

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2026

2.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councillor Ian Selby Chairman
Councillor Anna Kelly Vice Chairman

Councillor Kyle Abel	Councillor Richard Litchfield
Councillor Emma Baker	Councillor Nikki Manterfield
Councillor Rhys Baker	Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Ashley Baxter	Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor David Bellamy	Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Pam Bosworth	Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Pam Byrd	Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Richard Cleaver	Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Helen Crawford	Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Steven Cunningham	Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Phil Dilks	Councillor Vanessa Smith
Councillor Barry Dobson	Councillor Peter Stephens
Councillor Ben Green	Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Tim Harrison	Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Graham Jeal	Councillor Paul Stokes
Councillor Gloria Johnson	Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Anna Kelly	Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Jane Kingman	Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Gareth Knight	Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Philip Knowles	Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Zoe Lane	Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Robert Leadenham	Councillor Sue Woolley
Councillor Bridget Ley	

OFFICERS

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
David Scott, Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)

Chris Prime, Communications Manager
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Mark Fisher, IT Support and Infrastructure Lead

107. Public Open Forum

Before commencing with the business of the meeting, the Chairman paid his respects to former Councillor Mike Taylor who had recently passed away. Councillors Harrish Bisnauthsing, Graham Jeal, Charmaine Morgan and Jane Kingman also paid their respects to Councillor Taylor.

The Chairman proposed a motion without notice to vary the order of the agenda so that the Motions on Notice were considered prior to Members' Open Questions. This was seconded. Following a vote, it was **AGREED** to vary the order of the agenda.

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

108. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:

Matt Bailey
James Denniston
Patsy Ellis
Paul Fellows
Nick Robins
Penny Robins
Rob Shorrock
Mark Whittington

109. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

Note: Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew left the Council Chamber and did not return.

110. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record.

111. Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements. The Chairman highlighted the Grantham Rotary Swimmarathon as a wonderful event.

The Cabinet Member for Planning gave an update on Lincolnshire County Council's (LCCs) removal of £2 million of funding to Grantham High Street. Their Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had recommended to the Executive the formal reinstatement in the proposed capital programme of the money. However, the Executive chose not to follow this recommendation and the £2 million for Grantham High Street was not part of LCC's Budget agreed on 20 February 2026.

LCC's latest position was no formal commitment to the scheme, but that it would be considered when Grantham's Southern Relief Road was completed. The Leader of SKDC, the Chief Executive and others were continuing to lobby LCC on this issue.

112. Appointments to Committees and Panels of the Council

Members considered the requirements placed on Full Council for the appointment of Members to its Committees and Panels.

Since the previous meeting in January there had been further group makeup changes. Group leaders met on 17 February 2026 and had endorsed amendments to the makeup of the Council's committees and panels.

Having been moved and seconded, and following a vote it was **AGREED:**

DECISION

That Full Council:

- 1. Note the changes in political proportionality of the Council and the consequent allocation of seats on committees.**
- 2. Delegate the appointment of the Reform UK seat on Licensing Committee to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Group Leader of the Reform UK group. This appointment was to take place as soon as possible.**
- 3. Appoint Members to its Committees and Panels, in accordance with political balance:**

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Democratic Independent Group lose one seat, gained by the South Kesteven Independent Group. However, the South Kesteven Independent Group have gifted it back to the Democratic Independent Group.

Employment Committee

Conservative group lose one seat, gained by Reform UK group (Councillor David Bellamy). The SK Independent Group will gift their seat to the Conservative Group.

Licensing Committee

South Kesteven Independent Group lose one seat (currently a gift to the Conservative Group) and Reform UK group gain.

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kyle Abel to replace Councillor Ben Green as the Reform UK group representative.

Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kyle Abel to replace Councillor David Bellamy as the Reform UK group representative.

