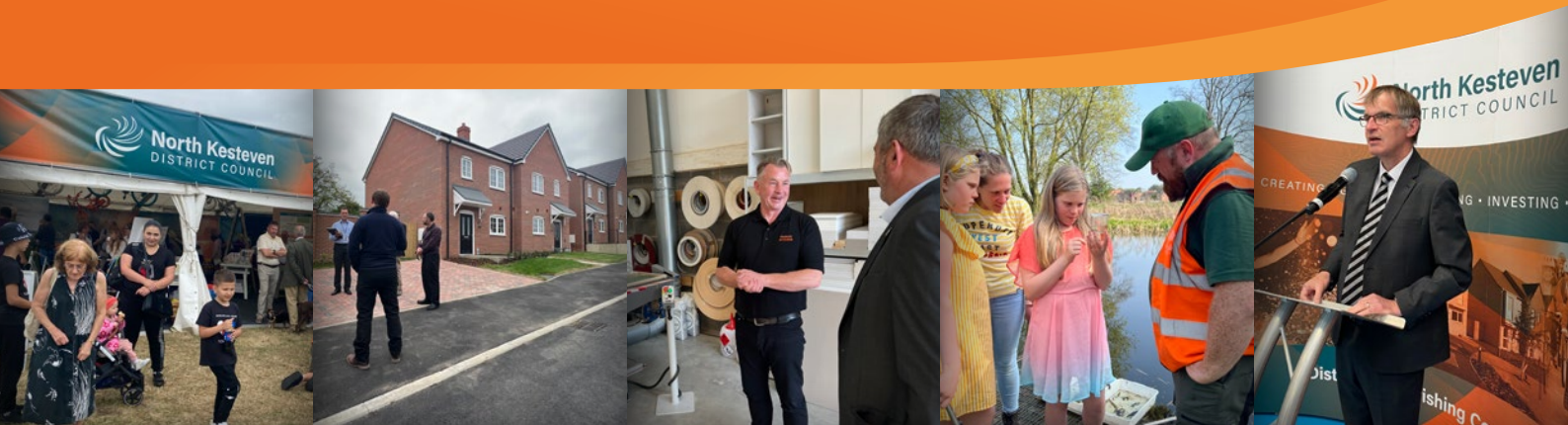


# North Kesteven District Council's **Annual Report** 2022-23



North Kesteven District  
Council supporting a District  
of **Flourishing Communities**

# Foreword

It is a pleasure to provide a foreword to the Annual Report looking back over 2022/23, a year in which the Council was able to put more emphasis on its agenda for moving forward strategic objectives for the District's flourishing communities and its active participation in positive partnerships.

The Council has completed several capital investment schemes, embarked on and advanced even more, set out an ambitious ten-year capital programme of £240 million, developed new service responses and, critically, stepped up yet further our Climate Action goals and priorities – setting out our focus in aspiring to be Carbon Net Zero by 2030.

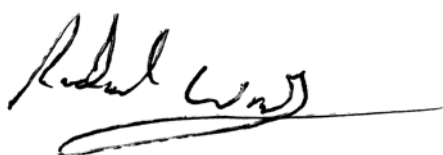
In this past year we commissioned eight new Passivhaus homes built to the highest possible eco-standards; set out our plans for all new council housing to be equally climate-responsive and for existing-stock to be upgraded for cost and carbon efficiency, whilst successfully rolled out a new recycling regime that has greatly improved the quantity and quality of recycled materials collected.

This Annual Report gives an overview of activities over the 12 months to March 2023, which we have continued and expanded on in the current year. It illustrates:

- The excellent work carried out by this Council in support and furtherance of our communities and reflects on our achievements in meeting our aims and aspirations;
- Our continued success in reaching the highest standards and delivering strong and resilient services that are truly relevant and responsive to our communities' needs;
- The effective and efficient manner in which the Council carries out its duties and responsibilities.

In the face of ongoing and emerging challenges, such achievements are under-pinned by the solid foundations of strong leadership and a clear plan of community-focused priorities, set out through the NK Plan and supported through the endorsement of partners, stakeholders, residents and businesses.

Reflecting on the year to last March, there have been some phenomenal results across all areas of the authority. These are presented in the ensuing pages, and I hope, like me, you are proud to have been a part of it – as a resident, trader, partner, Member, Council colleague or contractor. Thank you.



Council Leader Cllr Richard Wright



# Corporate Priorities:

Our  
Communities



Our  
Environment



Our  
Homes



Our  
Economy



Our  
Council



# Vision

A District of Flourishing Communities

## Purpose

A prosperous, sustainable District, supported by effective and efficient public services that deliver local priorities and meet the challenges of both climate change and economic uncertainty.

### Priorities

#### **Our Communities:**

To enhance the health and wellbeing, safety and resilience of all our communities; inspiring and supporting a sustainable and flourishing future

#### **Our Environment:**

To meet the challenge of climate change; ensuring integration and delivery of the Climate Action Plan across all NK Plan priorities

#### **Our Homes:**

Through the Local Plan, deliver sustainable housing growth and pursue energy-efficient development to meet the current and emerging needs of all our communities

#### **Our Economy:**

To support local economic growth and resilience, and build on opportunities from the 'green economy'

#### **Our Council:**

To be a high-performing, value-for-money Council that is agile, resilient and actively embraces the challenges and opportunities of the future

### Key Ambitions

Promote participation and engagement within our communities, to deliver a clean, safe and inclusive District

Champion greenhouse gas reduction, both within the Council and across the District

Facilitate the provision of community infrastructure to align with housing growth

Acknowledge the challenging economic situation; supporting business where possible, alongside the protection of existing jobs and the creation of new jobs

Deliver high quality, value-for-money and sustainable services, underpinned by effective workforce planning



# Priorities - Our Communities

Communities are the beating heart of the district, each with their own unique character and strengths. Harnessing the spirit and resilience of our communities is key to our aspirations for 2030.



## Ambitions:

- ▶ Recognise and be responsive to the increased cost of living challenges for our communities
- ▶ Promote healthy lifestyles by providing a range of leisure and cultural opportunities
- ▶ Support partnership health strategies, as part of our provision of effective and efficient support services for residents

## Performance Indicators:

- ▶ **860,433** visitors to indoor leisure facilities and sports outreach services (647,925 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **109,094** visitors to NK Arts Partnership events, activities and education (94,116 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **258,811** visitors attended the Whisby Natural World Centre (232,685 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **220,687** visitors using Countryside NK's Stepping Out network activities and events (223,184 in 2021/22)



## Priority Delivery Actions

### Community Lottery

The North Kesteven Community Lottery celebrated its 1st Birthday in December 2022, giving community groups the opportunity to net additional funding. The proportion of money being given to good causes by the Community Lottery is twice as much as the National or Health Lotteries, and all the benefits are going to projects in North Kesteven. Since its launch, the Community Lottery has raised more than £30,000 in revenue for good causes across communities and more than £6,000 has been given away in prizes. During 2022/23, more than 66 local groups signed up as part of a fun and effective way to raise funds for their valued services in the community.



### The Hub - A National Centre for Craft and Design

An 'Arts Council England' grant awarded to the Council has secured delivery of the District's arts service over the forthcoming three years. The continuation of funding for the cultural programme delivered by The Hub enables the Council to sustain the positive contribution it makes to the Arts Council's 'Let's Create' Strategy. The three-year funding, totalling more than £600,000, is a share of more than £6 million heading into Lincolnshire as Arts Council England backs art, culture and creativity across the country through to 2026. This ensures more residents can find fulfilling art and culture on their doorsteps.



### Terry O'Toole Theatre

The Council received funding from the 'Tarmac Landfill Community Fund', which has enabled a major refurbishment to take place at the Terry O'Toole Theatre in North Hykeham. The project included the replacement of 200 theatre seats and improvements to the existing dance and performing area by creating new flooring. In addition, the carpets of the theatre were replaced, and a new hearing loop was installed. As part of the project, the Council put in an additional £12,000 enabling the Theatre to grow and develop and continue to serve the local community.



### Breastfeeding-Friendly Project

The project, pioneered by the Council, aims to normalise and break down the barriers around public breastfeeding. There is a specially designed window sticker for businesses in the District to convey the clear message that breastfeeding is supported and welcomed on the premises, along with babies fed by bottle and other ways. This also enabled businesses to be listed in the Council's online business directory as 'child and breastfeeding friendly' and enables parents to find venues they might wish to visit and enjoy.





# Priorities - Our Communities

## Health and Wellbeing Funding

The Council's Health Wellbeing and Resilience Fund, administered by the Lincolnshire Community Foundation, had grants available to charitable, voluntary and community organisations; church groups; community interest companies; and non-statutory agencies that are based in the District. The groups could already be delivering crucial services, or are able to demonstrate there is a gap and have a workable solution to address and support the emotional wellbeing of local residents. Bids were considered from existing and new organisations, with up to £73,000 allocated to worthwhile projects that are supporting health and wellbeing. Furthermore, there was an element of sustainability built into the planning process linking the Council's Green Thread throughout all its ventures.



