

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE 2024 - 2025

1. Introduction

Welcome to the annual scrutiny report, which highlights the key scrutiny activities and developments in North East Lincolnshire Council during the 2024/25 Municipal Year. The report provides a summary of the work undertaken by scrutiny in 2024-25 and outlines likely future work programmes.

Scrutiny has a key role within the Council's governance arrangements to support effective delivery of the council's priorities and provide challenge, as appropriate, to make sure that the basis for decisions being taken by the Council are robust. Whilst the Council has retained five scrutiny panels, the past year has seen a change to the council's scrutiny arrangements. Alongside the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, the Communities Scrutiny Panel and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, two new panels have been established – the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel and the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel. The five scrutiny panels have been involved in a broad range of work; including providing challenge on key decisions in advance of consideration by Cabinet, monitoring service improvements, task and finish work, carrying out visits and working with partners on key areas affecting the residents of North East Lincolnshire.

Areas of focus have included the Children's Services improvement agenda, elective home education, household support, empty homes, regeneration of the resort of Cleethorpes, mental health, managing the disabled facilities grant, planning policy and the Corporation Bridge project. The panels have also been involved in joint work, providing challenge on the skills strategy and continuing their involvement in the budget setting process, with all Members invited to attend both informal and formal sessions to comment on proposals prior to final decisions being made by full Council. The panels have also considered the refresh of the Council Plan, contributing directly to the formulation of the key priorities of the organisation. Task and finish reviews have been undertaken regarding traffic management co-ordination and the transition from the Equans partnership. These reviews have explored innovation and helped to bring new thinking to issues of local importance. Across the year, scrutiny's work has led to a number of recommendations being made to Cabinet with the intention of strengthening final decisions and improving outcomes. These have been broadly welcomed by Cabinet.

Key areas of focus for scrutiny in North East Lincolnshire during the coming year are expected to include a diverse range of subjects – food poverty, the Library and Archives Review, dentistry, the Local Plan, nature recovery and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision. The panels will continue to monitor the Council's budget and performance indicators contained within the Council Plan.

Joanne Robinson, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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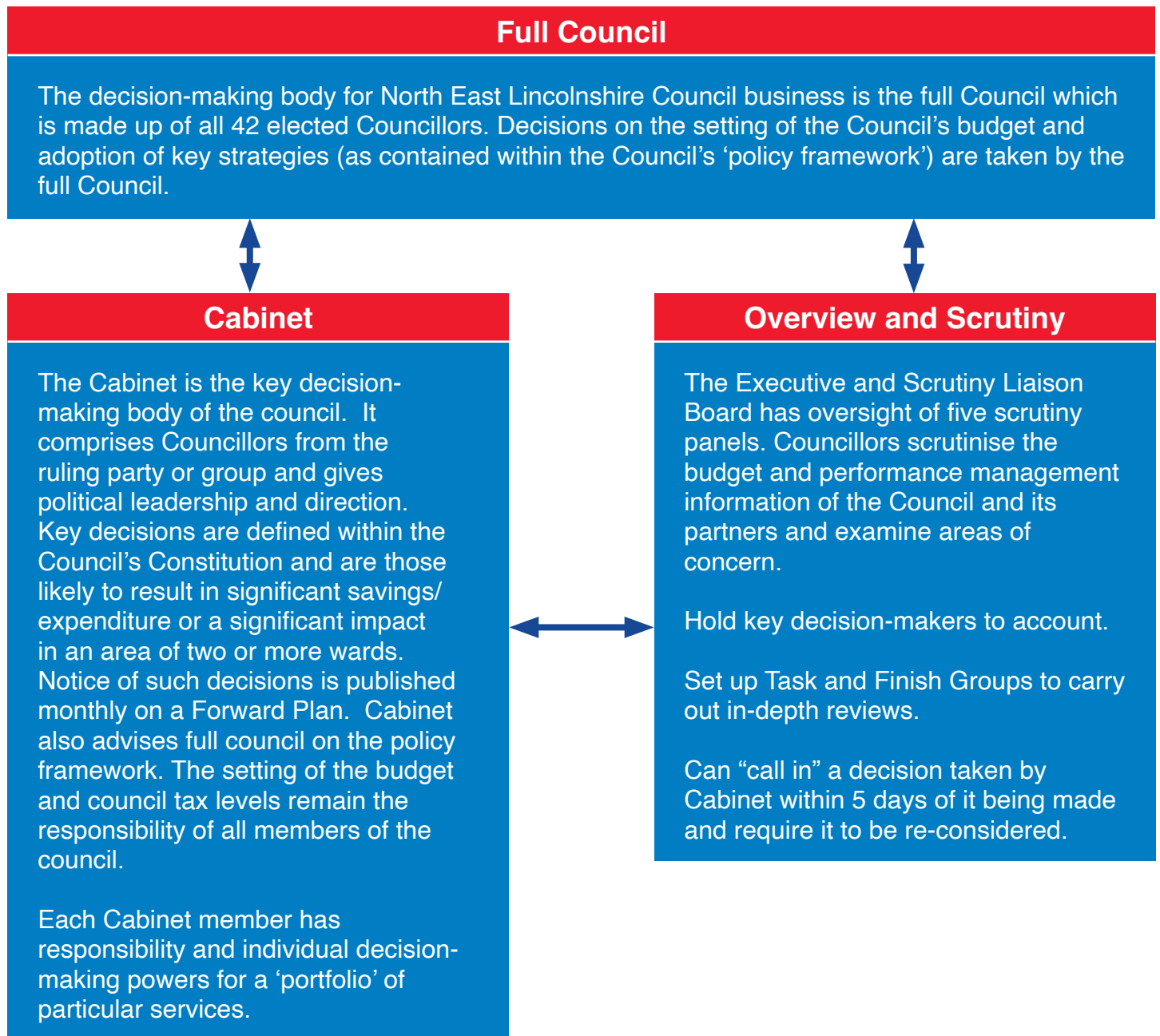
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2. Scrutiny in North East Lincolnshire



