



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting in July 2025

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

4th March 2025 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Mill (in the Chair)
Councillors Cairns (substitute for Crofts), Hasthorpe, Holland, Humphrey, Lindley, Pettigrew and Wilson

Officers in attendance:

- David Baker (Contract Business Manager) (Equans)
- Geoff Barnes (Deputy Director of Public Health)
- Laura Bartle (Spatial Planning Policy Manager) (Equans)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Paul Evans (Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Housing, Highways and Transport)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director of Regeneration)
- Helen Johnson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Guy Lonsdale (Assistant Director Finance)
- Jason Papprell (Partnership Director) (Equans)
- Philip Quinn (Contract Performance Manager (Equans)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy, Strategy and Resources)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor Harness (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor Augusta

There was one member of the public and no press in attendance.

SPTISH.68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Crofts.

SPTISH.69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

SPTISH.70 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 14th January 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

SPTISH.71 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPTISH.72 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the current forward plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPTISH.73 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations previously made by this scrutiny panel which had been updated for reference at this meeting.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That, with regard to SPTISH.57 (Equans Performance report Quarter 3), information on the number of Section 215 notices and prosecutions be forwarded to members of this panel.
3. That, with regard to SPTISH.57 (Equans Performance report Quarter 3), the results of the tenants' survey be provided to members of this panel, and any red flags addressed.

SPTISH.74 FINANCE AND COUNCIL PLAN MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets presenting the Council Plan Performance Report for quarter three of 2024/25.

Members sought clarification on council priorities. Ms Robinson advised that the council's priorities remained the same and Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council) confirmed the overriding responsibilities.

In response to members questions on the temporary accommodation review, Mr Evans advised members that the review would cover all housing provision and that a strategic approach would be taken once complete. A further update would be given to members when available.

Members enquired about plans for more accommodation like Swan House. Mr Evans advised members that he recently presented a report to the Communities Scrutiny Panel on registering to become a housing provider and the choices made now would shape the direction the provision would take. A site visit by members of the panel looked at provisions that our partners could offer. When questioned why this had not been brought to this scrutiny panel, Ms Robinson advised that the whole housing agenda cut across both panels and confirmed this had arisen due to a request for more information around homelessness, which fell under the remit of the Communities Scrutiny Panel. Members felt that becoming a housing provider should be covered under the strategic element of this panel and clarification should be sought on this. Mr Jones advised officers would take this away and clarify the remit of both panels through the Executive Scrutiny Liaison Board.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That, once available, an update be provided to members of this panel on the temporary accommodation review.
3. That clarification be provided through Executive Scrutiny Liaison Board on the remit of this panel in relation to housing issues.

SPTISH.75 EQUANS PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4

The panel considered a report from Equans containing a summary of performance against key performance indicators for the period October to December 2024.

With reference to flood risk management, panel members advised officers that they had received reports that the sustainable drainage system (SUDs) project on Broadway was not working correctly and was still an issue. Mr Papprell advised they had received no complaints but would investigate and provide an update to members on this issue.

Mr Papprell advised members that this was the penultimate Equans report before the contract returned to the council. Further reporting to this panel would therefore happen after the contract had ended. Discussions with North East Lincolnshire Council colleagues would ascertain how future reporting would move forward.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That an update on the SUD's project on Broadway, Grimsby be provided to members of this panel.

SPTISH.76 LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION TIMETABLE

The panel considered a report from Portfolio Holder Housing Infrastructure and Transport on the Local Development Scheme which included a revised timetable for the main stages of the local plan's preparation.

Ms Bartle gave the panel an update on the report advising members of the council's statutory requirements and advised that the timetable presented to members shows some delays/slippages from its predecessor due to recent National Planning Policy changes. Ms Bartle assured members she would return to scrutiny once a more detailed version of the plan became available.

In response to members' questions on the Needs Assessment, Ms Bartle advised members that it would be updated, advising this was very complex and there were very tight timescales.

Members noted that staffing was classed as a high risk within the report and enquired if this was an area of concern. Officers advised that there were no current vacancies, and staff were motivated and worked proactively, however, the team were vulnerable due to how lean the team were and the lack of qualified staff availability. Mr Jaines-White advised that they hoped to build resilience into the team with funding for

a graduate role. Ms Bartle added that Spatial Planning had carried out unforeseen work with Greater Lincolnshire and this joined up work was also a statutory requirement. This area of work had its own issues, specifically around sign offs, which they had little control over. Although currently there was no cause for concern, it could potentially impact on the Local Plan.

In response to the panel's questions on neighbourhood plans, Ms Bartle advised that having a solid Local Plan was better and that she could not foresee neighbourhood plans happening within the area, although consideration would be given if any came forward.