113. Budget Proposals for 2026/27 and indicative Budgets for 2027/28 and 2028/29 – Housing Revenue Account

Members considered the draft budget proposals and estimates for 2026/2027 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Leader of the Council proposed the report, and highlighted the following points:

- The HRA was mainly comprised of rent collected from tenants and the sale of council houses through the 'right to buy' scheme. The HRA was ringfenced; it could not be cross subsidised from the General Fund, and tenants' money from the HRA could not be spent on General Fund purchases.
- At Finance & Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 24 February 2026 the long-term outlook of the HRA was discussed. Meeting government standards on housing and working through repair backlogs required significant funding.
- The recommendations within the report had been robustly scrutinised by the Joint Budget OSC and Cabinet.

The report was seconded.

Comments raised during debate included the level of increase of council-owned housing rent (4.8% rise), the improving performance of the Housing team at SKDC, and the use of reserves to fund housing work.

Having previously been proposed and seconded, and following a vote it was **AGREED:**

DECISION

That Council:

1. Approve the HRA budget for 2026/2027 and indicative proposals for 2027/2028 and 2028/2029 (Appendix A of the report).
 2. Approve an increase of 4.8% for 2026/27 for the social housing dwellings.
 3. Approve the proposed increase of 2% for garage rents and 3.8% increase for service charges.
 4. Approve the HRA Capital Programme and financing statement 2026/27 to 2028/29 (Appendix B of the report).
 5. Approve the HRA Capital Programme budget carry forward of £10.416m from 2025/26 (Appendix B).
 6. Approve the movements in HRA Reserves (Appendix C of the report).
114. Budget Proposals for 2026/27 and Indicative Budgets for 2027/28 and 2028/29 – General Fund

Members considered the final budget proposals and estimates for 2026/2027 for the General Fund.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that Standing Order 11.5 would be suspended for the Leader of the Council in order that he could speak for longer than five minutes when introducing the report.

In proposing the report, the Leader of the Council gave a presentation and linked the Corporate Plan priorities to the Budget Proposals:

1. Connecting Communities
 - Communities were connected in several ways. There had been several flag raisings at SK House, Grantham over the course of the year, including Merchant Navy Day, Pride, Armed Forces Day, Emergency Services Day, Lincolnshire Day, anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine, and Tamil celebrations.
 - Art was another way of bringing the community together. An art project known as the 'Whale' had visited all four towns.
 - It was almost 300 years since the birth of Sir Isaac Newton. The council aimed to deliver a community festival. For this, £20,000 was ringfenced within the Events Budget; however, this money may become available via the year's financial underspend.

- Major budget increases were planned for an Events Officer post, Community Grants (£100,000), Safer Streets patrols (£41,494) and Safer Streets CCTV cover.

2. Sustainable South Kesteven

- This priority included areas such as Parks, Trees, Culture and Waste.
- Leisure Centres in Bourne, Grantham and Stamford were facing cost pressures. However, gratitude was expressed to the Board of Leisure SK Limited for their work in this area.
- The Environmental Crime Partnership had been shortlisted for an award at the Local Government Chronicle Awards.
- Solar panels were in place on roofs at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre and the new depot at Turnpike Close. There were other energy saving measures in place, which helped to future proof these buildings.
- Major budget increases were planned for tree planting for SKDC open spaces (£62,000), tree maintenance for SKDC open spaces (£66,150). Vehicle replacement (£1,046,000), wheelie bin replacement (£155,000). EV charging points (£55,000) and mobile CCTV cameras (£10,000).

3. Enabling Economic Opportunity

- Investment in South Kesteven was happening. It was also a great place to visit to see some wonderful stately homes.
- Markets in Grantham and Stamford were thriving; there were plans to assist Bourne with their market.
- Major budget increases were planned for an Events Officer post, the events budget (£100,000, to include Newton 300 preparations), town centre vitality and viability (£20,000), Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire (£33,000), car park improvements (£120,000), Wharf Road car park refurbishment (£650,000) and additional apprenticeships (£100,000).

