas, as well as making sure we understand our customers and their needs.

What this means for our strategy

We understand customers expect a more seamless, transparent, and responsive service.

By reviewing and refreshing our Customer Experience Strategy, the Council has an opportunity and responsibility to transform how we engage with

our customers. This is the first step in ensuring we adopt a customer focused approach for our front facing service areas, which will evolve to meet the needs of the people we serve.

Our Customer Experience Strategy is designed to place the customer at the heart of everything we do, aligning people, processes and technology to deliver consistent, personalised, and meaningful interactions across all channels.

This strategy reflects our commitment to improving every interaction between the Council and our customers – whether it is accessing services online, visiting our customer service centres, paying a bill, or requesting support. It recognises that customers are not just service users but valued businesses and residents in our district whose feedback, satisfaction, and trust are essential to building positive relationships.

Finally, this strategy provides a clear roadmap for understanding and anticipating customer needs and improving satisfaction.

Key objectives of this strategy:

- Customers are at the heart of our service: Embedding a mindset of empathy, respect and accountability throughout our organisation, ensuring every staff member understands their role in delivering excellent service.
- Service Accessibility & Inclusion: Ensuring equitable access to government services for all customers, regardless of language, ability or digital literacy.
- Improved Service Design: Using customer feedback, data and journey mapping to streamline services and design experiences that are simple, timely and intuitive.
- Multi-channel access: Providing consistent and high-quality service across in-person, phone, digital and community channels—meeting customers needs wherever they are.
- Continuous Improvement: Measuring satisfaction, identifying service gaps and using these insights to continually refine our approach and respond proactively to community needs.

Consultation

The Council and Customer Service Team believe our customers should be at the heart of all we do. Knowing our customers, getting feedback, taking this on board to improve services and moving forward with technology is vital in building a forward looking Customer Experience Strategy.

A consultation took place between 10 March 2025 and 7 April 2025, with a variety of stakeholders.

Who we consulted with

- ✓ Customers who contacted the Council via Customer Services
- ✓ Customers who contacted service areas within the Council directly i.e. not via Customer Services
- ✓ Other organisations that contacted SKDC
- ✓ Those who do not contact the Council
- ✓ Local businesses
- ✓ Community and Voluntary Groups
- ✓ #TeamSK (SKDC staff)
- ✓ Other service areas in the Council

The purpose of the consultation – To inform the Customer Experience Strategy. To:

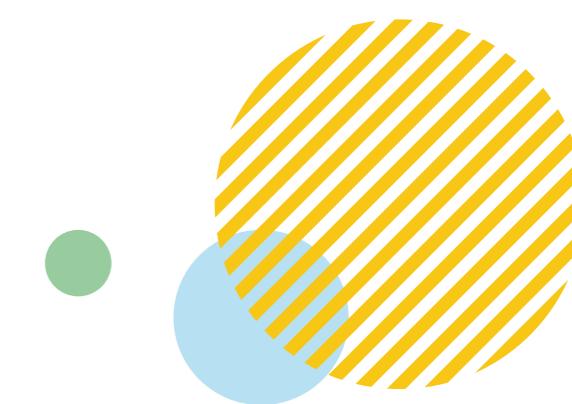
- ✓ Find out how people contact SKDC, why they contact us and how often
- ✓ Establish what is important to people when contacting us
- ✓ Understand what is most in need of improvement
- ✓ Use this information to draw up SKDC's Customer Charter/Commitments and also what the Council expects from customers (SKDC's Expectations of its Customers)
- ✓ Measure the degree of support for the strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes

The results of the consultation

- Feedback received from those contacting Customer Services and service areas directly
- Efficiency, availability, knowledge and being kept informed identified as key concepts
- 80.2% of respondents agreed with the ambitions of the strategy
- 90.8% of respondents agreed with the outcomes in the strategy
- Automation and use of AI embraced by some respondents. Others keen that Council continue to interact directly with its customers - particularly those from vulnerable communities

Outcomes of the consultation

- ✓ Development of a Customer Charter – for both Council staff and customers
- ✓ Development of Service Standards across all public facing service areas
- ✓ Identification of areas for improvement, with subsequent action plan
- ✓ Embed Customer Experience Vision 2025 to 2029



How we currently operate

We currently have two customer service centres located across the district. Our staff are multi-skilled, so are able to respond to a range of service requests through any access channel. However, the experience the customer gets will vary depending on the channel chosen.

