

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 24 March 2026, 2.00 pm

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Kyle Abel
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Elvis Stooke
Councillor Rob Shorrock

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Paul Stokes

Officers

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Community)
Carol Drury, Community Engagement & Manager
Bethany Goodman, Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer

54. Public Speaking

There were none.

55. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Denniston, substituted by Councillor Elvis Stooke, and Councillor Lee Steptoe, substituted by Councillor Rob Shorrock.

56. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

57. Minutes from the meeting held on 27 January 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 were proposed, seconded, and AGREED as an accurate record.

58. Updates from the previous meeting

The outstanding actions were completed prior to the meeting.

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

There were none.

60. 'We are Undefeatable' Campaign - Presentation

The 'We are Undefeatable' Campaign presentation was delivered by the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead.

Backed by Sport England and National Lottery funding, the campaign was a collaboration between 15 health and social care charities offering free guidance and resources to encourage physical activity. Such resources included short exercise videos and routines, as well as a 'move your mood' activity suggestion tool.

To inform the campaign, a survey was conducted in December 2024. Of the 311 responses, 30% had long-term physical or mental health conditions, 18% of respondents wanted specific sessions for people living with a disability or a long-term health condition, and 69% of respondents wanted to be more active.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- It was noted that the profile of the campaign needed to be raised in order to accurately measure the campaign's success. The Physical Activity & Wellbeing Lead agreed to circulate further information about the campaign to all Members. **ACTION**
- Members requested greater data to be collected about the impact of the campaign. It was confirmed that a new dashboard was being developed to collate data about the campaign.
- The Physical Activity & Wellbeing Lead agreed to circulate information about the funding measures of the campaign. **ACTION**
- It was queried whether there were separate activity groups, depending on demographics. It was confirmed that the materials were primarily for completing individually remotely rather than in activity groups.
- Some Members of the Committee agreed to utilise the physical activity resources.

The 'We are Undefeatable' Campaign presentation was noted by the committee.

61. Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – review of activities 1 October to 31 December 2025

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

The total amount of Household Support Fund funding for SKDC (2025-26) was £458,452, equating to 14% of the funding distribution across Lincolnshire.

The delivery plan as of 31 December 2025 was detailed within the report, outlining funding for the following organisations:

- Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF)
- SKDC Administration and Preventative Measures
- Third-party Referrers
- Outreach Work/ Pensioners
- HSF7 Vouchers – LCF
- SKDC HSF7 Vouchers – Welfare & Financial Advice Team.

Open applications closed on the 28 February 2026 to enable processing of the 220 outstanding applications before 31 March 2026. The expected amount to be awarded was £37,000. Applications awaiting vouchers to be issued were 80 with an expected value of £12,000.

Applications continued to be received from third party trusted partners and teams within the council up to 31 March 2026. Assistance was predominantly provided by supermarket vouchers and Energy Vouchers.

From 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025, the team received and processed 1,608 referrals. The total value of financial support identified and awarded was £101,075.

The action plan for additional activities to be undertaken by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team during 2025/26 was detailed in Appendix One of the report.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- A Member expressed concern that the scheme was reactive, especially considering Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) had only recorded issuing food vouchers.
- It was confirmed that the definition of resilience used by the Welfare and Financial Advice Team was the provision of ongoing lifestyle support.
- The Team also used Fusion21 given it was a national campaign ran by professions. A Member noted concerns about the ethical practices of

the provider. It was confirmed that the provider was on the national commercial services register and there had been no concerns in the service delivery.

- It was noted that the Team were considering a scheme to support residents requiring heating oil during the current market turbulence. Members expressed sympathy for residents effected and the suggestion was made for a co-operative purchasing to be orchestrated by Parish Councils.

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team Update – review of activities 1 October to 31 December 2025 was noted by the committee.

62. Crisis and Resilience Fund

The Crisis and Resilience Fund was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

In June 2025, the Government announced a new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) which replaced the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). The new scheme covered the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 and represented a shift from short term emergency help towards a more preventative, needs based approach.

The expected outcomes of the fund were to provide effective crisis support, improve financial resilience, and build a strong local support system.

Current outline proposals for the delivery of the scheme were:

- Crisis Payment – application-based support
- Housing Payment – delivered in years one and two. Total funding for each year was £155,861 with administration funding of £22,853.
- Resilience Services - Funding to be used for new services or to increase capacity/fill gaps in existing services, programmes and activities that support building financial resilience.
- Community Co-ordination - Work was undertaken to help guide decisions on which activities to prioritise and the level of funding required for this strand to enhance or sustain effective co-ordination, referral pathways and local partnerships.