## Health and Well-being Delivery Plan

The Council's Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan identifies further ways to improve health and wellbeing across the District through possible interventions, opportunities and partnerships, as well as utilising the authority's existing work across service areas. The Plan was developed following the 'Lincolnshire District Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy', which district councils have published together and is intended as a blueprint for individual delivery plans. The development of the Council's individual Plan will drive the authority's contribution to that strategy.



## Cost of Living

A new guide focusing on the increasing cost of living was provided to all households within the District in December 2022. To ensure everyone had an opportunity to see the help that may be available to them, the Council created a four-page cost of living publication arriving as a wrap-around with the winter Council newsletter NewsNK. This sat alongside information on the Council's website, which included a dedicated page on cost of living, shared guidance via the Council's social media channel and e-news bulletins. The information also highlighted organisations which formed part of the response in North Kesteven, from food banks and the Sleaford Community Grocer to support from local groups and good causes. Furthermore, this work ran concurrently with the Council's partnership work and role in the countywide response.



# Priorities - Our Communities

## Armed Forces Day

Armed Forces Day was celebrated in North Kesteven in June 2022, whereby businesses throughout Sleaford and across the District were encouraged to decorate their windows in keeping with the Armed Forces Day theme and to enter the Shop Window Competition. A Veterans' Lunch was organised with over 100 guests, celebrating and acknowledging the contribution made by the Armed Forces to the community, both organisationally and as individuals.



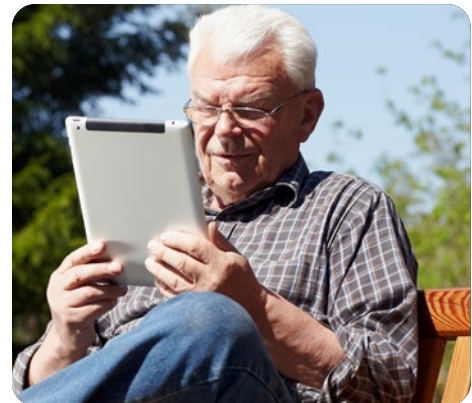
## Lincolnshire Resettlement Partnership

Operating at the heart of the Lincolnshire Resettlement Partnership, various service areas were committed to a range of responses in welcoming to the area refugees displaced by war. During this period, there were 326 property inspections completed by District Councils and more than 370 Disclosure and Barring Service checks initiated by Officers of Lincolnshire's local authorities. In addition, the Wellbeing Lincs service defined and signposted to additional wraparound care and routes to support. During this time, almost 1,200 Ukrainians fleeing their country for safety reasons and seeking sanctuary in UK are known to have found new temporary homes with 70 sponsor families across Lincolnshire.



## Digital Skills

In partnership with Lincolnshire Community Health Service, the Council had access to iPads that could be loaned to residents for up to six weeks, along with one-to-one support provided by a specially-trained Digital Coach. To be part of this project, people had to be aged over 60 and have little or no experience with computers, smart phones, or other digital devices and/or need a reminder on how to use new devices. At the end of the six-week loan period residents would either be signposted and supported to buy their own device, or potentially be directed to another partner organisation who could provide access to a free device.



## Community Trigger Process

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the 'Community Trigger Process' for residents that may be experiencing continued anti-social behaviour in their communities. Working with 'ASB Help' (a national charity who provide advice and support to victims of anti-social behaviour), Councils, Police and registered social housing providers in Lincolnshire have reviewed their Community Trigger Policy. The aim of doing this is to provide an improved service to victims who are experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour and also protects victims of persistent anti-social behaviour, providing them the right to request a formal review of their case if the local threshold is met.





# Priorities - Our Communities

## Community Champion Awards

The Council celebrated its twelfth annual NK Community Champion Awards in 2022, and was proud to celebrate the community-minded endeavours of individuals, businesses and groups at the Awards. A total of 33 finalists across 11 categories were recognised in the celebrations from 110 nominations received, which showed a huge breadth of good deeds taking place across North Kesteven.

## NK Walking Festival

The North Kesteven Walking Festival is a celebration of the countless walking opportunities available within the district. From short saunters to long hikes, all ages, abilities and fitness levels enjoyed the social walking experience within the area. The festival demonstrates the Council's commitment to physical activity and is part of the Countryside NK partnership with Hill Holt Wood (a charity and social enterprise) who maintain over 130 miles of Stepping Out walks in the area and have been running the festival since 2018. There were 66 led walks covering more than 200 miles and were attended by 1,263 walkers. Many of the walks were themed and involved foraging, story-telling, socialising, heritage, wellbeing, tea breaks, and pie and pea suppers.

## Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

The Platinum Jubilee, which marked the 70th anniversary of the Queen's reign, was a historic event that had never before been celebrated in this country. A manner of festivities throughout the District to commemorate the occasion ranged from traditional fetes and street parties to vintage celebrations, scarecrow competitions, beacon lighting and royal cake bakes. There were also activities taking place at Council visitor attractions, which included a weekend of activity at the International Bomber Command Centre and participation across nearly every parish.



# Priorities - Our Environment

Climate and the environment are at the forefront of the global agenda, presenting both significant challenges and a wide spectrum of opportunity. They cut across and are reflected in the approach and aspirations for all five of the Council's Priorities.



## Ambitions:

- ▶ Research and promote adaptations needed to increase resilience to climate change
- ▶ Promote and protect environmental health, including measures to enable living safely with Covid-19
- ▶ Conserve and enhance North Kesteven's heritage assets
- ▶ Develop biodiversity across the District and support natural carbon capture

## Performance Indicators:

- ▶ **99%** of food businesses within the District broadly compliant with legislation (97.72% in 2021/22)
- ▶ **100%** of new homes created reaching an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level A-B (99% in 2021/22)
- ▶ **2.68** is the number of fly-tipping enforcement actions per fly-tipping incident (3.26 in 2021/22)





## Priority Delivery Actions

### Climate Emergency Strategy

The Climate Emergency Strategy sets out the strategic direction for climate action and the net zero ambitions for the Council and the wider District. The Action Plan sets out the specific actions to be taken and, together, the two documents plan how the Council is working to address the climate emergency and support the journey toward a sustainable net zero future. The 2022 refresh followed a structured process informed throughout by expert external sources, sectoral best practice, previous resident, business and stakeholder consultation, and internal discussion.



### Further Investment in Climate Action

To assist delivery against the Council's climate emergency response, it has established a £1 million reserve, which will be used to help fund high priority actions from the Climate Emergency Action Plan. It is a huge investment and is being used to support high-impact projects to help take positive and tangible action to tackle the climate emergency and work towards net zero for the District.



### UK 100 Pledge

Council Leader, Councillor Wright, signed up to the 'UK 100 Pledge', which is a promise of Council Leaders to do everything within their power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – including bringing the Council's emissions to net zero by 2030. This adds impetus to the Climate Emergency Strategy, backed up with an ambitious Action Plan, to deliver the Council's climate response. Throughout 2022 and 2023, Councillor Head represented the Council in the UK100's 'Climate Leadership Academy', which supports the development of climate pioneers in local government.



### Weaving a Green Thread

The Council promotes a 'Green Thread' throughout its strategic planning framework, ensuring that climate action runs through everything the Council does. The Green Thread is the link that connects a colleague's individual actions, at any level throughout the organisation, directly to the Council's overarching vision and purpose, and illustrates how they contribute to fulfilling the Council's climate aspirations. This link is inherent within the Council's culture and values, helping everyone to remain focused on their purpose and potential for delivering excellence and meaningful climate action.





# Priorities - Our Environment

The Council and 'Heckington in Bloom' and 'Trees for Heckington' transformed a number of the Council's green spaces in the village with a variety of measures that will encourage improvements in biodiversity. Such measures include letting grass grow longer, planting wildflowers and trees, and providing other habitats for wildlife. Furthermore, it is possible other partnerships could be developed within North Kesteven communities to create sustainable biodiversity projects across the District.

## Air Quality

Parents waiting to collect children are being reminded to stop running their cars in a bid to boost children's health and protect the environment, through a project with the Council and William Alvey School in Sleaford. The Council provided the school with learning resources about the impact on air quality of cars waiting, along with leaflets and branded air fresheners to serve as a reminder for people. The Council plans to roll out this work to other schools and communities in a bid to improve air quality for all young people in the District.