4. Housing

- The 21-home development at Swinegate, Grantham was award winning and a great place to live.
- External funding would be secured to assist with the development of South Kesteven's Local Plan.
- Major budget increases were planned for body worn cameras (£10,000), Spitalgate garden village (£30,000), disabled facility grants (£975,000) and new posts; Private Sector Housing Officer/Rough Sleeper Support Officer/Housing Options Officer.

5. Effective Council

- Staff and teams had been shortlisted for several awards this year. South Kesteven won the Best Service Team for Waste, Recycling and Street Scene at the Association for Public Service Excellence conference and awards event, and Joshua Mann won the 'Rising Star' award at the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) Conference 2025.
- Major budget increases were planned for an Enforcement Officer post, Income Recovery Officer post, funding for compliance works in corporate buildings

(£100,000), surface water drainage clearance (£60,000), stock condition surveys (£40,000), River Witham footbridge (£55,000), Grantham Canal (£200,000), grounds maintenance equipment (£130,000) and Council Chamber audio equipment (£88,000).

There was a proposed Council Tax increase of £5.66 per year on a Band D property. The public were consulted about this change, and 61% supported the rise in Council Tax.

The recommendations were seconded.

An amendment to the recommendations was proposed:

Council resolves:

1. *That the Council Tax increase for South Kesteven District Council for the financial year 2026/27 be set at 1.99%.*
2. *That the resulting reduction in projected Council Tax income (Appendix A line 15), £96,000, be met from the following 2026/27 budget adjustments:*
 - a. *Reduction of £6,000 from conference attendance budget for 2026/27 (Appendix A line 1).*
 - b. *A one-off virement of £45,000 from the General Fund Leisure Reserve (Appendix C line 14).*
 - c. *A one-off virement of £45,000 from the Local Priorities Reserve (Appendix C line 5).*

The proposer took the view that more of the Council's financial reserves could be used, if it was in a responsible way.

£45,000 from the Leisure Reserve was roughly 5% of the reserve set aside for any future development of the Deepings Leisure Centre.

The amendment was seconded.

The following points were highlighted during debate on the amendment:

- Using high levels of financial reserves was not a responsible approach to finances.
- Whilst the amendment was relevant to this year's budget, it did not address what would happen in future years.
- The General Fund Leisure Reserve and the Local Priorities Reserve (LPR) were discretionary and used at the will of the Council, therefore they were not ringfenced.
- 'Core spending power' guidelines for local authorities put forward by government assumed that the Council would request the maximum Council Tax increase possible.

- It would be concerning to see a cut in the LPR as there were several projects in Grantham that had used this reserve.
- It was important to be mindful of the cost of living, whilst having regard for people's incomes, rather than inflation. State pensions would rise by 4.8%, and the minimum wage would rise by over 4%. The 2.99% proposed rise in Council Tax was below these levels of increase.
- Roughly two-thirds of respondents to the public consultation on Council Tax were in support of a 2.99% Council Tax rise.
- There were arguments in favour of reducing Council Tax this year, but more arguments to put it up, including:
 - The government have advised that the 3-year funding settlement would be enough for the needs of the Council, but specifically on the basis of raising Council Tax by the maximum allowable.
 - Reduction of conference budget – this mainly affected the Leader of the Council who would always attend a number of conferences and training events as part of his role. The point of conferences was to increase knowledge and meet peers.
 - Deepings Leisure Centre reserve – talks were still ongoing about the future of this site.

A recorded vote was requested on the amendment to the General Fund Budget – the results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For: Councillors Kyle Abel, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Ben Green, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Richard Litchfield, Nikki Manterfield, Paul Martin, Susan Sandall, Peter Stephens, Ian Stokes, Sarah Trotter, Sue Woolley (19)

Against: Councillors Emma Baker, Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Steven Cunnington, Phil Dilks, Barry Dobson, Tim Harrison, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Penny Milnes, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Rhea Rayside, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Vanessa Smith, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Murray Turner, Jane Wood, Paul Wood (28)

Abstentions: None.