Please note that decisions regarding certain functions are determined by 'regulatory' committees of the council such as the Planning Committee and the Licensing and Community Protection Committee. Such decisions do not fall under the remit of Scrutiny. There is co-ordination between Scrutiny and the Audit and Governance Committee on matters of mutual concern.

Overview

Scrutiny is a process that enables Councillors who are not Members of the Council's decision-making process to review and scrutinise matters affecting local people.

The role of Elected Members performing the overview and scrutiny function is to:

- Review and report on issues that affect the economic, environmental and social well-being of local people.
- Act as a check and balance to the Council's decision makers, examining and reviewing decisions and holding the Executive to account.
- Consider the work of public bodies operating outside the Council but which affect local residents, for example, local health services.
- Contribute to the development of future policies and strategies that will help improve services for local people.
- Involve local people in council decision making:
- Scrutiny is carried out using a range of methods, including panel meetings, working groups and select committees, but in all cases the process is non-political and Members from all groups participate.

Our Panels

Our panels and chairs this year were:

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Paul Silvester

Communities Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Nicola Aisthorpe

Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Keith Brookes

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Karl Wilson

Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Sheldon Mill

Thanks are noted to Councillors, on all panels, for their contribution to the work of scrutiny over the last Municipal year.

3. Scrutiny



Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

This municipal year the Panel have continued to receive their regular updates on the Children Services Improvement Journey. The panel congratulated the new management team on all the work done and progress made regarding performance and implementation of the improvement journey. The panel continues to seek reassurance around workforce issues and maintains a focus on recruitment and retention. The panel has examined systems and processes in place and enquired about current performance in areas where concerns had previously been raised. The Panel welcomed the opportunities presented by officers to drive forward transformational change.

The panel maintained an interest in the future of the council's nursery and daycare provisions. The panel welcomed the progress made by the settings that had been subject to a previous consultation around potential closure and the good relationship that officers now had with those settings. The panel were impressed with the raft of support from the local authority, including constructive financial support, capital advice and early years advice.

The panel considered a number of reports prior to decision by Cabinet. This included the council's offer to foster carers, particularly in relation to retention and recruitment. Members supported the recommendations but sought clarification

First and foremost, may I take this opportunity to thank members and officers for their continued support, professional input and their valuable contributions to the work programme of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel. Throughout the year I believe the panel have been very effective in scrutinising, challenging and holding officers to account for all aspects of the work programme. During the year we have witnessed major improvement across all areas of children's services and I feel scrutiny has played an important role in supporting the improvement journey and the leadership team as we approach a significant Ofsted Inspection.

