

Minutes

Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 23 September 2025, 10.00 am

**Council Chamber – South
Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,
Grantham, NG31 6PZ**

Committee Members present

Councillor Bridget Ley (Chairman)
Councillor Gareth Knight (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Matthew Bailey

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Paul Stokes (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Philip Knowles (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing)

Officers

Richard Wyles (Deputy Chief Executive, S151 Officer)
Alison Hall-Wright (Director of Housing & Projects, Deputy Monitoring Officer)
David Scott (Assistant Director of Finance, Deputy S151 Officer)
Emma Whittaker (Assistant Director of Planning and Growth)
Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place)
Gyles Teasdale (Head of Service – Property & ICT)
Debbie Roberts (Head of Corporate Projects, Performance and Climate Change)
Simon Jackson (Economic Development Inward Investment Manager)
James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

18. Public Speaking

There were none.

19. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Harrison, Mark Whittington and Richard Cleaver.

Councillor Matt Bailey substituted for Councillor Mark Whittington.

20. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

21. Minutes from the meeting held on 24 July 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 24 July 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record

22. Updates from previous meeting

All actions were complete.

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

The Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive joined Officers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and visited parts of Grantham. They visited the new Swinegate development, Marketplace, Larch Close and the new Depot.

The Leader of the Council apologised for the late notice of the consultations on Local Government Reorganisation. The consultation events would commence, starting in the Deepings on Wednesday, 24 September at 4pm.

The Chairman introduced the new Economic Development Inward Investment Manager, Simon Jackson to the Committee.

24. Update on Economic Development Strategy Action Plan

The Leader of the Council presented the report updating the Committee on the Council's Economic Development Strategy which had previously been adopted by the Council in October 2024.

The strategy looked at five areas of focus, where the Council is likely to influence the key challenges to economic prosperity in the district, including:

- Business growth and job creation
- Skills development
- Inclusive growth and regeneration
- Inward Investment
- Enhancing the Tourism and Visitor Economy offer

The action plan set out a number of activities that the team would carry out over the lifetime of the strategy, and these were split between short term (1 year) and activities due to be completed by years 3 and 4.

Some activities had been delayed due to a vacancy in the manager's post; however, the manager post had been filled.

A query was raised whether there were any areas of special concern regarding further delays.

The Leader of the Council confirmed the pace and deliverability of some of the aspirations. Other concerns were funding and capacity within the team.

One Member noted that several actions had been assigned to the new Economic Development Inward Investment Manager.

The Economic Development Inward Investment Manager had studied the Action Plan and provided the Committee with reassurance that in 6 months' time, projects within the Action Plan would be underway.

The Chairman requested updates where possible on all actions.

The Committee:

- 1. Noted the progress made on the Action Plan**
- 2. Agreed to receive a further update and refreshed Action Plan within the next six months**

25. Update on UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing presented the report.

The report updated the Committee on the progress made allocating the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant for 2025-26.

The UKSPF grant and the Rural top-up grant was awarded to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority rather than the Council directly.

The Mayor's Office subsequently agreed that the funding would be distributed to each of the Council's within the Greater Lincolnshire area. This meant SKDC was awarded approximately £1.2m in UKSPF funds and a further £162,000 in Rural top-up funds.

The fund priorities have remained the same over the previous three years, and a copy of the investment plan was submitted to the Mayor's Office and was appended to the report.

It was highlighted that almost all funding had been allocated to a variety of projects across the entire District.

The report detailed those projects which were successful. Officers were working on plans to allocate the remaining £19,000.

One Member queried what figure had been allocated for the resurfacing of Dysart Park Grantham tennis courts.

The Assistant Director of Finance clarified the amount funded was £32,120 for the resurfacing of Dysart Park Grantham tennis courts.

Members congratulated Officers and Members of the UKSPF board for their hard work. Members felt the grants were much more strategic and targeted than previously.

The Committee:

1. Noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive a further update in 6 months.

26. Turnpike Depot Update - September 2025

The Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member of Property and Public Engagement.

The Leader of the Council thanked Cabinet Members, the Chairman of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all Officers involved for attending the Depot working group.

The report covered the period up to the first week of September 2025 and included the latest financial forecast identifying risks and latest timetable.

The contractor had confirmed a three-week delay due to delays in steels being delivered and to the liquidation of the steel manufacturer. Another reason for the delay was due to fire compartmentalisation regulations.

In order to mitigate the delay, the mobilisation period has been reviewed and two weeks of the delay could be absorbed, meaning an overall one week likely delay to the original operational date.

There were currently two primary risks identified. These related to the permit application for the siting of waste materials from the Environment Agency. The other risk related to the connection of utilities.

It was clarified the permit itself only affects waste on the site and would not impede the operational date scheduled. It would mean bulky waste collections and fly

tipping would be retained in skips on the existing depot and mobilise staff between the two locations during that period.

