Minutes

Cabinet
Monday, 24 November 2025

Date of publication: 1 December 2025
Call-in does not apply to this decision of Cabinet.

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Leader: **Councillor Ashley Baxter** (Chairman)
The Deputy Leader: **Councillor Paul Stokes** (Vice Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Richard Cleaver, Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Planning
Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing
Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member for Housing

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Ian Selby

Officers
Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director (Planning & Growth)
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Charles James, Policy Officer

65. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Rhys Baker.

66. Disclosure of Interests

The Leader of the Council highlighted the fact that Councillors Baxter, Cleaver and Dilks were also Lincolnshire County Councillors who took part in a separate debate about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) at Lincolnshire County Council.

There were no further disclosures of interests.

67. Public Open Forum

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

68. Local Government Reorganisation

Purpose of report

To consider the final LGR proposal for submission to government.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. **Had considered the resolution of the Full Council meeting of 20 November 2025 relating to the draft proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for Greater Lincolnshire.**

2. **Approves the attached proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.**

3. **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any minor changes to the submission document prior to the final submission.**

The Chairman of Council on 27 October 2025 agreed that this decision of Cabinet was not subject to call-in. This was due to the time constraints between this meeting and the final deadline for submission to government of 28 November 2025

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council had no obligation to submit a full LGR proposal to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and there would have been no legal penalty for not doing so. However, the Government had stated that LGR would proceed whether or not any proposal was submitted. Therefore, if the Council had not submitted a proposal, it would have missed a unique opportunity to shape and influence local government and the future delivery of the strategic interests of South Kesteven's residents.

A full options appraisal was contained within the proposed submission at Appendix A of the report.

The Kesteven Interim proposal submitted in March 2025 included the geography of Rutland CC as part of 'Unitary 1'. This was based primarily for economic alignment in accordance with government's mission for growth. The inclusion of Rutland had been considered and rejected during the options appraisal for the following reasons:

- Rutland was within the Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Invitation Area. Proposals which crossed over different invitation areas were possible but would require a very strong rationale. The inclusion of Rutland into Unitary 1 would involve a very significant risk of being regarded as non-compliant with the statutory requirements.
- A cross-invitation area proposal ought to have the clear commitment of all parties and, thus far, there had been no clear indication of support from Rutland County Council (RCC).
- There was further risk of uncertainty on the degree of modelling required by MHCLG on impacts to the neighbouring Invitation area.
- The inclusion of Rutland within a proposal for Lincolnshire would require clear proposals for the remainder of the Leicestershire and Rutland Invitation Area.
- Rutland currently had separate provision of several key services including Fire and Rescue. Clear arrangements for the delivery of these services would need to have been included within the proposals.
- Rutland was not part of the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority and therefore the inclusion would arguably not meet 'Criterion 5', which required that proposals support devolution.
- Compliance would be a matter of MHCLG discretion. MHCLG had communicated that if Rutland CC were to be included, it would have to be as part of the core proposal, not as an additional variation. It was considered that the risk of non-compliance was too high for a proposal that included RCC to be submitted. Therefore, the Rutland option was not taken forward.

Reasons for the decision

The government had invited councils to submit full proposals for LGR by 28 November 2025. The decision should be informed by public debate; the draft LGR submission for South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) was considered by Full Council on 20 November 2025. Following a robust debate, the draft LGR proposal was moved by Councillor Lee Steptoe and seconded by Councillor Robert Leadenham, and subsequently Full Council voted to recommend the draft submission to the Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council gave an update on the latest LGR proposals from around Lincolnshire:

- North Kesteven District Council's (NKDC) meeting of Full Council voted to recommend the same draft submission as SKDC's to their meeting of Executive Board, due to be held on 27 November.
- On 21 November, Full Council at LCC voted to recommend their 'continuous authority model' (retaining the boundaries of LCC and abolishing the seven district councils within Lincolnshire) for an Executive decision.
- The City of Lincoln (CoL) Council will consider recommending a proposal to their Executive on 25 November.
- South and East Lincs Councils partnership, which included South Holland District Council (SHDC), East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) and Boston Borough Council (BBC) released their proposals for LGR on 21 November,

which would be considered by the respective Executive meetings of their partnership.

The following points were highlighted by councillors during debate:

- It was encouraging to see the level of support at SKDC's Full Council for the proposal to merge NKDC, SKDC and SHDC together and form a new unitary council. This would also see CoL, ELDC, BBC and West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) merge together into a second unitary council.
- In debating proposals at LCC's meeting of Full Council, councillors were dissuaded from comparing the alternative models put forward by Lincolnshire districts.
- Devolution was supposed to bring decisions closer to those whose lives they affected; however, it could be argued that LGR had a reverse effect through removing a layer of democracy.
- It was a commonly held view by members of the public that there appeared to be too many councillors within Lincolnshire. However, in some areas of Lincolnshire the 'continuous authority model' of LCC would see a large reduction in councillors in some areas. In the Deepings West division on LCC, the number of councillors would reduce from 6 to 1.
- The area of the LCC proposal was much too large to be reasonable. Over 50% taking part in the LCC engagement survey said that the council would be too remote and there would be reduced accountability. The second most popular response questioned whether the cost savings advertised would materialise.
- The SKDC and NKDC model was a compromise which would see a cut in the number of councillors across the county, but not as a great a cut as the LCC model.
- It will be much more difficult to attract new councillors in the future when the areas councillors were responsible for grow in geographical size.
- New unitary areas may create further cross-boundary issues. Stamford was surrounded on three sides by Rutland; in that area, large housing developments would potentially cut across two new authorities.
- Consideration would need to be given to either managing and building relationships with neighbouring councils or lobbying for boundary reviews.
- SKDC had consulted local communities through three rounds of all member briefings and two rounds of parish and town council briefings. There was a final full and free debate at the Full Council meeting held on 20 November ending in a recorded vote.
- A single unitary authority responsible for c780,000 people would be too large and remote.
- Government needed to consider all factors contained within submissions, rather than compartmentalising into easier parts.
- The Full Council debate on LGR on 20 November saw a high level of unanimity. There was cross-political group support for the SKDC/NKDC proposal.
- The Chairman of Council once again thanked those involved in formulating the SKDC and NKDC proposal, and paid tribute to the quality of debate seen at Full Council on 20 November.

- Where possible the SKDC submission to government had been written ‘in-house’. External assistance had been necessary at times - £54,000 of a £75,000 budget had been spent on consultancy. This was in addition to a government grant which had been spent on the work of PwC. During meetings with PwC, there had been healthy challenge to their presentation of facts and figures from the SKDC’s Section 151 Officer.

The Leader of the Council wished to thank: external experts that had contributed to the SKDC and NKDC proposal; officers and councillors at NKDC (Kath Marriott and her team, and Councillor Richard Wright); the Communications team, all SKDC staff involved in the writing of the report especially including: Chief Executive, Karen Bradford; Deputy Chief Executive Richard Wyles; and Policy Officer Charles James.

69. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 4:40pm.