Therefore, the amendment to the motion was **LOST**, and debate returned to the substantive proposal:

- The purchases of vehicles had been the topic of debate at several committees and members were urged to revisit committee minutes of these meetings if they wanted more information.
- Fly tipping was an issue for many residents, who reported this through their ward councillors. The extra funding within the budget for this issue was worthwhile.
- Discretionary reserves included funding for (but not limited to) arts centres and leisure centres. £100,000 had been included in the budget for events; however, due to their 'discretionary' nature this funding could be used elsewhere.
- Funding was being granted to the Citizens Advice Bureau, which helped the poorest and most vulnerable in society.
- If members removed all discretionary funding, residents would notice and it would not be received positively.

A recorded vote was required on the General Fund Budget – the results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For: Councillors Emma Baker, Rhys Baker, Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Pam Byrd, Richard Cleaver, Steven Cunningham, Phil Dilks, Barry Dobson, Tim Harrison, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Bridget Ley, Penny Milnes, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Chris Noon, Habib Rahman, Rhea Rayside, Max Sawyer, Ian Selby, Vanessa Smith, Lee Steptoe, Paul Stokes, Elvis Stooke, Murray Turner, Jane Wood, Paul Wood (28)

Against: Councillors Kyle Abel, David Bellamy, Pam Bosworth, Helen Crawford, Ben Green, Graham Jeal, Gloria Johnson, Jane Kingman, Gareth Knight, Zoe Lane, Robert Leadenham, Richard Litchfield, Nikki Manterfield, Paul Martin, Susan Sandall, Peter Stephens, Ian Stokes, Sarah Trotter, Sue Woolley (19)

Abstentions: None.

Therefore, as the recommendations had been proposed and seconded, following the vote it was **AGREED**:

DECISION:

That Full Council:

- 1. Set a General Fund budget requirement of £22.875m for 2026/27 inclusive of Special Expenses (Section 4 and Appendix A of the report).**

2. **Set a Council Tax level of £195.03 including Special Expenses for 2026/27 (Band D property).**
3. **Note indicative Budget estimates for 2027/28 and 2028/29 (Appendix A of the report).**
4. **Approve the General Fund Capital programme and financing statement 2026/27 to 2028/29 (Section 5 and Appendix B of the report).**
5. **Approve the General Fund Capital Programme budget carry forward of £1.389m from 2025/26 (Appendix B of the report).**
6. **Approve the movements in General Fund Reserves (Section 7 and Appendix C of the report).**
7. **Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (Section 9 and Appendix F of the report).**
8. **Approve the Capital Strategy (Section 9 and Appendix G of the report).**
9. **Note the calculations and set the Council Tax for the year 2026/27 made in accordance with requirement set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (Appendix H of the report).**

Note: The meeting adjourned at 3:52pm and reconvened at 4:12pm.

115. Houses of Multiple Occupation Licence Fees 2026-2027

Note: Councillors Vanessa Smith, Jane Wood and Paul Wood did not return to the Council Chamber following the adjournment.

Members considered the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing fee structure for the 2026/2027 financial year, to take effect from 1 April 2026. Two cost-recovery models were presented for consideration, reflecting current and enhanced enforcement approaches.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- This report had come back to Full Council following additional research undertaken by officers on the levels of fees associated with HMOs.
- There were two options proposed (options 1 and 2). Option 2 was a copy of Option 1, with the addition of compulsory inspections for HMOs. Option 2 would also require an additional member of staff, with £55,000 needed for this post. This was not the exact salary for this post, as it included national insurance and pension contributions. The post could not be funded by HMO fees alone; the intention would be to recruit a full-time member of staff. Using the General Fund, this member of staff would assist the Private Sector

Housing team with their new responsibilities, which had arisen due to the new Renters' Rights Act.

- Fees for HMOs had to be set for cost recovery only.
- 'Unlicensed HMOs' could be a loaded phrase and could give the impression of wrongdoing; HMOs with less than five occupants were not required to be licensed.
- You must have a **mandatory HMO licence** if:
 - The property is **occupied by 5 or more people**
 - The tenants form **2 or more separate households**
 - The tenants **share facilities** such as a kitchen, bathroom, or toilet
- Increasing HMO fees to discourage the creation of new HMOs was not permitted.