The proposed key dates for delivery were:

- 1 April 2026 – Housing Payments
- 1 April 2026 (or as soon after) – Resilience Services
- 1 July 2026 – Crisis Payments
- During 26/27 – Community co-ordination gap analysis activity were throughout Year 1 to shape any changes to delivery in years 2 and 3.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- Members were pleased to note the flexibility of the Fund.
- The Cabinet Member for Housing was confident that the 1 April 2026 deadline would be met for the Housing Payments and Resilience Services.
- Given the rising energy costs caused by the international market turbulence, it was queried whether individual support payments would be increased. The Head of Service (Revenue, Benefits, Customer Service, and Community) confirmed that the £9.9 million programme funding was fixed with an additional amount for heating and oil support. However, the Head of Service highlighted the flexibility between the crisis and resilience aspects of the scheme allowed a level of autonomy over the distribution of the funding.
- It was confirmed that the mechanism for determining the district funding allocation would be presented at a future meeting.

The Crisis and Resilience Fund was noted by the committee.

The Cabinet Member for Housing left the Chamber.

63. Community Engagement Update 2024-2025

The Community Engagement Update 2024-25 was introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The report provided an update on the work of the Community Engagement Team during the calendar years of 2024-2025. The work of the Team provided a 'bridge' between where a community group was and where it wanted to be. The Team's role was not to tell these groups what to do, it was to support them to do what they want to do. Once they had the skills the Team could withdraw – but with a clear understanding that, should they require support again, the support remained available.

Attached to the report at Appendix A was the 2024-2025 update on achievements against actions agreed under the Council's Community Engagement and Development Strategy – Our People, Our Place 2024-27.

Many actions within the Plan were listed as "active" whilst four were listed as completed. Actions listed as active remained ongoing simply because these projects or activities were delivered in order to provide continuing support to the voluntary and community sector.

During discussions, comments were made on the following:

- Reassurance was sought that officers were seeking to engage with more community groups and a higher proportion of the 500 community

groups already registered with the authority. Officers confirmed that they were being proactive in this.

- Members praised the important role of community engagement and thanked the officers providing the support.

The Community Engagement Update 2024-25 was noted by the committee.

64. SK Community Fund

The SK Community Fund was introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The fund was currently allocated across two schemes:

- Small Grants Scheme: £100 - £2,000

This was available to smaller groups with a maximum financial resource of £10,000. Groups could apply for 100% of project costs to the maximum £2,000

- Projects and Events Fund: £500 - £5,000

Groups could apply for up to 80% of project/event costs to a maximum of £5,000. A minimum of 10% match funding was required, and the remaining 10% contribution could be in-kind contribution and volunteer time if relevant to the project or event.

At the time of the report's publication, £855,651 of grants had been provided to Parish and Town Councils, voluntary, community, faith and sports-related groups across South Kesteven. The SK Community Fund was often used by groups to secure match funding for larger projects.

A growth bid of £100k was agreed by Full Council on 26 February 2026 increasing the SK Community Fund to a total of £200,000.

It was also timely to refresh the governance arrangements around the SK Community Fund given that these have been in place since 2015. It was therefore proposed that the Small Grants Fund remains in place, continuing to operate in the same manner save for two changes:

- To be eligible for support the maximum financial resource held by a voluntary or community group should be reduced to £5,000. This would ensure that funding is targeted to those community groups that have a genuine need and that newly established groups can be supported.
- The eligibility criteria be amended to include items requiring revenue funding. Small, newly formed groups often require financial assistance with basic running costs until they are established, e.g. utility bills, venue hire, office supplies, insurance premiums, volunteer training costs etc. Funding provided

would be for one-off support and groups would be required to become self-sufficient as they become established.

It was proposed that a Large Grants Fund be introduced to replace the existing Projects and Events Fund with the maximum grant value being increased. It is further proposed that the groups and organisations eligible to apply should have financial resources of no more than £100,000. The minimum grant available would be £2,000 and the maximum £10,000 for community events and £20,000 for projects which support parish and community assets. Match funding of a minimum of 10% would be required against all large grants.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- Members expressed pride in the fund and its impact on the district.
- It was reiterated that a new cap was proposed for funding eligibility depending on the level of an applicant group's bank reserves.
- It was queried if there was a contingency plan should the community fund run out. It was confirmed that this had not happened before and officers were actively seeking to promote the relevant administrative dates to applicants via workshops and the Communications Officer.
- It was confirmed that the funding was only available to charities and causes that worked within and benefited South Kesteven.

Following discussions, it was proposed, seconded, and AGREED to:

1. Review the proposed changes to the SK Community Fund and provide comment.
2. Recommend to Cabinet that the delegation for decision making by the Chairs and, where necessary, Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be provided and that the proposed changes to the Fund's criteria were approved to allow for re-launch of the Fund for the 2026/27 financial year.

65. Work Programme 2025 - 2026

The Work Programme 2025-26 was noted by the committee.

66. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

The Chairman gave a statement urging Members to make nominations for the upcoming SK Community Awards.

The meeting concluded at 15.11.