The Council were in regular contact with the Environment Agency to ensure they were satisfied with the plans and operation deployments of the site before issuing the permit.

The operational open date of the depot was not a business critical deadline but a self-imposed date. The Council could still operate and retain the existing location.

A query was raised whether steel had been supplied from a new or alternative supplier and whether there was a cost implication of the previous steel provider going into liquidation.

A supplementary question was raised on whether the delay in the delivery of the project could have a further cost implication.

The Head of Service (Property and ICT) clarified the original supplier was used for the steelwork and the cost remained the same.

Clarification was sought that there would be no additional costs forthcoming from the project.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed there was no request for further funding on this project.

The Chairman requested a site visit once the depot was operational.

It was confirmed that Members of the Committee would be invited to the 'soft launch' of the depot.

A closure report would be brought back to the Committee in February 2026.

The Committee:

Noted the current position of the delivery of the new Waste Depot at Turnpike Close, Grantham

27. Corporate Asset Management Strategy Review

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement.

The report presented the strategy for 2025-2030. The strategy set out a framework for managing the corporate property general fund over the next 5 years and is set within the context of the Council's corporate plan, financial plan and sustainability aims.

The asset management strategy is structured in the following way:

- Strategic context
- Key asset management priorities
- Achieving the vision and key actions

There are 11 key actions in the strategy which enable the vision to be delivered over the 5 year period.

Once the strategy has been approved, an action plan will be developed to monitor the implementation of the actions

One Member noted the strategy was five years and would overlap with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was queried whether any implications would need to be considered in the future.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed the Council were continuing business as usual and the LGR timescale would not impact the strategy at present. In regards to the strategy, the Council's assets would be assimilated into the new authority following LGR.

It was proposed, seconded and AGREED for the Asset Management Strategy (Corporate Property) for the period 2025 – 2030 to be recommended to Cabinet.

28. Corporate Property Maintenance Strategy Progress Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement.

The report was an update that was previously presented to the Committee in February 2025.

A maintenance strategy was approved in September 2024 which sets out the criteria for the allocation of funding to deal with the backlog of maintenance and planned maintenance.

The report set out the programme of works which had been undertaken across the property portfolio.

The works were allocated utilising the condition survey information and focused on works identified as end of life and requiring immediate attention.

Going forward, it was intended that cyclical condition surveys of around 20% per annum would take place in order to develop a planned maintenance programme.

One Member questioned whether local suppliers would be encouraged to carry out maintenance works, wherever possible.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that Full Council had recently approved the updated Contract Procedure Rules. It was noted individual quotations for local suppliers had increased from a £10k to £25k threshold. Cumulative spending would still be taken into consideration, and therefore using the same supplier multiple times would be monitored to ensure procurement financial thresholds are maintained.

A query was raised on when the bell turret would be repaired as part of the Guildhall Arts Centre repairs.

It was clarified the bell turret was off site and would be returned to the Guildhall Arts Centre in Spring.

The Committee:

Noted the progress being made with respect to the development and delivery of the General Fund Maintenance Programme, in accordance with the allocation criteria set out in the Maintenance Strategy

29. Leisure Investment Reserve – Allocation Criteria

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing declared he had a register of interest as a Director of LeisureSK Ltd.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed this agenda item did not conflict with LeisureSK Ltd and this was a Council driven initiative, therefore a declaration of interest was not required.

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which had been developed in response to the creation of a Leisure Investment Reserve was approved by the Governance and Audit Committee on 23 July 2025.

It was recognised that current maintenance funding was primarily focused on urgent works and limited funding was available to support the more cosmetic and decorative works.

Customer perception when using facilities can lead to negative feedback due to the limited investment in those cosmetic and decorative elements.

To enhance the customer experience and meet the objectives of the reserve, external consultants had been engaged to provide a summary of proposed investment based on the condition surveys with a clear focus on cosmetic and decorative works.

Following the consultants site survey, a specification of works would be developed to prioritise the allocation of the £500,000 reserve across the four main leisure assets.

Members were pleased to see the fund had been initiated.

A query was raised on why external consultants would provide a summary of proposed investment and not a Council employee, it was further questioned how much an external consultant would cost.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified the external consultants were the same consultants who provided condition surveys of the assets and therefore had good understanding of each asset. The consultants would review the assets professionally and begin to allocate where the £500,000 would be prioritised across the four locations.

The cost of the external consultants was around £5-6000 and would be taken out of the property services budget.

The report outlined usage figures, it was questioned how the figures were measured.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place confirmed that LeisureSK Ltd utilised a dedicated customer management system where visitors would be checked in on arrival. It was acknowledged the system would not record every visitor to the centre but would uplift figures in relation to other services. For example, a badminton court booking would record two visitors.

ACTION: For the Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place to provide an update on how attendance figures were measured at the Stadium in Grantham.