## Solar Panels

As part of the Council's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, the authority invested in 230 solar panels, which were installed on the Council's Office Building in Sleaford. The installation is expected to reduce the Council's electricity bill by as much as 25% and save over 20 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

## Looking After Wildlife

A raft of works to ensure wildlife can flourish along the River Slea and at Lollycocks Field in Sleaford have successfully taken place, as part of the Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project. This includes in-channel works in the Slea, which had features installed to improve biodiversity within the river and its verges. Five new berms have also been installed, which are low-level shelves constructed in a river channel that help recreate the natural meander and processes of the water. The berms will become vibrant pockets of greenery with flowering plants, such as marsh marigold and water forget-me-not, adding colour and food sources for wildlife. The small crevices within the berms





# Priorities - Our Environment

also provide refuge for small fish, amphibians and invertebrates. Bankside improvements include removing a material called Nicospan downstream and replacing it with pre-planted coir roll, which will improve the riverbank for species that need to burrow.

## Riverside Footpath

As part of works already identified in the ongoing £1.29 million Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project, a popular section of the Riverside Footpath has been restored and revamped to create a metre-wide gravel pathway and provide a level passageway there once more. This also enables improved access and better enjoyment of a popular section of the River Slea.

## Fly Tipping

The Council takes a no tolerance approach to fly-tipping and works closely with partners across the countywide Environmental Crime Partnership. This has resulted in the introduction of strict penalties, including fines and the seizure of vehicles, due to the potential harm that can incur to communities and the environment. For example, there has been a combined total of £11,598.87 in fines, and a driving ban, during this period after people were caught fly-tipping in North Kesteven.



# Priorities - Our Homes

Having pioneered a new era of council house building a decade ago, alongside developments to meet the District's growing population and housing needs, the Council will focus on increasing quality and quantity to ensure a balanced and sustainable set of housing choices across the District.



## Ambitions:

- ▶ Provide high quality services for both housing and tackling homelessness; recognising the additional cost of living pressures now faced
- ▶ Maintain, improve and future-proof housing
- ▶ Deliver homes that are affordable and meet the full range of needs and the net-zero ambitions of the Local Plan

## Performance Indicators:

- ▶ **27** private sector empty properties brought back into use (14 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **11** new Council Homes provided (71 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **95.75%** of repairs to Council Homes completed right the first time (99.09% in 2021/22)
- ▶ **85.10%** of tenants satisfied with the Landlord service provided by the Council (89% in 2021/22)
- ▶ **118** affordable homes delivered (195 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **497** homelessness cases prevented through advice and prevention tools (657 in 2021/22)





## Priority Delivery Actions

### Sustainability Award – Passivhaus Standard

The future of house-building has taken shape in the form of eight new homes built in the District to the highly eco-conscious 'Passivhaus standard,' which is the highest energy-efficient standard available in Europe. This is an internationally recognised environmental mark awarded to homes built with top energy-saving solutions, including design and materials, which stop the unnecessary movement of air, avoiding loss of heat and even heat reclamation systems to boost their efficiency. The Council has since adopted the rigorous principles of the Passivhaus standard for future new Council homes, under the authority's CO2-Sy Homes standard. The houses are significantly cheaper to run for the occupants, generally requiring about 75% less heating than standard builds. The homes also have solar panels, with electricity from them helping cut energy costs and the excess electricity produced by each home used to heat its water.

### Climate-Conscious Homes

Seventy-nine Council homes have been fitted with solar panels, to help to ensure they are comfortable and less expensive for residents, whilst cutting carbon emissions, which was undertaken through the 'Green Homes Grant.' The Council is also working with YES Energy Solutions to identify residents across the District who qualify for the Home Energy Upgrade Scheme, which supports people in homes with poor energy ratings (EPC rating E or below) and on lower incomes to upgrade for better energy efficiency. Over a number of years, the Council has been successful in improving the efficiency of the housing stock through a major programme of heating upgrades, and by taking advantage of grant funding available to social landlords, to undertake insulation improvements. Works completed to date has contributed to reducing CO2 emissions and supported tackling fuel poverty.

### Retrofitted Homes

In excess of 600 Council homes in the District are planned to be retrofitted with carbon-cutting features and energy-saving measures in another step towards the aim for a net zero District by 2030. The initial retrofitting programme is expected to involve around £20 million of investment, and the homes will receive improvements selected through careful costing and consideration, for the best possible carbon and energy-saving benefits.



# Priorities - Our Homes

## Below Inflation Rent

The Council's proposal to increase the level of rents paid for North Kesteven's Council homes was at a rate significantly below inflation and will enable the District Council to maintain its improvements programme. This followed significant deliberation, and the need to balance the current financial circumstances and the need to keep delivering the priorities agreed by tenants. Alongside this, in recognition of the difficulties facing many people with current cost of living challenges, the Tenants Hardship Fund has more than doubled to £60,000, alongside a review of its eligibility criteria. This forms part of a broad package of practical and financial assistance in place by the Council to support its tenants.



## Inclusive Housing Strategy

The Council recognises the challenges and opportunities in creating more inclusive housing and, in response, developed an Inclusive Housing Strategy. The Strategy will help the Council continue to create a housing stock that meets the needs of customers now and in future. By understanding the needs of forthcoming generations and aiming to make our homes more inclusive, this enables the Council to provide better choices and options for its tenants, and future tenants.



## Damp and Mould Policy

The Council implemented a Policy on damp and mould which strengthens and brings together existing procedures already utilised by the Council. It sets out clear and consistent steps recognising that good housing can decrease the need for medical intervention. It covers the whole process, working together with tenants, from the first report of any damp and/or mould being present in a Council home through to organising repairs and monitoring of the works completed.

## Adoption of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan has been adopted and will be used in making decisions on planning applications across the North Kesteven, City of Lincoln and West Lindsey areas. The new Local Plan is pioneering in placing climate change at its core and will help ensure Central Lincolnshire is a net zero carbon area. This is the second Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire, replacing the 2017 version, which was revised to ensure it aligns with emerging pressures and priorities – such as those relating to climate change – and will ensure that sustainable development occurs in our area.





# Priorities - Our Homes

## Sheltered Housing Scheme

A former sheltered housing scheme in North Hykeham is being transformed into new high quality homes. Grinter Close was a collection of one-bedroomed flats, which are being demolished and will be replaced by 18 new homes. Grinter House is also a building made up of one-bedroomed flats that will be remodelled to create 16 affordable flats, each with their own entrance and more space. The scheme will offer better quality homes for peoples' changing needs in the District and will be built to the Fabric First energy-saving standard. The layout will also complement the character of the neighbouring area, whilst delivering high quality homes to meet local needs and creating a strong sense of place.



## Affordable Homes

Work has started on more than 64 new affordable homes on the edge of Sleaford, which supports the Sustainable Urban Extension to Sleaford, and will bring much needed affordable housing to the area.



## Lafford Homes

The Council's arms-length company, Lafford Homes, is expanding availability of market-level rental homes and unlocking more housing choice by bringing forward good quality and well-priced rental options to help meet local demand and, in doing so, contributes financially to the Council. This includes much needed development in Sleaford with six three-bed houses and a brand new site in Metherringham, comprising of 20 new homes of varying designs and sizes, including flats, bungalows and houses.



## Empty Homes

The number of homes classed as 'long term empty' has fallen in North Kesteven, with more than 250 empty homes brought back into use across the District through targeted intervention and involvement over the past 12 years. After a two year period, the Council's 'Empty Property Working Group' pays particular attention to try and identify ownership, liaise and unlock barriers to refurbishment and promote the potential VAT reductions or other incentives to owners with the objectives of restoration and re-habitation.





# Priorities - Our Economy

The District has traditionally had low unemployment and strong economic resilience with core economic sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. Our aspirations are to take the economy to the next level, releasing the benefits from new skills and technologies.



## Ambitions:

- ▶ Attract investment to improve physical infrastructure, support regeneration and enhance digital connectivity
- ▶ Create a clear vision of place; celebrating and marketing all that the District has to offer
- ▶ Promote the economic opportunities from tackling climate change

## Performance Indicators:

- ▶ **31** jobs created as a result of Council intervention (60 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **21** new investments in NK for regeneration projects (12 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **194** jobs safeguarded as a result of targeted support by the Council (237 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **8.50** hectares of employment land has been developed for delivery of jobs (3.90 in 2021/22)
- ▶ **92.63%** average workshop occupancy across the workshop portfolio (92.93% in 2021/22)



## Priority Delivery Actions

### Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park

The Council embarked on delivering a £56 million investment in the Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park to unlock new opportunities for the local economy and communities, and to support 500 jobs. Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park has led by example with energy efficient and environmentally conscious measures in place, which has resulted in units on the site benefitting from various features, including solar panels, energy efficient insulation and electric vehicle charging points.



### Discovery Court

A £2.2 million development scheme in North Hykeham is now home to a community of start-up and growing businesses. Discovery Court contains 15 high quality business units that have close proximity to good transport routes and are well-connected to the surrounding area. The additional units bring the Council's commercial portfolio to over one hundred properties at twelve locations District-wide.



