

Meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Wednesday, 6 May 2026, 2.00 pm

Committee Members present

Councillor Nikki Manterfield (Chairman)
Councillor Rhea Rayside (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Habib Rahman
Councillor Lee Steptoe
Councillor Sarah Trotter

Cabinet Members

Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Virginia Moran

Officers

Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place)
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Community)
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing Options)
Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection
Andrew Beaver, Community Safety Manager
Kati Conway, Senior Neighbourhoods Officer
Nicola Moore, Customer Services Manager
Funmi Reilly, Cost of Living Co-ordinator
Joshua Mann, Democratic Services Officer
Inspector Mark Hillson [External]

67. Public Speaking

There was none.

68. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kyle Abel, Pam Bosworth, and James Denniston.

Councillor Sarah Trotter substituted for Councillor Pam Bosworth.

69. Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

70. Minutes from the meeting held on 24 March 2026

The minutes of the meeting held 24 March 2026 were AGREED as an accurate record.

71. Updates from the previous meeting

The outstanding actions had been completed.

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

There were none.

73. Crime Disorder and Local Partnership Working update - Presentation

The Crime Disorder and Local Partnership Working update was presented by:

- Head of Service (Public Protection)
- Senior Neighbourhoods Officer
- Community Safety Manager
- Head of Service (Housing)
- Inspector Mark Hillson.

The presentation encapsulated the following:

- The multi-agency approach taken between SKDC, the Police, and relevant partners. This joint working has included joint patrols, shared use of a case management system, joint-agency meetings, panels, and conferences.
- Enforcement Actions – such as Behaviour Warning Letters, Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts, Community Protection Warnings and Notices, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Notice to Quit, and Closure Orders.
- Making Time Count – the shared case management and intelligence database.
- Relevant legislation – such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Case studies of successful operations and safeguarding.
- Annual crime data overview.
- Measures taken to disrupt county lines and child exploitation.
- Award winning CCTV surveillance and resulting arrest figures.

During discussions, comments were made on the following:

- It was confirmed that the crime statistics presented included rural areas within the district, however the instances tended to be in more urban areas. The Lincolnshire Rural Crime Unit was still operating, however there had been staffing changes.

- It was confirmed that domestic abuse was not included within the crime statistics as this was recorded separately. It was agreed that a presentation would be given on the role of SKDC's Domestic Abuse Officer. **ACTION**
- A Member requested that more comprehensive data be included within future reports about the outcome and effectiveness of enforcement measures. It was confirmed the notices served demonstrated the incremental approach was working as enforcement had not subsequently escalated. Only 12 community protection notices were breached.
- Confirmation was also sought that the customers of fly tipping operations were also being prosecuted. It was confirmed that efforts were made to identify the customers of fly tipping operations as identifying the origin of the waste could be a key step of the investigation. The Council had also undertaken a social media campaign to promote the use of registered waste carriers.
- Inspector Hillson noted the usual fluctuation in crime statistics across the year but stated that South Kesteven's figures were comparable to, or better than, neighbouring districts.
- The Head of Service (Public Protection) noted that she had not noticed a significant impact from the police budget cuts to the PP service, compared to the anticipated impact.
- It was agreed to bring the committee a future report outlining the costs, staffing model, downtime, and geographical hotspots of the CCTV operations. It was also noted that the CCTV downtime was within the key performance indicator target. **ACTION**
- The Chairman thanked the officers involved and Inspector Mark Hillson for his attendance.

The Crime Disorder and Local Partnership Working update presentation was noted by the committee.

74. Crisis and Resilience Fund

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

The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) covered the period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 and represented a shift from short term emergency support to a more preventative, needs-based approach.

Funding was to be used to establish a new crisis payment fund scheme and grant funding for resilience services.

The delivery and management of the CRF was to be overseen by the following:

- Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Deputy Chief Executive & S151 Officer
- Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service)
- Welfare and Financial Advice Team
- Revenues and Benefits Technical Support Team

The scheme was to be administered by SKDC and across the county would constitute 45% of the total CRF (£9.9m for 2026/27). SKDC had received £625,086 funding for Crisis Payments for 2026/27.

A county-wide working group was undertaking the following:

- Development of an online application form
- Development of a case management system
- Inter authority grant agreements (prepared by LCC legal team)
- Procurement process to commission a partner(s) to administer and issue the payments
- Development and maintenance of a resilience organisation database
- Final district distribution of the resilience funding.