Both Bourne and Grantham Customer Service Centres provide face to face support. In addition, both centres also have self-service kiosks where customers can be supported by our experienced Customer Service Advisors. The kiosks enable access to a range of online services – all of which are detailed at the end of this strategy.

We use a wide range of IT systems to deliver our services. This means that our staff interpret information in a range of formats and often only get a partial view of the customers circumstances. This limits the customer's overall experience. Not all of our systems can facilitate the type of interactions that we now see as commonplace, such as sending a text message



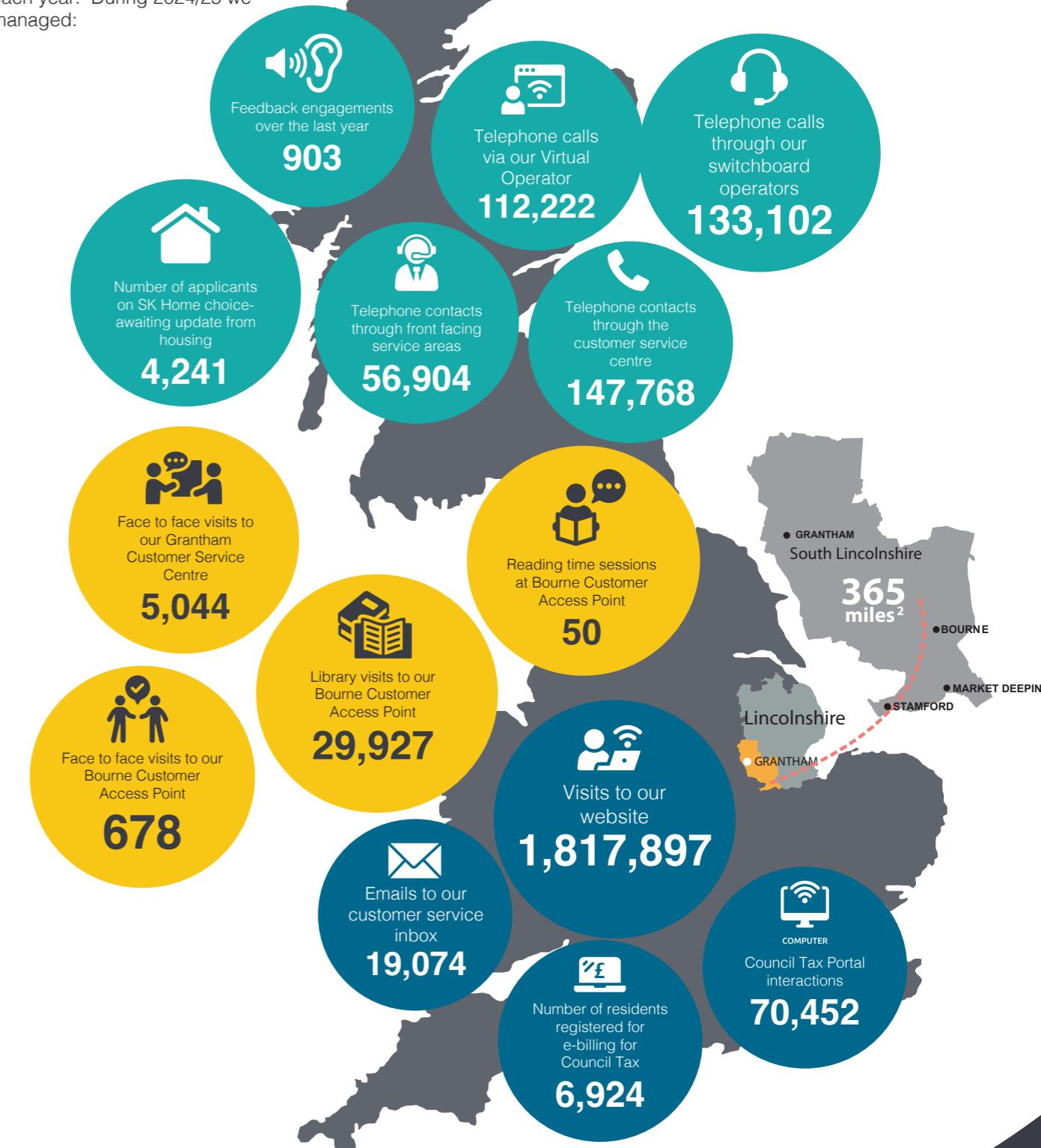
update to a customer. We often have to join systems together to achieve the outcomes that the customer expects. This can be costly and time consuming.