### Supporting Businesses

The Council's focused support of businesses, from large enterprises through to sole traders, has continued to grow. The Council offers a range of services from business advice for start-ups to pre-planning advice, and sites and premises services. The Council is committed to responding to business needs and working with businesses to help deliver their growth plans.



### RiverLight Festival

Sleaford was brought to life through a celebration of culture and creativity through the RiverLight Festival, which welcomed people back to the high street and showcased Sleaford's local community. Rooted in the historic stories and environments of the River Slea, an artistic programme saw over 10,800 public engagements across eight days bringing together over 120 local artists, businesses, retailers, schools, community groups, venues and volunteers.





# Priorities - Our Economy

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

An outline Investment Plan was developed with stakeholder engagement and submitted to central government for an allocation of £3.2 million. The fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances, investing in communities and place, supporting local businesses, people and skills. A number of projects were identified from the Sleaford Masterplan refresh along with a support package to businesses and communities.

## Love for Sleaford

There was a new installation to celebrate all that is loved about Sleaford, and allowed people to share their appreciation for others around Valentine's Day. Working in conjunction with retailers and businesses, the Council invited residents and visitors to help create a visible expression of what they like and love about Sleaford by adding to a heart seat installation at the Riverside Centre. People were also invited to write the things they love most about Sleaford on dedicated tags and add these to the heart seat throughout February 2023. People were welcome to take photographs at the heart seat with themselves and others, which could be shared on social media, to help share the love for Sleaford and, in doing so, also help promote the District.



## Waterwheel at Cogglesford Watermill

An investment of £51,000 was put into Cogglesford Watermill as part of a two-part programme of repairs to the waterwheel and improvements to the visitor experience. The waterwheel was fully restored following £30,500 of repairs allowing it to turn once again. Improvements of £20,500 to the visitor experience were also completed, including enhanced visitor boards and a new children's area. With sustainability being a key focus, the old paddles from the wheel were reused to make some of the new furniture. Further plans include exploring the option to expand the café offer and to create an outside seating area adjacent to the River Sle.



## Mrs Smith's Cottage

The three year-long restoration project funded by 'National Lottery Heritage Fund' and match funded by the Council, enabled the restoration of the Cottage, essential repairs to the roof and the introduction of a two year 'Artist in Residence' programme. The project has seen 4,494 visitors since reopening, £7,276 in donations and 4,097 engagements through the learning programme. The National Lottery Heritage Fund complimented the Council on an exemplar project that learnt to adapt through the Covid-19 pandemic and still deliver the desired outcomes with fresh ideas.





## Cranwell Aviation Heritage Museum

It has been 30 years since the venue has been open to the public, creating a space to delve into our aviation heritage, with a specific focus on the history of the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell. Launching in June 2022, the exhibition honoured the role animals played in warfare, and tells the story of some of the animals who had won the Dickin Medal, the animals' Victoria Cross. During this period, a planning application was approved to relocate the current museum into the neighbouring Carlight Building, meaning the space will expand with a larger and improved exhibition space, bespoke café, retail area, conference and educational space, as well as additional parking and outside play area. These expanded facilities could help create additional jobs and volunteer roles. The Museum will also incorporate use of green energy and electric vehicle charging points, with the Council's aim in mind for the District to be carbon neutral by 2030.



## Christmas Events

Support was given to the curation of Christmas activities under the 'Eventful Sleaford' identity. There was a 'Farmers' Market' and 'Christmas Market' in Sleaford, as well as the 'Gifted Market' at the Hub and a 'Pop-Up Market' at Millstream Square throughout the Christmas period. This showcased contemporary makers selling crafted gifts, food stalls, Marvel character walk-about and street performers, as well as live music and theatre performances.



## Historic Building Grants

The Council made funding available for both residential and commercial buildings, with the aim of the scheme to preserve and enhance the area's built heritage, by encouraging the sympathetic repair of historic buildings. There was £25,000 available, with the funds being offered as grants to help with work, such as, the restoration or reinstatement of original windows and doors; brickwork and stonework repairs and repointing; repairs to chimneys; and the repair or reinstatement of traditional boundary walls, railings and steps. The scheme is now in its third year of operation, with £53,000 being allocated to 28 successful applicants so far.



# Priorities - Our Council

The Council is the bulwark for local democracy with its 43 members elected to champion their wards and the District, taking decisions to ensure a high-performing council, accountable to its residents and driving the District forward.



## Ambitions:

- ▶ Ensure our Council is financially resilient
- ▶ Promote and protect good governance and healthy democracy, with open, accountable and transparent decision-making
- ▶ Maintain a strong focus on our customers

## Performance Indicators:

- ▶ **86.45%** of customers were able to contact the Council via their preferred communication method (83.75% in 2021/22)
- ▶ **99%** of access to information requests are responded to within the statutory deadline (99% in 2021/22)





## Priority Delivery Actions

### NK Plan and NK Finance Plan 2023-26

The Council's NK Plan 2023 to 2026 maps out the authority's commitments and investments in the District across five distinct corporate priorities and creates the framework for delivering the Council's ambitions over the next three years. Also considered was weaving the 'Green Thread' throughout the Plan, which joins together actions on climate throughout the five priorities, and the increasing cost of living. The Plan is backed by the Community Strategy through to 2030, which aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and the Council's own Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. In addition, the NK Finance Plan 2023-26 confirms the Council has effective and balanced plans for maintaining financial sustainability, with the capacity to invest in priorities and services.

### Local Government Awards

North Kesteven District Council was singled out as one of the best in the country, as it was shortlisted as an exemplar in three of the most prestigious local government awards for 2022. In addition to being a finalist in the MJ Achievement Awards as 'Local Authority of the Year' and in the LGC Awards as 'Council of the Year', Chief Executive Ian Fytche was also shortlisted for the MJ's 'Chief Executive of the Year' award.

### Sharing Our Vision

The Council welcomed stakeholders from across the District in relation to the shaping of our NK Plan at various engagement events. It was an opportunity to focus on the strength of partnership in NK and to invite stakeholders to join us on the journey to 2030. The Council received positive feedback from stakeholders in relation to the events and acknowledged the strong partnerships we have with them. Furthermore, the feedback and discussion from the events has been built into future Corporate and Divisional Service Delivery Plans.





# Priorities - Our Council

## Applauding Building Excellence

The annual 'Building Excellence Awards' took place where we recognised some of the high-quality building work in our District, both commercial and domestic. The awards are a celebration of the individuals and projects that have excelled the year, whilst demonstrating the potential of strong partnership working between developers, builders and the Council in delivering the best possible finished products. The finalists and winners were selected by a Panel consisting of Council Leader Councillor Richard Wright and senior Council Officers engaged in housing, property services, planning, environmental health and zero-carbon development.



## East Midlands Challenge

A team from the Council took part in the East Midlands Challenge, coming together with local government colleagues from across the region, to navigate their way through a day of strategic thinking, crisis management and partnership-building in a fast-paced test environment. They impressed on the day and were highly commended in the Leadership category, along with a highly commended recognition for one of the team in the 'Shining Star' award category.



## Our People Strategy

The Our People Strategy aims to support Officers and the wider organisation to have the right people, in the right place, with the right skills, at the right time to enable the delivery of the NK Plan. It aims to improve people management and builds on previous work to enhance and embed excellent people management across the organisation.

## Elections

Elections were held in May 2023 to elect 43 District Councillors. Every effort was made to ensure residents were aware that, to vote in person at a polling station, they would need to bring identification. Guidance was made available for members of the public, a 'frequently asked questions' page created and additional training for colleagues was provided, resulting in a successful Election delivered during this period.