Councillor
Paul Silvester
Chair



around how the new offer would affect carers who are currently on the top range of payment and questioned whether the Council Tax discount being offered was fair. The panel also received a Cabinet report on the recommissioning of speech and language provision. Members queried whether the financial envelope was realistic for this provision, but after receiving reassurance supported the recommendations within the report. The panel endorsed recommendations contained within further Cabinet reports on the 'Local Offer to Care Experienced People', 'Care Experience as a Locally Protected Characteristic' and the 'Recommissioning of Dedicated Outreach Support Service and Outreach Provision for Children with Autism or Communication and Interaction Needs'.

The panel had some reservations over a Cabinet report on Children's Homes Transformation as it was felt that the report lacked detail around the financial implications. However, after a motion fell to defer the report, other panel members were happy to agree with the recommendations within the Cabinet report.

The panel has welcomed the involvement of external partners and the public. There were public questions around the consultation on the maintained nurseries and daycare settings. The panel was keen to understand how external partners were contributing to the Children Services agenda and was pleased to hear them report on the improved relationship with North East Lincolnshire Council. The Director of Children Services reported that the partnership had previously been disjointed but had now transformed and she felt that everything was now more aligned.

The panel monitored progress with school attendance, school transport, the Family Hubs and the provision of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) specialist free school. There were some concerns raised as part of the Family Hub's update around access and it was agreed that this would stay on the panel's work programme to receive demographical data to show where service users were coming from. The panel asked several questions on school transport, particularly around cost.

A special meeting of the panel was called to allow a detailed discussion on Elective Home Education. The panel wanted assurance that children were receiving efficient, full-time education which was suitable to their 'age, ability, aptitude' and any special educational needs they may have, particularly in reference to children being home educated. The panel felt strongly that they wanted to support this agenda and recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State to ask for local authorities to be compensated for children who are not full-time pupils at any school and provide more resources to enable local authorities to support the families of home educated children.

The panel has also continued its joint working with the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on the Skills Strategy. Progress with this strategy has been heavily scrutinised, but Members felt reassured that the strategy was being implemented effectively. This joint work will continue into the next Municipal Year.

Other areas that have been scrutinised this year included:

- Finance Monitoring and Council Plan Performance reports.
- Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report
- School Attainment
- Alternative Provision.

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Progress of the SEND specialist free school and SEND Provision
- School Transport including costs
- Family Hubs – focus on demographical data that shows where service users for Family Hub were coming from
- Alternative Provision
- Exclusions
- Deep Dive on Finances



Communities Scrutiny Panel

The panel have had an interesting year covering a broad range of topics within their panel remit.

At the start of the year the panel received the Annual Youth Justice Plan for 2024/25 for comment and pre-decision scrutiny prior to its submission to Cabinet. Members were particularly interested in becoming more engaged with the plan and asked for further information on a number of areas and regular updates.

In the Autumn of last year, the panel received an update on progress with the Depot Rationalisation project. The panel had previously raised several concerns on this matter, particularly around the additional cost of the project. Members highlighted the cost of piling within the report and subsequently asked for a more detailed breakdown of the piling work as they wished to better understand the various aspects of the project that had impacted on the overall cost.

The panel received an update on how the council had utilised the Household Support Fund (HSF). Members were pleased with the announcement from Government on the six-month extension of the HSF, but remained concerned around continued uncertainty of future funding. Subsequently the panel recommended to Cabinet that a letter be sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting further clarification of the Government's plans beyond the additional six-month funding period. Subsequently this led to an additional recommendation to Cabinet asking the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities to send a further letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, advocating for adjustments to the Household Support Fund to account for inflation from 2025 onwards and to emphasise the specific needs of the borough highlighting why sustained or increased

"From the outset, I aimed to strengthen how the panel carries out scrutiny. As Chair, I revised the previous format by removing all time restrictions on questioning, allowing for more thorough and stronger challenge. I worked with officers to move away from verbal-only reporting, ensuring both members and the public had time to review detailed written reports in advance. I'd like to thank officers for their time and collaborative approach, and panel members for their active participation throughout the year. Effective scrutiny relies on open, informed dialogue, and I believe the panel's collective work this year has helped ensure decisions better reflect the voices and priorities of our communities."

Councillor
Nicola Aisthorpe
Chair



funding was critical. Members were also interested in whether the council was actively publishing the HSF around the borough for our residents. Officers agreed to provide some further information on how it was being distributed and advertised.