One Member noted that the majority of complaints from visitors at Stamford leisure center related to the changing areas only.

It was highlighted that several complaints received from all centers related to changing room facilities and it was hoped the £500,000 would be utilised in updating all changing rooms, following the external consultants report.

One Member noted that upgrades would relate to refurbishment rather than re-decoration.

It was likely the £500,000 may not be sufficient to upgrade all of the assets. The Committee may wish to recommend to Cabinet in future that further allocations be made to the reserve during budget setting.

The Committee:

1. Considered the proposed criteria for the allocation of the £500k from the Leisure Investment Reserve.

2. The Committee agreed to receive a further update at the meeting of the 18th November 2025 regarding the proposed work programme.

30. Finance Update Report - April to July 2025

The Leader of the Council presented the report. The report was the first budget monitoring report for the current financial year covering income expenditure between April and July 2025.

The report covered general fund, HRA, revenue and capital expenditure.

The forecast position on the general fund was currently at an underspend due to a number of different variances as outlined in table two of the report. This was a combination of forecast changes to income and expenditure and would continue to be monitored throughout the year.

There was an emerging concern regarding the expenditure position of the HRA. Work was ongoing to ensure the levels of expenditure for repairs and maintenance were regularly reviewed. The expenditure position was partly due to the focus on clearing maintenance backlog alongside new requirements as a social landlord.

In terms of capital expenditure, other variances included HRA new build, which was below budget due to delays in programme and some abortive schemes. Work continues to identify potential sites for development or acquiring new build properties where there was an identified need or the properties meet the housing demand.

It was noted the report outlined £1 million variant overspend budget for repairs. It was queried whether the Council would borrow money from another HRA fund for further repairs.

The Leader of the Council clarified there were significant reserves in the HRA budget. It was highlighted that since 2023, condition surveys had outlined significant repairs which required attention alongside the backlog of voids.

The Director of Housing and Projects outlined the Council's need to manage the number of repairs in order to reduce the budget for repairs. At present, there were 3,500 repairs that require completion in properties and around 200 new repairs were raised each week. The numbers had reduced by 600 since March 2025.

Capital funding was monitored on a monthly basis and from a decent homes perspective, the Council were achieving 99.76%. Only 14 properties were currently failing to meet decent homes standards. There were approximately 160 tenants who had refused works, which would increase the cost of repairs when the property becomes a void.

A question was raised on what the Council could do to ensure that money is spent within South Kesteven District Council and would not be spent on the new authority, following LGR.

The Leader of the Council confirmed budget preparation had started for 2026-27. The Council would be taking a prudent approach to spending public money before the new authority was established. We would hope that the Council's money would still benefit the residents within the area but this was a common concern of Council's around the country about the amalgamation of budgets into a new authority.

It was queried whether the Council were reviewing finances of other Council's which SKDC could be amalgamated with. The Council was working on baseline data across the authority to develop a model that would support its LGR submission. The data being captured was balance sheets, contract spend, staffing groupings, investment and debt levels.

A query was raised on why the Council could not evict tenants who refused essential repairs to comply with legal requirements.

The Director of Housing and Projects confirmed the Council could only take legal enforcement for gas compliance. The majority of refusals were based around replacements of kitchens or bathrooms.

It was noted the HRA capital had an £8 million underspend regarding the new build programme. Concern was raised on whether individuals on the housing register would endure a longer wait for a house. The reasons for projects being delayed were queried and whether alternative options had been considered.

The Director of Housing and Projects clarified some delays on start dates due to drainage issues. Government had recently lifted a numerical restriction on the amount of properties the Council could buy 'off plan'. It was further highlighted that discussions with potential developers are time consuming.

The Leader of the Council noted that new builds can cause resistance in terms of locations being close to existing properties.

The Committee:

1. Reviewed and noted the forecast 2025/26 outturn position for the General Fund, HRA Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of July 2025.

31. Work Programme 2025/26

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2025/26.

The following items were agreed to be included on the Work Programme:

- Leisure Investment Reserve – Allocation Criteria proposals (18 November 2025 meeting)
- Discretionary and mandatory fees and charges (18 November 2025 meeting)
- UKSPF – (24 February 2026 meeting)
- Economic development strategy plan UKSPF – (24 February 2026 meeting)

It was highlighted that taxi licensing fees would be brought to the Committee in November. A request was made to expand the scope of the item to include all fees and charges.

The Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee were due to meet on 13 January 2026 where fees and charges would be scrutinised. It was felt that Officers may not have the draft fees and charges ready to present by November.

It was confirmed the Committee could be reminded of discretionary fees and charges alongside mandatory fees and charges that were set outside the Council's control.

32. St Martins Park Update (Verbal)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC & PRESS

That under Section 100 (A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the grounds that it is likely, that if they were present, there could be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

33. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstance decides is urgent

There were none.

34. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:50.

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