# Financial Review:

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- ▶ General Fund
- ▶ Housing Revenue Account
- ▶ Capital Expenditure





# Financial Review: General Fund

## Financial Environment

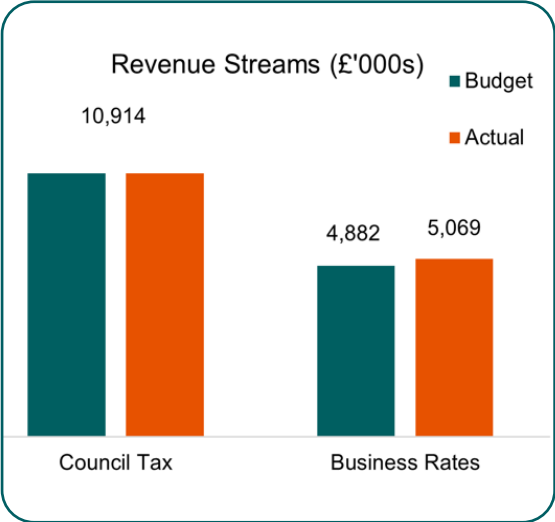
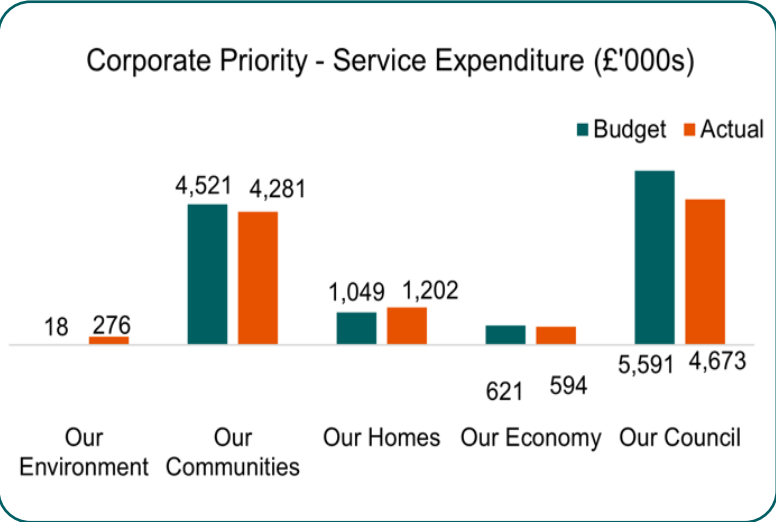
The financial year began with the setting of the budget in February 2022. The following sections describe the performance against this budget.

In common with the rest of local government, the Council has seen significant reductions in its core funding, creating an increasing reliance on Council Tax and the need to seek alternative income sources to maintain service delivery.

Therefore, difficult decisions have been taken by the Council in order to establish a balanced financial plan for the next three financial years, given the finite resources that will be available. The Council has proactively sought to find ways to protect services and has found the majority of savings from efficiencies and increased income, rather than cuts to service delivery.

## General Fund

The General Fund covers all net spending by the Council on services, other than those accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account. General Fund services are funded via contributions from Business Rates and Council Tax, Fees and Charges, as well as Government Grants. The graph below shows the expenditure of the General Fund, broken down by Corporate Priority.



# Financial Review:

## Housing Revenue Account

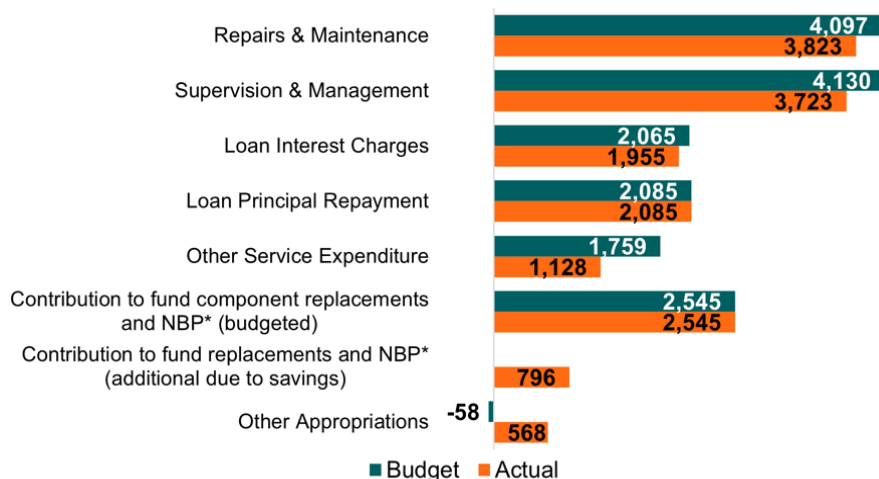
### Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has to be maintained as a separate account and contains all the expenditure and income relating to the Council's function of managing and maintaining Council owned dwellings as a social landlord.

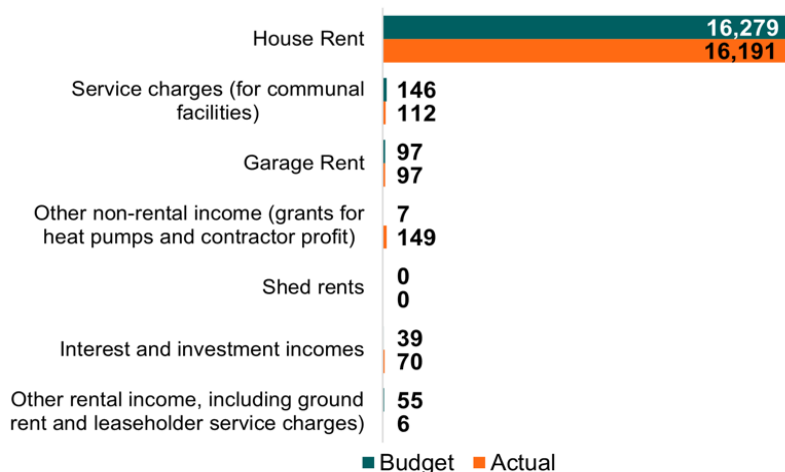
For 2022/23, the approved budget for the year showed a balanced income, alongside a balanced expenditure programme. The net expenditure for the year reflected a surplus of £796,465.

As at 31 March 2023, the Council maintains a working balance for the HRA to cover any unforeseen expenditure in the operating of the Council's housing stock and any unforeseen financial risks.

Housing Revenue Account Expenditure (£'000s)



Housing Revenue Account Income (£'000s)



\*NBP - New Build Programme



# Financial Review:

## Capital Expenditure

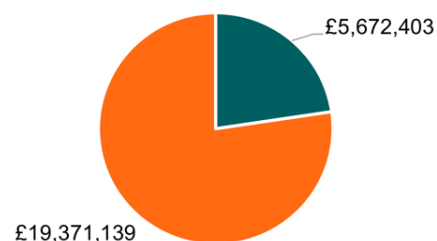
### Capital Expenditure

The Council's capital expenditure, on the provision of new or enhanced assets, is largely met from reserves and borrowing, but also to a lesser degree from government grants and contributions from third parties.

Capital expenditure for the 2022/23 financial year amounted to £25.044 million, compared to the approved capital programme budget of £39.362 million, representing an underspend of £14.318 million.

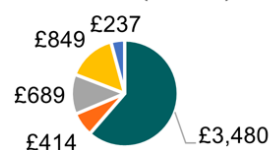
The Council is embarking on the most ambitious capital programme since the mid-1980s by investing in both the current housing stock, in order to maintain the NK Standard, and the New Build Programme.

Capital Spend Programme 2022/23



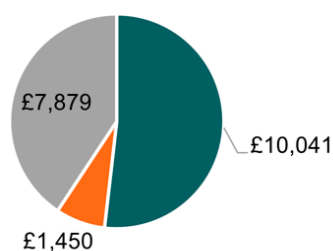
- Housing Revenue Account Capital Spend in Year
- General Fund Capital Spend in Year

Housing Revenue Account Capital Funding 2022/23 (000's)



- Contribution from major repairs reserve
- Grants and contributions
- Useable capital receipts applied
- Useable capital receipts applied (affordable homes)
- Contribution from reserves

General Fund Capital Funding 2022/23 (000's)



- Prudential borrowing
- Grants and contributions
- Contribution from reserves



# Corporate Functions:

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- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Our People
- ▶ Access to information
- ▶ Complaints





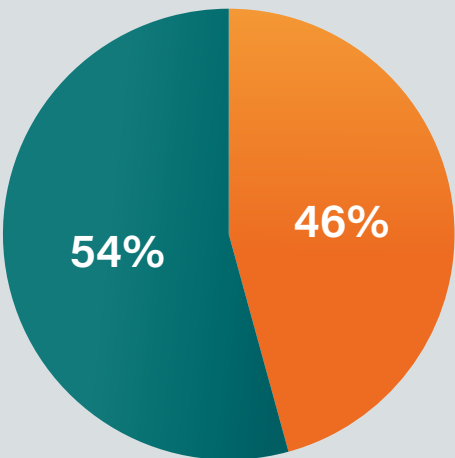
# HR - Our People

North Kesteven District Council employed 437 members of staff in more than 190 different roles across multiple sites during 2022/23.