However, there are over 150 forms online which help customers to transact with us at any time of day or night. Some of these are joined to automated back office processes which enable prompt processing of work, or responses to enquiries. This is continuously being reviewed and improved to extend this further.

We still have some duplication of work. Whilst we've made some improvements, we often have to rekey information into back office systems, and some frequently accessed services still rely on face to face or telephone conversations to be delivered. Often, customers have to understand how we operate in order to access our services.

Our Service in Numbers

It is important to appreciate just how many customer contacts the council handles each year. During 2024/25 we managed:



Alignment across the organisation

We believe that when we put customers at the heart of every decision, we create a lasting impact. That's why we're committed to working together across teams and departments — breaking down silos, sharing ideas, and aligning our efforts — to bring our corporate priorities to life in a way that truly serves the people who matter most: our customers.

Together, we're building a future shaped by empathy, innovation, and a relentless focus on delivering exceptional experiences.

Crucial to achieving this is showing we understand the powerful links between our customer experience ambitions and our wider corporate strategies.

By clearly connecting the dots between what we want to achieve for our customers and what we want to achieve as an organisation, we create momentum, focus, and purpose. This alignment ensures every action we take contributes to a stronger, more connected experience — for our customers and our people. Those strategies which are linked are:

| Communities Strategy | ICT Strategy | Information Governance & Compliance | People Strategy |
|--|--|---|---|
| Working together to ensure community and customer initiatives effectively address the needs of both individuals and groups | Making information and services more accessible to all customers | Ensure customer initiatives comply with governance standards and legislation to safeguard customer data | Support empowerment by developing skills, evolving training programs and supporting continuous learning so people are empowered to excel in their roles |
| Ensuring our most vulnerable customers can access the services they need | Improving our services to make better use of time for both our customers and staff | Respecting customer trust by ensuring data is used ethically and responsibly across all our services | Develop the aims and objectives of the Customer Experience Working group |

South Kesteven District Council Customer Experience Strategy

Vision 2025 to 2029

Our vision is split into key themes which, combined, will improve customer experience as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. The Customer Experience Strategy will be implemented by each service area within the council to achieve our overall goal to connect all objectives within the five priorities as they are designed to work together to achieve the improvement of customer experience and operational efficiency.

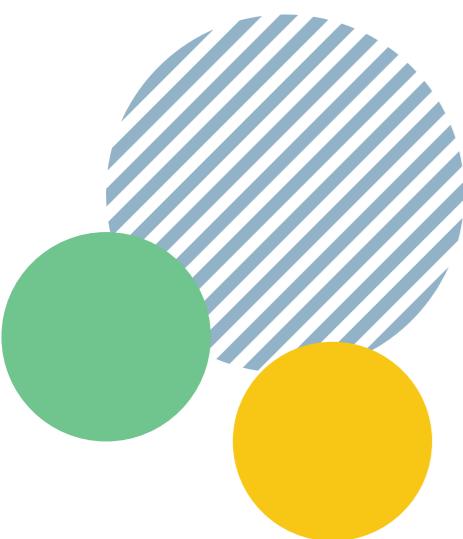
Our Vision Statement

“To offer great customer experiences for residents, businesses and the wider community by putting them at the heart of everything we do”

In implementing this strategy, our core priorities will be:

- Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos**
- Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels**
- Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion**
- Priority 4: Regular staff training**
- Priority 5: Technology**

An action plan will be developed for each priority, which will be endorsed by Senior Management and Members. The action plan will be monitored by our Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and will form part of future service planning.