RESOLVED –

1. The report be noted.
2. That a further update on the Local Plan be received by this panel when appropriate.

SPTISH.77 EAST MARSH RETROFIT SCHEME

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills seeking approval of the principle of, and the next steps of progressing, the East Marsh Retrofit scheme.

Mr Dowson gave a brief introduction to the pilot scheme which would see retrofit works carried out to approximately 60 properties on Rutland Street, Grimsby. Mr Dowson advised members that, after carrying out critical consultation and surveys to ascertain the nature of the works and costings, he would return to scrutiny for further review. Mr Dowson added that he was also liaising with colleagues across the council to see if additional funding opportunities would align with this scheme, for example, highways or additional housing grants which could assist with efficiencies.

Members broadly welcomed the scheme and sought assurance that, where possible, works be carried out by local firms and contractors and that opportunities to tender for the works be made available to local businesses. Mr Dowson advised that initial survey works would be carried out by the council's regeneration partner, Equans, whose national team were experts in retrofits, but that subsequent subcontract works would be subject to normal procurement approaches.

Members enquired about the selection criteria for the scheme. Mr Dowson advised there were several elements to this, and he had been working with colleagues in public health to identify various measures, not just the properties but the families that live in them. Residents and owners would need to be willing and able to have the works carried out and the initial phase would establish this. Mr Dowson reiterated that this

was a pilot scheme and that the scheme would form baseline research with public health and other colleagues to enable impacts of the scheme to support the wider area for future projects.

In response to concerns around the potential counterproductive downside of updated properties becoming unaffordable for existing tenants once the works were completed, officers advised that consideration would be given to implementing a charge on properties. A time restriction could be placed on sales of updated properties to enable potential recoupment of money invested.

The panel recommended that the concerns of the panel with regard to how landlords may treat existing tenants and tenancies once works had been carried out, be noted. This would include homeowners who may also profit from the scheme.

Members raised concerns around the potential spend on the properties being the same as the current value of the properties and that, although they appreciated that costings were not readily available at this time, there would be a need for scrutiny to be aware of cost implications as the scheme developed. Additionally, the panel enquired if consideration had been given to alternative options, for example, purchasing a smaller number of properties and then developing them. Mr Dowson advised that funding was specifically for the retrofit of properties in Rutland Street.

Members felt that the report did not cover energy efficiencies and the environment in any great depth. Mr Dowson advised he would take on board members comments and enhance the environmental benefits of the scheme in future reporting. Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council) advised members that the report did contain details on the environmental benefits and gave the panel more details on the background of the scheme. He advised that the scheme was intended to be part of levelling up rather than just making environmental improvements and that the pilot scheme would provide a local and national benchmark and could result in further funding becoming available.

Members noted that there was an expectation within the project to raise aspirations of residents but were concerned that only a proportion of the street would benefit at this stage and that this could be to the detriment of the remaining residents.

Panel members expressed their concern that this scheme would only benefit Rutland Street when there were other areas within the borough which required the same level of improvements, Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council) reemphasised that it was a very bespoke scheme that was funded following a ministerial visit to the area. to the panel felt that there the profile of other areas needed to be raised so that they could benefit from future investment.

Mr Dowson responded to members question on whether there were any restrictions on how the money pot could be spent and confirmed that were not. Mr Evans added Homes England were interested in the pilot scheme and hoped this would attract additional funding to benefit the whole borough.

Members enquired if economies of scale would be a criterion of the scheme. Mr Dowson confirmed this would form part of the criteria once surveys and consultations had been completed. This was highlighted as a potential barrier to smaller contractors. With regard to an initial figure to set the scheme up, officers confirmed that up to £100k had been identified to complete the surveys and consultation works.

The panel enquired about the anticipated public health benefits of the scheme. Mr Barnes confirmed that one of his officers was working closely with Mr Dowson and that poor quality housing conditions could be a factor in respiratory and mental health conditions. An evaluation framework would be established to monitor outcomes over the coming years with a view to report on any benefits for future schemes.

Members asked that that the East Marsh Retrofit scheme be included in this panel's work programme and officers confirmed that they expected to be able to return to the panel in late summer of this year.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the concerns of the panel with regard to how landlords may treat existing tenants and tenancies once works had been carried out and how homeowners may profit from the scheme, be noted. This to include.
3. That the East Marsh Retrofit scheme be included in this panel's work programme and a further update be submitted in due course.

SPTISH.78 TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2024/25 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

The panel considered a report from Statutory Scrutiny Officer which reflected on the 2024/25 municipal year and the work undertaken by the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel. The panel also considered, within its terms of reference, suggestions to be included in the 2025/26 work programme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the East Marsh Retrofit scheme be added to this panel's work programme for 2025/26.

SPTISH.79 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions for the portfolio holder at this meeting.

SPTISH.80 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.08 pm.