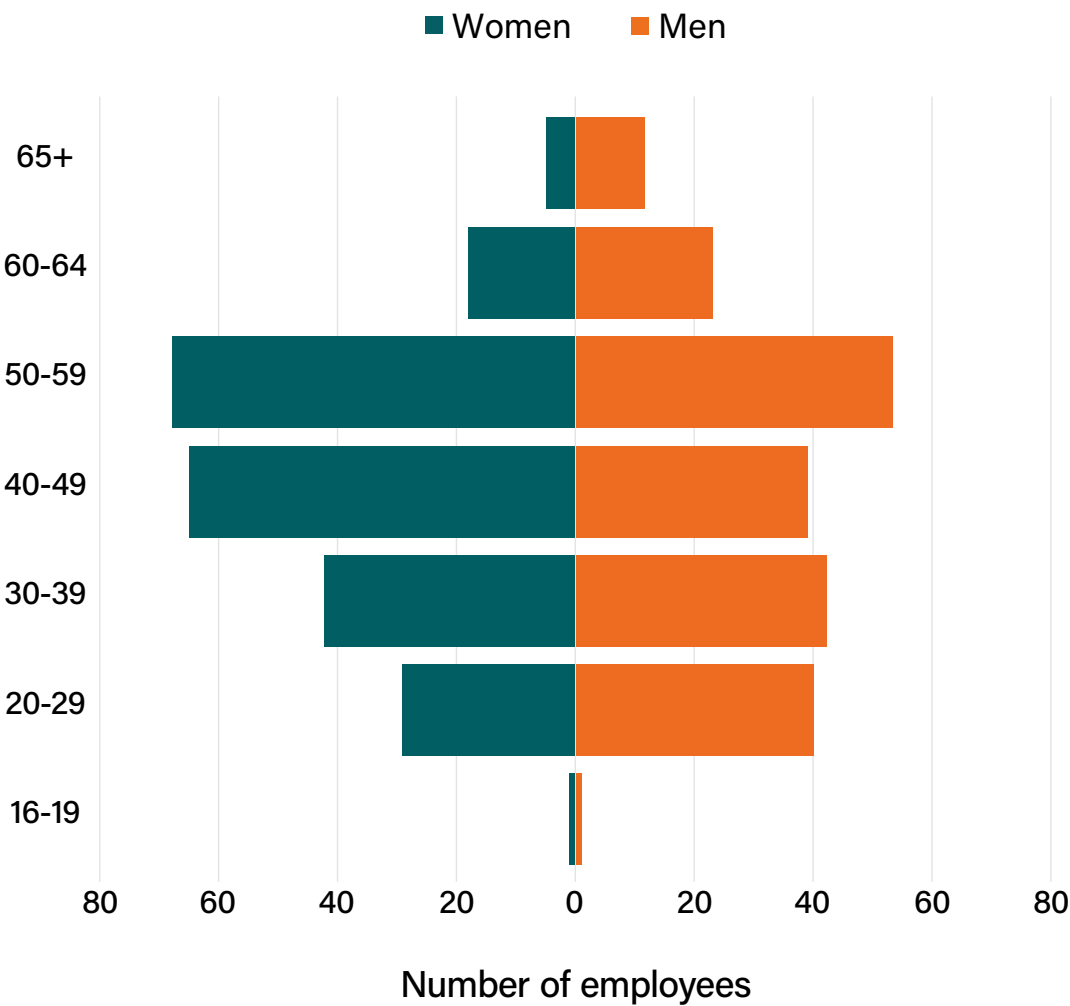
## Employee Demographics

■ Women (235)

■ Men (202)



## Employees by age and gender



# Access to Information

Access to information consists of: Freedom of Information (FOI)

requests, Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests, Data Protection Act (DPA) requests and Subject Access Requests (SAR).

These Regulations cover almost all areas of the authority giving members of the public access to information about the operation and activities of the Council. This in turn creates an atmosphere of openness and transparency, which will lead to an increase in public confidence in the authority.

## Key Statistics for 2022/23:

**531 FOI Requests**

**799 EIR Requests**

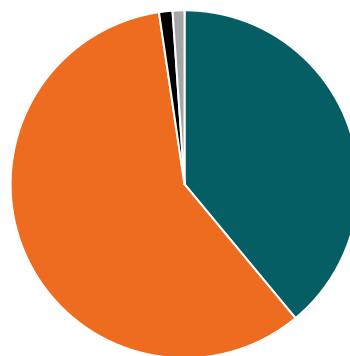
**17 DPA Requests**

**15 Subject Access Requests**

**1,362 overall requests**

**(1,199 in 2021/22)**

## Information Requests 2022/23



■ FOI (39%) ■ EIR (59%) ■ DPA (1%) ■ SAR (1%)

## How we performed this year:

# 99%

of all requests were  
completed within the  
statutory time frame.

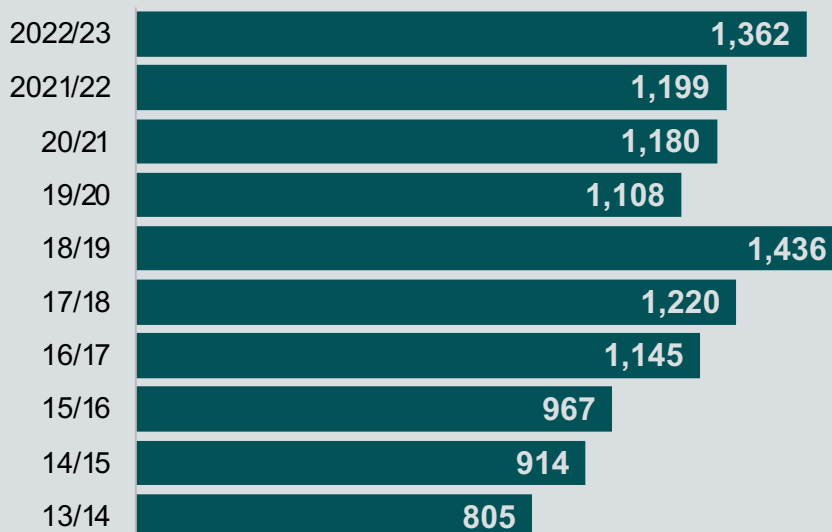
**Since 2010 there have  
been over 12,000  
requests, including:**

**7,713 FOI Requests**

**4,850 EIR Requests**

**255 DPA Requests**

## Total Requests per Year





# Complaints Management

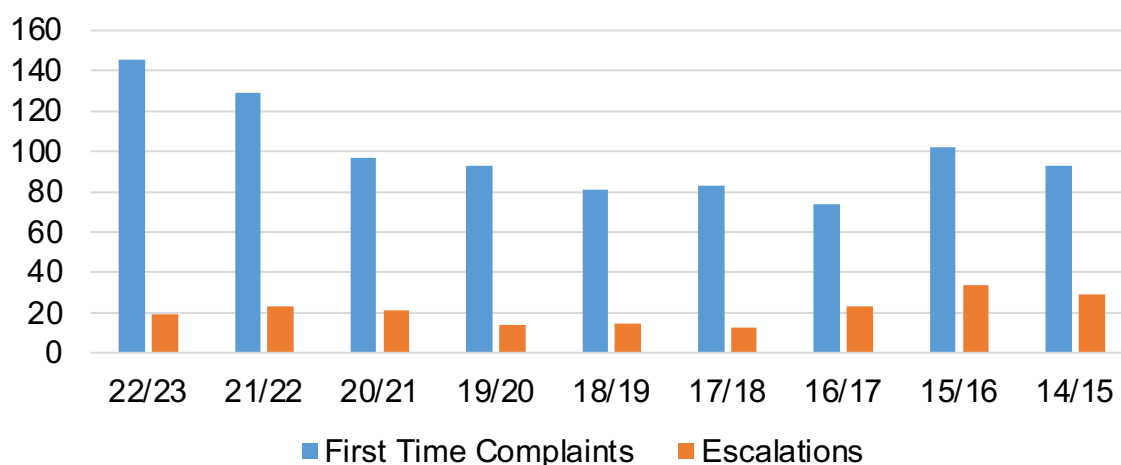
The Council takes complaints very seriously and deals with them quickly and efficiently. We are committed to provide excellent customer service, but realise that sometimes things can, and do, go wrong.

We want to know if our residents are unhappy or dissatisfied with our services so that, wherever possible, we can try to put things right. We value residents' roles in helping us improve our services.