Option 1 within the report was proposed and seconded:

Current Cost Recovery Model - the HMO licensing fees as set out in the Fees and Charges report considered by Council on 29 January 2026 reflecting the full cost recovery model based on current levels of service delivery and enforcement.

On being put to the vote, this option was not agreed and therefore **FELL**.

Option 2 within the report was proposed and seconded – the following points were highlighted whilst debating this proposal:

- It was concerning that in wider society there were people that want to look down on the residents of HMOs. There was a wide cross-section of society living in HMOs.
- Grantham had an increasing number of HMOs.
- This option was not an attack on tenants, nor about demonising HMOs, it was concerning the council not running an underfunded service. Enforcement was necessary to enable yearly welfare checks on residents within HMOs, who should always feel safe and supported.
- Residents living in these HMOs could be vulnerable. It was important to remember the role that HMOs played in the provision of housing for single people. HMOs provided vital housing – last summer the district witnessed people living in tents. Nobody should have to live in a tent.

Having previously been proposed and seconded, following a vote it was **AGREED**:

DECISION

That Full Council

- 1. Approves the 'Enhanced Enforcement Cost Recovery Model' option for setting the Houses of Multiple Occupation ('HMO') Licensing Fees for the period 2026-2027, to take effect from 1 April 2026:**

- a. **The revised HMO licensing fees set out at para.2.10 of this Report, reflecting cost recovery associated with an enhanced HMO enforcement and compliance function.**
 - b. **The allocation of funding from the Local Priorities Reserve to support the recruitment of an additional HMO Officer at an estimated annual cost of £55,440, and delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to implement the necessary budget and reserve adjustments.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Director of Housing and the Monitoring Officer, to implement the approved fee structure.**

116. Notices of Motion

117. Councillor Graham Jeal

Councillor Graham Jeal proposed the following motion:

Council notes:

That Councillor Ray Wootten served the residents of Grantham St Wulfram's Ward and South Kesteven with great distinction for many years, representing his community in a cross-party manner with dedication, compassion, and good humour.

That during his time in public service, Cllr Ray Wootten played a significant role in supporting local causes, mentoring colleagues, improving community facilities, serving as Mayor of Grantham, Chairman of South Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire County Councillor, and promoting civic pride across the district.

That Wyndham Park holds a special place in the life of Grantham as a much-loved public space which continues to attract visitors from near and far. Wyndham Park is shared between the wards of Grantham St Vincent's and Grantham St Wulfram's and would therefore be an appropriate place for South Kesteven District Council to recognise the contribution made by Cllr Wootten to the people of Grantham.

Council further notes:

That there is currently no formal public recognition of Cllr Wootten's long service and contribution to the life of our community following his passing in 2023.

Council therefore resolves:

1. *That a public consultation be launched to seek views on renaming the Wyndham Park Visitor Centre as the "Ray Wootten Visitor Centre", in recognition of his many years of service to the people of Grantham and South Kesteven.*

3. *That the consultation be publicised through the Council's website, social media channels, and local media outlets, ensuring that residents, park users, and the Friends of Wyndham Park volunteer group have the opportunity to share their views.*
4. *That following the consultation, a report be presented by the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure to the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining the findings and recommendations for consideration.*

In proposing the motion, Councillor Jeal informed all present that he had been touched by comments from members of the public, who recalled the ways Councillor Ray Wootten had supported the public. Recognising a public servant was important.

The motion included public consultation on a potential renaming of the Park. The Friends of Wyndham Park group could have a role in any consultation process.

There would be some modest costs attached to any renaming of the Park.

The motion was seconded.

