

Parish Update – August 2022

Some news hot off the press this month ... we are in the process of launching a great new app for everyone's mobile phone which will alert you to special offers and incentives from local businesses.

It's called HelloSK and will help support local firms as they continue to recover from the pandemic.

From the business point of view, it's easy-to-use and will help them win more customers.

For the customer, it has the benefit of letting them know about special offers in real time as they walk around in local shopping areas. Basically, it pings your phone when you're near a trader or venue with something to offer. There will also be listings for local events.

HelloSK is free to use and has been paid for with money from SKDC's £250,000 allocation from the Government Welcome Back Fund.

As you know, 'growth and the economy' is one of the key priorities in our Corporate Plan and this will provide even more support for businesses across the district by encouraging residents to shop locally.

If you'd like more information on HelloSK, or pointers on where to download the app from, please ask me afterwards.

Military support

I am extremely proud that South Kesteven District Council has been awarded the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award. It is for employers who commit to key responsibilities on housing and the employment of service personnel.

We are one of only 18 organisations across the East Midlands to hold this status.

We all know that South Kesteven has a proud military history and as a Council we take our responsibilities towards current and former Armed Forces personnel and their families, extremely seriously. This award recognises our commitment to supporting them in every way that we can.

I would also like to share the news that Cllr Richard Dixon-Warren is the new Armed Forces Champion for the Council. He is a former senior Army officer and will give extra impetus to the award we have just won.

He will help promote our work both within the Council and externally to business and partner organisations.

I am pleased to add that our former Armed Forces Champions continue to act as Ambassadors to support events and awareness.

Better matches for council tenants

We are introducing a new council house allocations policy to give residents more choice. This should make for better matches and - ultimately - fewer empty properties.

Instead of matching people needs directly from the waiting list, the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme shows available housing online for eligible applicants to bid for.

It gives SKDC the opportunity to better match those most in need with suitable housing and to use our housing resources as effectively as possible.

All current applicants on the waiting list will be told about the changes ... and help will be provided to complete a new application.

Update on the county's caring response

Lincolnshire's significant contribution in supporting refugees over the years was celebrated during Refugee Week recently.

Almost 700 Ukrainian refugees are known to have settled in Lincolnshire as guests of 250 hosts and, as you know, our district is hosting more refugees than any other in Lincolnshire. Our special project team continues to work hard to ensure they receive the support they need.

More hosts are still being sought so if you or someone you know is interested in providing accommodation I would urge you to get in touch with the Lincolnshire Homes for Ukraine Team via the normal County Council phone number.

Anyone who wants to show support but is unable to offer accommodation, could consider donating to the Lincolnshire Community Foundation's Ukraine Refugee Appeal. More than £8,000 has already been raised and funds will help to meet the specific, individual and more personal needs of the arriving Ukrainian guests where these are not provided for by statutory support or their hosts.

Council Tax Rebate

Around 15,000 non-validated customers and those who do not pay by direct debit should now have received a letter in the post, which includes a barcode.

This barcode is for a £150 voucher, which can be redeemed from any Post Office branch. Once the Post Office is satisfied identification has been proved the voucher can be redeemed, either in cash or be credited to a bank account of the resident's choice.

And finally...

I was pleased to be able to support National Manufacturing Day recently, when businesses in South Kesteven opened their doors to the public.

We host a diverse range of business here in South Kesteven and work with our partners in all sectors to support sustainable and dynamic growth, something key to the success of the district.

It was also fantastic to get along and see the continued progress of our joint regeneration site, St Martin's Park in Stamford. The team have cracked on at a good pace and it's great to see this project moving forward, ultimately to deliver new homes, business space and retirement living.

On a personal note, I feel honoured to have been re-appointed as a board member on the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board of the Local Government Association for the year ahead.

We had a busy work programme last year and no doubt this year will be the same, and I am very much looking forward to working with them.