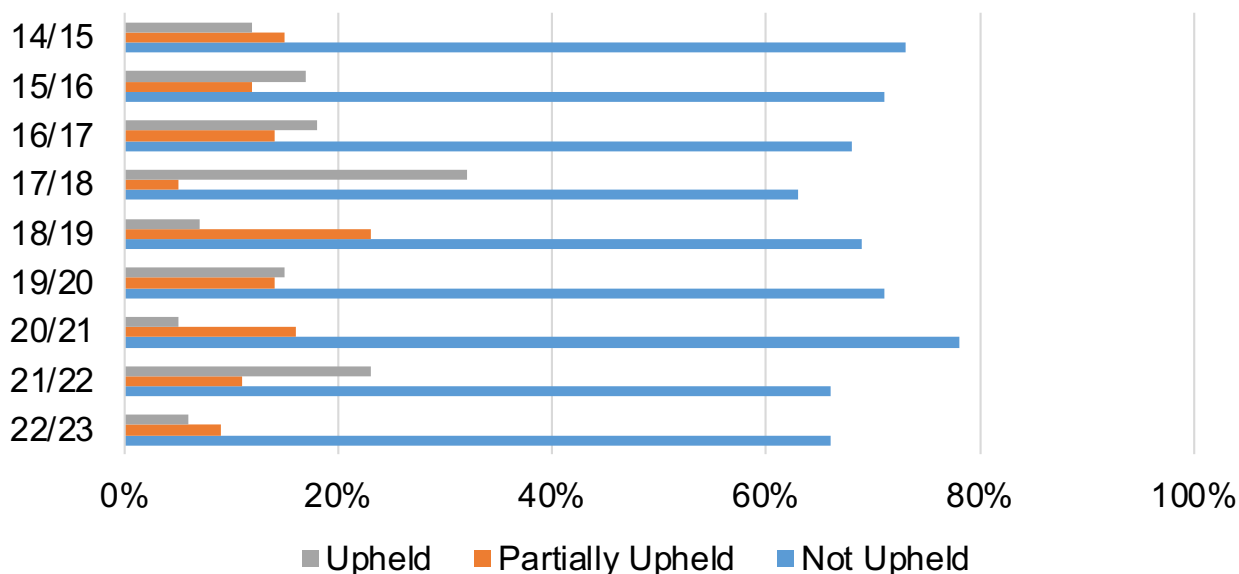
## Key Statistics for 2022/23:

- 145 Stage 1 complaints, 108 compliments and 24 comments
- 54% of all complaints made were upheld to some extent.

### Overall Complaints Received



### Complaint Outcomes



# Consultation

Consultation is any activity that gives local communities a voice and an opportunity to influence important decisions. It involves listening to, and learning from, residents, businesses, Town and Parish Councils, and partners before decisions are made or priorities are set.

We received over 6,600 consultation responses from residents and stakeholders on a variety of topics including: corporate planning, social media, digital access and local projects (please see examples below):

Survey	Total Responses
Corporate Consultation (NK Plan, Climate Change, Culture and Leisure and NewsNK)	2,475
Customer Service Satisfaction (General)	1,393
Social Media	1,156
Annual Survey of Tenant (Satisfaction)	1,061
Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project	424
Digital Access	135

## The Headlines from our Surveys

**94% of respondents to the 'Digital Hub Survey' stated they learnt something new after attending the session and 85% of respondents stated their confidence with computers had increased**

**91% of respondents who completed the 'Disabled Adaptation Survey' said their views and opinions were listened to when the adaptation was being designed**

**85% of tenants who responded to the 'Tenant Satisfaction Survey' stated they are 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the Landlord service**

**73% respondents to the 'Corporate Consultation Survey' 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that we have to act urgently to address climate change**

**100% of survey respondents to the 'Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Survey' agreed that spaces within Sleaford are important for wildlife**



# Decision Making:

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- ▶ Political Structure
- ▶ Executive Board
- ▶ Scrutiny Committees:
  - » Resources Scrutiny Committee
  - » Flourishing Communities Scrutiny Committee



# Political Groupings and Decision Making

## Political Structure

The Council has a total of 43 councillors spread over 24 wards. The role of an elected Member includes setting strategy, allocating resources, monitoring performance, representing people within their ward, and community leadership and engagement.

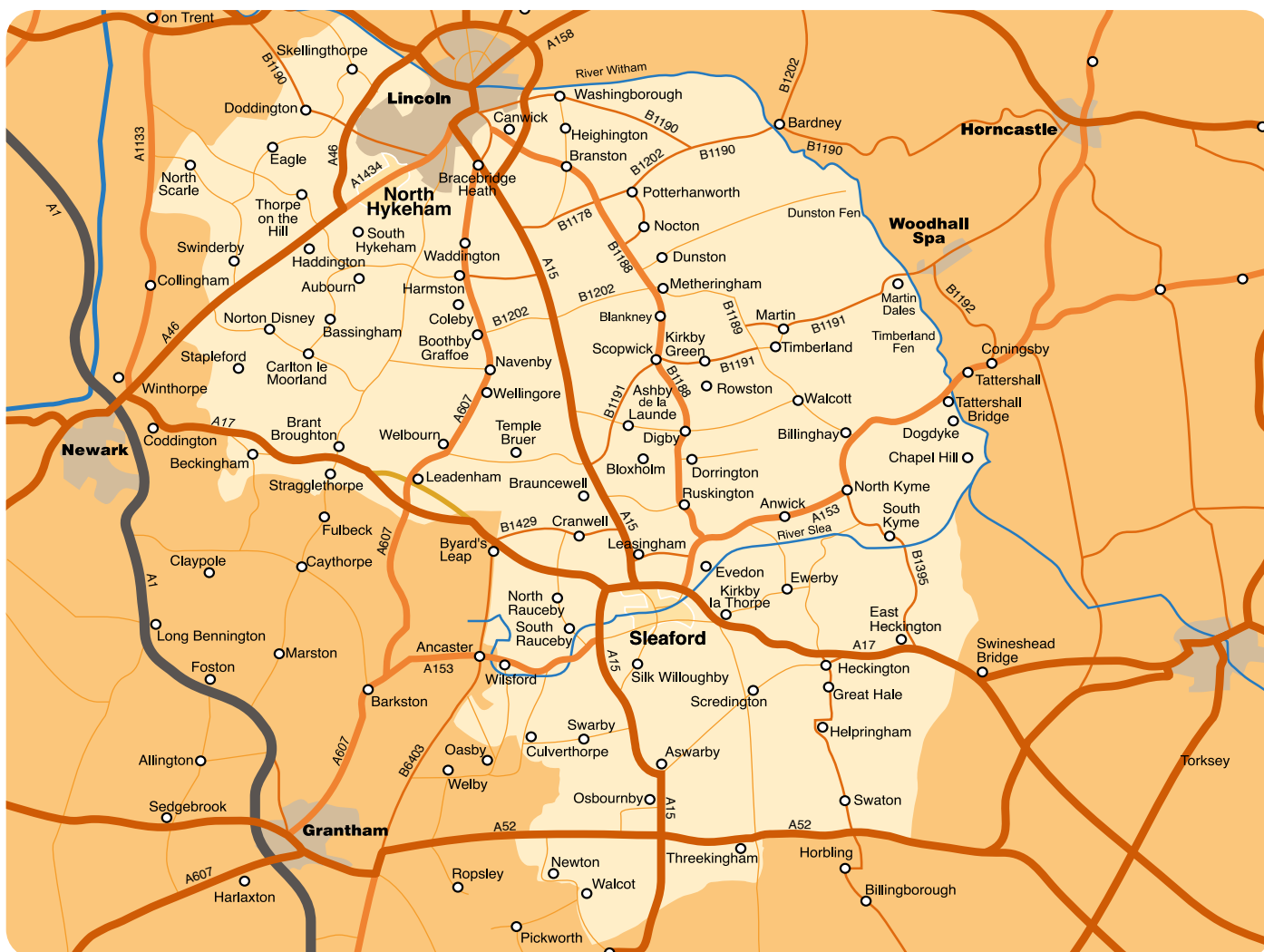
### As of May 2023, there are:

**25 Councillors - NK Conservative Group**

**11 Councillors - Lincolnshire Independents**

**2 Councillors - Labour**

**5 Councillors - Independent (no political party)**



# Executive Board

## The Executive Board:

- Provides leadership at a top level
- Recommends the budget and key policy proposals to Full Council for agreement
- Decides policies and is responsible for implementation of major plans and strategies
- The Forward Plan, which is published every month and covers the four months from the date of publication, contains decisions likely to be made by the Executive Board.

## Executive Board Members



**Cllr Richard Wright**  
(Leader)



**Cllr Ian Carrington**  
(Deputy Leader)



**Cllr Mary Green**



**Cllr Mark Smith**



**Cllr Sally Tarry**

## A flavour of the decisions made:

- Approval of the Corporate Plan - The NK Plan 2023-26  
- and the Strategic Planning Framework
- Approval of the Member Development Strategy 2023-27
- Approval of the Cost of Living Strategy
- Approval of the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24
- Approval of the NK Financial Plan 2023/24





# Resources Scrutiny Committee

## Key Actions for the Year:

As well as their regular updates on Performance Management, Finance Monitoring, Treasury Management, Human Resources Dashboard and Lafford Homes, Members received the Target Budget for the year ahead. Other highlights include:

## Revenues and Benefits Performance Update:

The Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits presented the Committee with the annual performance report. It was noted it had been a challenging year for many customers and the Team, however there was a rise for in-year collection of Council Tax and, nationally, North Kesteven was the 28th highest in terms of Council Tax in-year collection, compared with 35th in the previous year. The Committee also understood the significant challenges for businesses and noted the reliefs and grants available to assist with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside this, the Welfare and Benefits Advice Team were receiving large volumes of enquiries and spending considerable time with customers to ensure they received all the benefits and income they were entitled to. The Committee thanked the Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits for the report and expressed thanks to the Team for their hard work during these challenging times.