The following points were highlighted whilst debating this motion:

- The timing wasn't right, however if the motion were agreed it was right to hold a public consultation.
- Wyndham Park was a special place for the residents of Grantham. Most of the park was within Grantham St. Vincents' ward, with a portion being within Grantham St. Wulframs' ward.
- Wyndham Park was already named after Lt. Wyndham, killed in action in World War One. The Park and Visitor Centre were a lasting memorial to the young man. His mother donated a significant sum of money for the Park. It was opened in 1924 as the Grantham's war memorial, with many members of the Wyndham family attending the centenary of the Park's opening in 2024.
- Geoplace provided guidance on street naming; it recommended a person be deceased for 20 years before their name be given to a street. There was similar guidance for blue plaques. SKDC's street naming policy recommended a gap of 25 years between death and renaming.
- Wyndham Park was in receipt of grant funding; therefore, the Heritage Lottery Fund would need to be consulted. Other consultees may include community members.
- Councillor Ray Wootten dedicated over 20 years to serving residents in South Kesteven.
- Wyndham Park was a protected site of remembrance; renaming it in Councillor Ray Wootten's honour would not be suitable due to its historic significance in relation to World War One.
- There would be other opportunities within Grantham St. Wulfram's ward, or elsewhere within the Park to recognise Councillor Wootten's service.
- The spirit of the motion was to open this up to public consultation, giving residents the opportunity to have their say.

Having been proposed and seconded, following a vote the motion was **LOST**.

118. Councillor Ben Green

Note: Councillors Barry Dobson and Bridget Ley left the Council Chamber and did not return.

Councillor Ben Green proposed the following motion:

Recognition of the 300th Anniversary of the Death of Sir Isaac Newton (1727 – 2027)

This Council notes that:

- *2027 will mark the 300th anniversary of the death of Sir Isaac Newton, one of the most significant figures in the history of science, whose life and work are deeply connected to South Kesteven and the surrounding area.*
- *Sir Isaac Newton was born in Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth and educated at The King's School, Grantham, and his legacy forms an important part of the District's historical, cultural, and educational heritage.*
- *The tercentenary represents a significant opportunity to celebrate South Kesteven's contribution to world history, to engage local communities, schools, and visitors, and to promote learning, heritage, and place-based pride.*

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. *Commit in principle to recognising the 300th anniversary of Sir Isaac Newton's death in 2027, including on or around the anniversary date of 31 March 2027.*
2. *Request that officers fully mobilise and work collaboratively with relevant partners and stakeholders to explore appropriate commemorative activity, including but not limited to:*
 - *Colsterworth and District Parish Council*
 - *The National Trust, including at Woolsthorpe Manor and other relevant sites*
 - *St. Wulfram's Church, Grantham*
 - *The King's School, Grantham*
 - *Local schools, heritage organisations, academic institutions, and community groups*
 - *local councillors*
3. *Encourage a coordinated, district-wide approach that is proportionate, inclusive, and reflective of South Kesteven's historical connection to Sir Isaac Newton, with a focus on education, heritage, and community engagement.*

4. *Request that a brief update be brought to the appropriate committee or Council in due course outlining potential options for recognition and partnership working.*

In proposing the motion, Councillor Green raised the following points related to Sir Isaac Newton:

- Woolsthorpe Manor was a place of pilgrimage. Physicists and mathematicians made the journey here.
- 99 years ago in 1927 leading scientific lights of the day were attracted here. A wreath was laid outside Newton's statue on St. Peter's Hill.
- Newton was also an alchemist and theologian.
- There were few finer ways to spend the day than to visit the Newton related attractions within the district.

The motion was seconded.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- Preparations for 'Newton 300' were underway; this issue had been discussed at meetings of Culture and Leisure OSC, as well as being addressed by the Leader in his speech introducing the Budget for the upcoming year.
- There was graffiti in North Witham Church that was said to have been created by Sir Isaac Newton himself.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and seconded – everything after 'This Council notes...' was to be removed, so the motion would read:

This Council notes and welcomes that preparatory work is already underway in relation to Newton 2027 and refers the matter to the appropriate Portfolio Holder and Committee for structured scoping and partnership engagement.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion accepted this amendment; therefore, it became the substantive motion.