The proposed key dates for delivery were:

- 1 July 2026 – Crisis Payment applications are live
- 1 July 2026 – Resilience Services identified and grant agreement discussions taking place / signed
- During 2026/27 – Community co-ordination gap analysis activity will be throughout Year 1 and will shape any changes to delivery in years 2 and 3.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- A Member noted concern about agreeing to a delegation before the documentation had been finalised. It was explained that this was due to the co-ordination of gaining approval from all seven involved district authorities prior to the 1 July 2026 deadline.
- It was confirmed that all districts were working to the parameters of the roughly the same eligibility criteria for the scheme.
- Reassurance was sought about safeguards against individuals that struggled to engage with support. It was confirmed that delivery of the service would be tailored to the individual to ensure accessibility.
- Once the rollout of the scheme was confirmed then materials would be circulated for Members to share.
- It was noted there was previously a support desk at the Jubilee Life Centre, Grantham. The Head of Service (Revenue, Benefits, Customer Service, and Community) said that this could be revisited during discussions.
- It was confirmed that funding for the next two years of the scheme had been confirmed.

- It was requested to include the working 'recommend as presented' within the resolution. This was incorporated within the proposal.

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

1. Recommend as presented to Cabinet the delegation of any operational and financial decisions required in regard to CRF scheme delivery to the Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer (as detailed in paragraph 2.7)
2. Recommend as presented to Cabinet that officers within the Welfare and Financial Advice Team deliver the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) scheme for 2026/27 and 2027/28 - in line with associated guidance (as detailed in paragraph 2.9).
3. Recommend as presented to Cabinet that officers within the Revenues and Benefits Technical Support Team deliver the Housing Payments (HP) element of CRF – in line with associated guidance (as detailed in paragraph 2.10).
4. Note the recruitment of an additional full time Welfare and Financial Advice Officer for a fixed term contract (31 March 2028) to support the delivery of the scheme (as detailed in paragraph 2.28).

75. Welfare and Financial Advice Team update - review of activities 2025/26

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team update - review of activities 2025/26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

The total amount of funding for SKDC (2025-26) was £458,452 with all funding distributed (£435,530) with £22,922 required for administrative costs.

The delivery plan and funding distribution was detailed within the report.

During 2025/26, a total of 2,601 Household Support Fund vouchers were issued to the value of £372,091.

All vouchers requested by third-party organisations were for food, rather than energy or wider household essentials. The same trend was observed by Lincolnshire Community Foundation. SKDC's Welfare and Financial Advice Team issued 1903 food vouchers with 8 energy vouchers and 66 wider household essentials vouchers.

During 2025/26, the team received and processed 2,566 additional wrap around support referrals, with £117,199 of financial support identified and provided.

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

An updated plan was currently being developed for 2026/27 and was linked to the Crisis and Resilience Fund scheme being presented to Cabinet on 2 June 2026.

During discussions, the following comments were made:

- Clarity was sought about support being given to individuals with oil heating. It was confirmed that of the 122 support applications received, 93 were approved.
- It was confirmed that the service was means tested as evidence was required that the total household annual income was under the £36,000 eligibility criteria. It was noted that outgoings were not analysed as this would slow the rollout of support to applicants.
- It was confirmed that the scheme funding was announced on 17 March 2026 prior to the scheme's implementation on 1 April 2026.

The Welfare and Financial Advice Team update was noted by the committee.

76. Customer Service update 2025/26

The Customer Service Update 2025/26 was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing.

The Customer Service Team handled customer interactions in various ways for 17 high contact service areas, as well as general public enquiries. The report provided an update regarding customer interactions for these service areas during 2025/26.

It was important for the Council to provide a variety of methods of contact for its customers as it was appreciated one contact method may not be suitable for all.

In comparison to 2024/25, on the whole, contact increased during 2025/26. Telephone and face-to-face contact increased by 9% and digital contact by 15%.

During 2025/26, on average, 92% of calls were answered, with just 8% of calls being 'abandoned' to other service channels. This is a significant improvement from 2024/25, where these figures were 79% and 21% respectively.

During 2025/26, the website contact increased by 352,707, or 19% (compared to 2024/25). During this period, there were a total of 828 individual 'was this page useful' interactions (26% yes, 74% no).

During discussions, comments were made on the following:

- The Cabinet Member and the Chairman expressed admiration for the resilience of Customer Service staff in light of the recent vandalism at

the Customer Service Centre. Appreciation was also noted for the efforts of the teams involved in getting the centre reopened swiftly.

The Customer Service Update 2025/26 was noted by the committee.

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

There was none.

The meeting concluded at 15.34.