## Revenues and Benefits Performance Update:

The Development and Zero Carbon Manager presented Members with an update on the Council's Retrofit Trials, grant funding and improvements to the housing stock. Members were informed that three types of properties formed the retrofit trial – well performing properties (EPC rated B), average performing properties (EPC rated C) and poor performing properties (EPC below D and E). The trials aimed to establish the cost of the works, the time impact for tenants, as well as whether works could be carried out whilst tenants were living within the property. At this time, four properties had been completed and the types of works carried out was individual to each property. A further two properties were currently undergoing works and then another two were due for completion. Alongside the Retrofit Trials, Retrofit Surveys were being undertaken on poor performing properties to identify shortcomings and improvements, particularly regarding thermal efficiency and carbon emissions. Furthermore, the Council had secured grant funding through the 'Green Homes Grant', which had enabled solar panel installation to be carried out on 79 Council homes. The Committee thanked the Team and noted the report.

## NK Plan 2023-26 Refresh:

The Strategy and Transformation Manager presented the refreshed NK Plan for 2023-26. Members noted the Green Thread sitting at the heart of the Strategic Planning Framework, and also discussed the external economic challenges. Members focused on the SWOT methodology (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) noting new additions for 2022. Members also considered the alignment between the Council's 2030 Community Strategy, the NK Plan and the draft Greater Lincolnshire Vision for 2050. The Committee thanked the Officer and noted the report.



**Cllr Stephen Roe**  
(Chairman)



**Councillor Dave Parry**  
(Vice-Chairman)

## Service Areas

- Corporate Information
- Democratic Services and Member Development
- ExCITe
- Efficiency and Value for Money
- Financial Services, including Annual Target Budget
- Health and Safety
- Human Resources and Corporate Training
- ICT
- Insurance
- Lafford Homes
- Payroll and Exchequer
- Performance
- Procurement
- Revenues and Benefits Client
- Risk and Governance
- Strategy and Business Transformation

# Resources Scrutiny Committee

## **Annual Procurement Report:**

The Interim Head of Commercial Services at Lincolnshire County Council provided the Committee with the Annual Procurement Report. Members were provided with an update regarding staffing levels and challenges facing the service, particularly in relation to recruitment and retention of colleagues. The Committee also reviewed key highlights, including the savings of over £2.4 million across the Partnership; the additional £32,000 income for the Service; six collaborative projects; and that 57% of contracts were awarded to local suppliers. The Chairman thanked the Interim Head of Commercial Services for the report.

## **Localised Council Tax Support Scheme:**

The Committee received details on the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for the next financial year, which was currently in the public consultation period. The Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits highlighted the proposed options, caseload and consultation timetable to the Committee. The Chairman and the Committee supported the Council Tax Support Scheme and thanked the Officer for the report.

## **Leisure Contracts Update:**

During this period, the Executive Board Member with Special Responsibility for Development, Economic and Cultural Services, Councillor Clegg, presented the report and Members received information in relation to the current performance of the Council's leisure contracts. The report also provided information regarding the ongoing impact of high delivery costs, user numbers, customer engagement, satisfaction and financial information. The Committee congratulated the Team, particularly at the Hub, for their hard work.

## **Housing Delivery and Investment:**

The Committee received a briefing on the operation of the Council's Housing Delivery and Investment programme. Councillor Carrington, the Executive Board Member with Special Responsibility for Housing and Property Services, introduced and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked the Chairman of the two Scrutiny Committees for the opportunity to provide the presentation to Members, which also included an update on the Council's Retrofit trial. Members had the opportunity to ask questions after each section of the presentation had been delivered. The Committee received details of the following areas within the Housing and Property Services Division: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Overview; Delivering the Service; Operational Delivery; Repairs; Investment; Retrofit; A Day in the Life of Housing; and Housing Strategy. The Chairman thanked Councillor Carrington and Officers for the informative presentation.

## **Gender Pay Gap:**

The Gender Pay Gap report was presented by the Corporate Information Manager. The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee of the Pay Gap between male and female employees as at March 2022. The Chairman thanked the Officer and noted the report.

# Flourishing Communities Scrutiny Committee

## Key Actions for the Year:

The Flourishing Communities Scrutiny Committee engaged in some valuable scrutiny over the past year with internal and external representatives being invited to discuss a range of issues. Some highlights include:

## Climate Emergency Emerging Strategy and Action Plan:

The Strategy and Transformation Manager presented the report providing information on the background for, and approach taken, to refresh the original Climate Emergency Strategy. This included a proposal that it be developed into a shorter and more agile document, which would be subject to an annual refresh. Members asked questions on a variety of issues and, at the end of the agenda item, the Chairman endorsed the draft Action Plan.

## Alternative Fuel Hire Vehicles:

The Licensing Team Leader presented a report referred to the Scrutiny Committee by the General Licensing Committee for consideration. It provided an update on the progress made following the promotion of the use of Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles. Members commented and asked questions on a number of matters, including cost and effectiveness of Alternative Fuel Hire Vehicles. The Chairman thanked the Officer for the report, and noted it would be reviewed further by the Committee the following financial year.

## Storm Overflows and Sewerage Releases

The Environmental Protection Team Leader presented the report which informed the Committee of the legislation, history and local impact of sewerage river releases. Members commented and asked questions regarding costs; role of Anglian Water; role of the Environment Agency; and water quality. It was considered that Anglian Water be asked to provide further information, including a copy of their capital works programme, on additional measures that were planned to be undertaken to reduce overflow occurring. In the meantime, the Chairman thanked the Officer for the report and noted further scrutiny work to be undertaken by the Committee.

## Tenant (Resident) Engagement Strategy

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the Tenant (Resident) Engagement Strategy 2023-2025 which included the vision and objectives; approach for digital engagement; ways for residents to get involved; and a delivery plan. Members thanked the Officer and noted the report.



**Councillor Bozena Allan (Chairman)**



**Councillor Nikki Dillon (Vice-Chairman)**

## Service Areas

- Building Control
- Climate Change
- Community Safety
- Communications and Graphics
- Cultural Services - Leisure Client, Sports, Arts, Tourism and Heritage
- Customer Services
- Development Management
- Economic Development
- Emergency Planning
- Enforcement
- Environmental Services and Public Protection
- Housing (Private Sector, Housing Tenants and Landlord Services)
- Local Plan
- Licensing
- Open Spaces and Trees
- Property Services
- Strategic Partnerships
- Street Scene
- Utilities – broadband/connectivity
- Waste Management



# Flourishing Communities

## Scrutiny Committee

### **Storm Overflows and Sewerage Releases – Anglian Water**

A presentation, followed by a question and answer session, was led by the Regional Engagement Manager and Regional Engagement Programme Manager from Anglian Water in relation to storm overflow and sewerage releases. Members set out various questions and sought clarification on specific issues, for example, impact of storm overflows, investment, awareness programmes, creating and maintaining partnerships, impact assessments and sustainable development. Members thanked the Anglian Water representatives for the opportunity to have a full and frank discussion on sewerage and drainage issues affecting the District, and it was agreed that they be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss, in particular, the progress made in relation to the monitoring of sewage treatment works.

### **Success of Issuing Health Related Grants**

The Assistant Director of Corporate and Community Services presented the report, where it was noted the scheme stemmed from the work of a former Task and Finish Group established to examine health and wellbeing support that might be made available by the Council, with a particular focus on mental health. The Executive Board had approved the establishment of the Council's Health Wellbeing and Resilience Fund with grants available to charitable, voluntary and community organisations; church groups; community interest companies; and non-statutory agencies that are based in the District. Bids were being considered from existing and new organisations, whilst it was also noted there was a sustainability element built into the planning process. During the Committee, Members questioned the impacts of individual schemes and outcomes of the projects. Members complimented the Assistant Director of Corporate and Community Services for the work undertaken to ensure the success of the scheme and noted the report.

### **Update on Warm Spaces**

The Assistant Director of Corporate and Community Services updated the Committee on the County Wide Warm Spaces/Packs programme. The programme focused on ways in which the community could be supported through the increasing costs of living, particularly the difficulties being faced as a result of significant increases in energy and wider costs. Consideration was also given to how best use the wider available resources, including the 'NHS Winter Pressures Fund', with a view to pooling these resources into the county wide programme. It was also noted how it was important to avoid a 'post code lottery' by which communities in need missed out on funding, therefore the county wide approach had been welcomed by partners. Members thanked the Assistant Director of Corporate and Community Services and were pleased with the success of the county wide programme, and expressed the hope it would continue and also be used as cool spaces in the summer months during the extreme weather conditions.