Having previously been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote the motion was **AGREED**.

119. Councillor Kyle Abel

Note: Councillors Emma Baker, Pam Byrd and Robert Leadenham left the Council Chamber and did not return.

Councillor Kyle Abel moved the following motion:

South Kesteven District Council Defends Local Democracy and the Right to Vote

Council notes that:

- 1. Local democracy is founded on the regular, lawful, and timely election of councillors by the communities they serve;*
- 2. The right of citizens to choose their representatives through free and fair elections is a cornerstone of British democracy;*
- 3. The cancellation or postponement of scheduled future local elections whenever they may be scheduled, undermines public trust in democratic institutions, weakens local accountability;*
- 4. It has been suggested that local elections may be cancelled or postponed in up to 60 local authority areas.*

Council believes that:

- 4. Whilst South Kesteven are not part of those councils presently considering cancellation scheduled elections, the general principle of cancelling local elections for reasons of political convenience rather than genuine necessity represents a serious democratic failure;*
- 5. Elections should never be suspended or avoided simply because legacy political parties fear electoral defeat or voter dissatisfaction;*
- 6. The current unpopularity of both Labour and Conservative parties reflects years of policy failure, mismanagement, and a perceived managed decline in national governance. Fourteen years of Conservative government have coincided with rising taxes, strained public services, weakened border control, and declining living standards;*
- 7. Since the last General Election, the Labour Party has demonstrated poor governance, broken promises, rising taxes on working people and an increasing disconnect from the priorities of the British people;*
- 8. Voters must not be denied their democratic voice simply because the electorate wishes to hold political parties to account for years of failure.*

Council resolves to:

- 10. Publicly reaffirm its commitment to the principle that local elections should not be cancelled or delayed except in the most extreme and unavoidable circumstances;*
- 11. Request that this Council will not support, request, or acquiesce in the cancellation or postponement of its own scheduled local elections at some date in the future;*
- 12. Call on all political parties to respect the electorate and allow voters to pass judgment at the ballot box rather than avoiding democratic accountability;*
- 13. Request the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to express this Council's opposition to the cancellation of local elections and to request the protection of local democratic rights;*
- 14. Request the Chief Executive to circulate this resolution to the Local Government Association and neighbouring authorities for information.*

In moving the motion, Councillor Abel highlighted the following points:

- The motion was designed to assure that all residents that under no circumstances would SKDC cancel future elections.
- SKDC did not have any district council elections in 2026; however, residents in Aveland ward wanted reassurance that elections in 2027 would not be cancelled.
- Elections should not be cancelled because political parties fear electoral defeat. Previously cancelled elections in 2026 were a denial of a democratic right to vote.

The motion was seconded.

An amendment was proposed to remove bullet points 7, 8 and 9. This amendment was seconded, and subsequently supported by the original proposer and seconder of the motion; therefore, it became the substantive motion.

A further amendment was proposed and seconded to remove bullet points 4 and 5, as local elections across England were no longer being cancelled. Debate ensued on this amendment:

- Once a local election was called the Council's Returning Officer had to administer it. If elections were postponed by government, then the Returning Officer had to adhere to this instruction. If a Structural Change Order was placed before Parliament, it was not a decision of this council as to whether to hold an election or not.
- The previous postponement of elections in 2026 was a decision of government, following a request from various councils. The government were overseeing a legislative change to reverse the postponement of local elections.
- The spirit of the motion was asking members whether they believed local district elections would still go ahead in 2027, and to not postpone elections where this could be avoided.

Note: As the meeting had reached three hours in duration, members voted to extend the meeting until 5:33pm.

Following a vote, it was **AGREED** that the motion be amended to remove bullet points 4 and 5. This motion became the substantive.

The substantive motion, having previously been proposed and seconded was put to the vote. Following the vote, the motion was **LOST**.

120. Members' Open Questions

There were no Open Questions from Members due to time constraints.

121. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 5:32pm.