Customer Charter: Our responsibilities to our customers

The Council is committed to ensuring that our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We have developed a Customer Charter as a result of the public consultation feedback, SKDC Service Area and Member workshops. This sets our promise to how we will deliver high quality services for our customers and the service standards we will provide which enable us to meet their expectations.

Our responsibilities are to:



Customer Charter: What we would like from our customers

To help us provide a good service, we ask our customers to:

- 01** **Treat our staff with respect and courtesy:** We are committed to treating customers with professionalism and courtesy, in return we ask that our customers treat the staff member handling their enquiry with respect and courtesy at all times.
- 02** **Provide requested information promptly and accurately:** Ensure all information is delivered to us on time and in the correct format as requested. For efficiency, we rely on our customers to provide complete and accurate information.
- 03** **Notify the Council of changes promptly:** Let the Council know as soon as possible if personal circumstances or service requirements change.
- 04** **Understand the impact of a delay:** If information is not provided as requested, this could hinder or delay our decision making.
- 05** **Use digital services where possible:** Make use of the Council's website and online portals to access services and information, especially during peak periods or outside of standard hours
- 06** **Engage positively and give honest and constructive feedback:** Provide honest and constructive feedback to help the Council understand how services can be improved. Communication should be in a constructive and respectful manner, especially when raising concerns or giving feedback.

Service Standards

To ensure that the customer experience is consistent across SKDC, it would like to introduce service standards for the corporate contact centre and each of its service areas.

Operational Standards

By implementing operational service standards, we will be able to

- Ensure ways of working which are focussed on delivering a positive experience for our customers
- Improve customer satisfaction levels, reduce complaints and create a trusted customer contact process
- Ensure our staff have the tools available to them to achieve the best level of customer service as possible

Performance Indicators

We will monitor and report on the following:

| Indicator | What we will do with this information |
|--|---|
| Number of calls offered | <p>We will monitor peaks and troughs in call volumes throughout the day / week</p> <p>Where possible, staffing levels will be reviewed to complement peak activities</p> |
| Number of calls answered | <p>A service level of 80% of calls to be answered will be set for all initial calls being handled by the customer service team</p> <p>Where this is not reached, we will review the available data to understand whether the call was re-routed to a different channel – such as email, online or in person</p> |
| Number and type of actions undertaken in response to website feedback | <p>To understand how technology is being used by customers to engage with the Council</p> <p>To provide assurance that feedback is important, and where possible, actions are taken to improve the customers online journey</p> |
| Number of days to respond to feedback and understand resolutions times | To provide assurance that feedback is important, and that lessons are learnt and implemented from all feedback |
| Undertake regular customer satisfaction surveys | Results will be analysed, and the Council will consider appropriate actions to make improvements |
| Continue staff working group meetings | To ensure all service areas are aware of their responsibilities within this strategy. |

Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos

Our commitment:

- To ensure customers are advised when their enquiry is passed on to another member of the team or service area for resolution

Purpose:

- We will ensure that the customer voice is central to our decision making when we look at how our services are designed in the future. We'll also share learning and best practice across the organisation.
- To be transparent and keep residents informed throughout their customer journey. Being clear, respectful and responding in a timely manner.

2029 Outcomes:

The Customer Service management team will:

- Work with service areas to continually review the customer journey, measuring, monitoring and providing feedback regarding performance against service standards
- Embed existing customer champions across service areas, which will be linked to the launch of the strategy
- Produce a clear handover of communication between teams when transferring enquiries and expectations on response times.
- Set a standard of communication within teams.
- Ensure consistency of messaging via phone, email, online form or in person.
- Implement Training and development plans to respond to feedback and improve our offer
- Embed the customer voice into our performance appraisals across the authority



Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos



Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion



Priority 4: Regular Training



Priority 5: Technology

Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels

Our commitment:

- Ensure customers have access to multiple service channels to support their needs and type of enquiry

Purpose:

- To enable customers to choose their preferred communication channel at every touchpoint.

2029 Outcomes:

- Each of our processes will continue to be reviewed in detail, and where necessary, remodelled to support digital interactions in the future.
- Focus on the core channels our customers prefer
- The customer will get an improved outcome and will have greater choice in how to access a service
- The council will see lower operating costs through greater levels of automation and a reduction in repeat contacts from customers.



Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion

Our commitment:

- We will ensure our services are accessible and inclusive for everyone regardless of ability, background, or circumstance

Purpose:

- To comply with legal requirements and a commitment to supporting all customers equitably.

2029 Outcomes:

- We will aim to identify any and all barriers to accessing our services (e.g language, literacy, digital inclusion), reducing these through continued working across all teams
- 100% of our staff to receive training in accessibility and continuous learning in this area to increase staff confidence and capability
- Satisfaction scores from consultation with groups who may have previously experienced inaccessibility will be improved.



Priority 4: Regular staff training

Our commitment:

- We will ensure our staff receive regular training to enable them to respond to enquiries with accurate information

Purpose:

- To ensure all staff have knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver excellent customer service across all service areas.
- To stay current with changes in policy and procedure and service area updates.
- Our aim is to support all residents effectively across all contact channels.

2029 Outcomes:

- Development of staff learning plans to increase staff confidence through training
- Develop our knowledge-base for use by customers, staff and virtual assistants
- Training to better improve staff understanding and response to feedback
- Embedding a learning culture about customer service across our teams



Priority 5: Technology

Our commitment:

- To review the provision of technology to improve services – such as customer contact, keeping customers up to date with progress of enquiries, website information

Purpose:

- To provide user friendly technology that enhances the customer experience and improves efficiency to access services. We want to ensure our customers can easily access information and services when and how they need to via our website, online portals, telephones and offices.
- Technological advancements are moving faster than ever and have a significant impact on customer expectations. There is no such thing as standing still. If we don't invest then in reality our services will be going backwards and won't be moving at the pace our customers expect. We need to fundamentally review the type and configuration of technologies used to deliver services across each channel

2029 Outcomes:

- Evaluate and consider the procurement and implementation of a new digital engagement / CRM platform
- Evaluate the deployment of new booking solutions to provide greater customer choice, independence and automation
- Evaluate deployment of chat technologies, including chatbots in high volume, repetitive environments
- Continue to improve digital access - 24/7, portals, online forms, support in offices for the less digitally confident.
- Ensure fast efficient updates through online portals, phone system, online, text message.
- Procure and deploy a new phone system.
- Continued development of our website – using feedback and improvements to our web pages from customer engagement. Also identifying gaps in our online information and updating regularly



Welcome to my SK

Online Processes include

Waste

- Assisted collection
- Bins & Bags
- Bulky waste collection
- Clinical waste (sharps box)
- Garden waste scheme
- Missed bin

Streetscene

- Dead animals
- Dog fouling
- Litter
- Overflowing / damaged litter bin

Housing

- Apply to carry out alterations and improvements
- Apply to rent a garage
- Assisted Garden Maintenance scheme
- Housing update form
- Mutual Exchange application
- Request a repair
- SK Homechoice

Licensing

- Animal boarding licence
- Charity house to house collection
- Charity street collection
- Dangerous wild animal licence
- Dog breeding licence
- Gambling licence
- Lottery licence
- Personal licence
- Pet shop licence
- Premise licence
- Private hire operator's licence
- Riding establishment licence
- Street trading licence
- Taxi vehicle licence
- Temporary events notice
- Transfer a premise licence
- Vary a designated premise supervisor

Neighbourhoods

- Abandoned vehicles
- Flytipping
- Fly posting
- Garden bonfires
- Graffiti Noise
- Untidy garden or land

Look for it
Apply for it
Pay for it
Report it

Welcome to my SK

Online Processes

Revenues & Benefits

- Benefits & Council Tax Support
- Discretionary Housing payment
- Move in
- Move out
- Move within
- Residential care
- Single occupancy
- Student discount
- Unoccupied & unfurnished

Environmental Health

- Food, Health & Safety enquiries & complaints
- Registering a food business
- Report a stray dog

Planning

- Apply for planning permission
- Apply for street naming and numbering
- Building regulation approval
- Local land charges search

Other Services

- Other Services
- Freedom of Information requests
- Pay for a parking fine
- Register to Vote
- Report a broken streetlight
- Stamford residents permit scheme

Look for it
Apply for it
Pay for it
Report it





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Contact Details

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