As a result of a question to the portfolio holder on the length of time being taken to get empty properties ready for new tenants, given the shortage of houses within the borough, the panel invited a representative from Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP) to provide an update on their approach to empty homes. The presentation was very positive focusing on LHP's approach to reducing turnaround times on void properties - a key area of interest to members – and a new empty homes process. The panel heard about key activities, challenges and actions being taken. The panel had the opportunity to ask questions and felt that this was an important step towards the council improving its relationship with LHP in the future.

The panel has long held an interest in whether the council should register to become a housing provider and officers provided an update, highlighting the benefits of taking this approach forward. This interest continued with the panel undertaking a field trip to Ongo Homes to look at housing sites in Doncaster and Scunthorpe.

Continuing on the housing theme, the panel received a call-in relating to a Cabinet decision to pilot a Selective Licensing scheme. The panel heard concerns from two ward councillors around problems with rogue landlords and waste in alleyways. The panel discussed the call-in at length, taking into account many factors including ward boundaries and which areas should be piloted. Officers provided assurance around the proactive approach being taken to enforce housing standards through selective licensing and confirmed that various monitoring measures were in place already with these schemes. The panel concluded that the decision should be released for implementation but with a commitment from this panel to evaluate the Landlord's Charter within a year of it being implemented.

The panel have been updated on the current operating model for the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and provided challenge around data in particular. Members remained concerned with signage, particularly with dog fouling, and cycling in and around the town centre. Subsequently, the panel asked for some further information including a breakdown of the fixed penalty notices issued under the dog control PSPO. The panel was also keen to understand the education work being undertaken with residents on dog fouling and the impact on the community. It was suggested that the council explore a campaign around dog fouling and encouraging the community to clear it up.

Another important piece of work this year has been the establishment of the Equans Working Group to oversee the Equans contract transition. The Working Group has fed into discussions around the resources required for the transition, including staffing and performance matters. The Working Group has reported recommendations around CCTV, security services and enforcement back through the Communities Scrutiny Panel prior to consideration at Cabinet. It has also recommended a further gateway review prior to the formal transition on 1st July 2025. These recommendations have been accepted by Cabinet as a valuable contribution to anticipated improvements through the new delivery model.

Further to a resolution from full Council following receipt of a petition, the panel considered a report on weed control and, specifically, the council's use of Glyphosate. The panel heard from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero who had undertaken some research around the impact of Glyphosate. The panel had a lengthy discussion exploring the three options contained within the report and recommended to Cabinet that Glyphosate be fully phased out in parks and open spaces but its use retained on highways and paths until a cost-effective option was available.

Furthermore, it requested that a trial be instigated to phase out in a specific highway area, with the outcome reported back to this panel. These recommendations have yet to be considered by Cabinet at the time of writing.

In addition to the visit to Ongo Homes, other panel site visits organised throughout the year have included a further visit to the new Border Control Point facility at Immingham and the CCTV facility in Doughty Road, Grimsby. The panel was also invited to visit Generations Food Pantry to learn about food provision. The panel wished to gain a better understanding of the sort of provision offered and some of the pressures, opportunities and community benefits that went along with operating them. The panel is keen to explore the Food Poverty Action Plan, once agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Members were updated on the Safer Streets 5 Programme of activities within the Grimsby Town Centre and were particularly pleased with the great work that had been undertaken to provide the new 'Haven Centre' and Horizon Youth Zone facilities within the town centre. It was positive to hear that this had helped reduce loitering and crime and disorder in and around the town centre.

Other areas that have been scrutinised this year included:

- Quarterly Council Plan, Resources and Finance Monitoring report.
- Year End Performance and Provisional Outturn report.
- The new Cleethorpes Country Park Management Plan.
- Update on the action plan associated with waste on private land.
- Annual Green Futures Report.
- Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan.

The following work remains of interest to the panel and will be carried forward into next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Update on Youth Justice Plan.
- Oversight of Food Poverty Action Plan.
- Joint Scrutiny Panel between Communities and Children and Lifelong Learning to receive and scrutinise the Youth Justice Plan.
- Violence against Women and Girls.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy Update.
- Cycling within the Town Centre.



Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel

During the municipal year, the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel have played a key role in the successful delivery of the Cleethorpes Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The panel had the opportunity to influence the project through a pre-Cabinet report on concept designs for Pier Gardens and Market Place, Cleethorpes. Members raised some queries around the Pier Gardens designs, however, after discussions and receiving reassurance from Officers, the panel was content with the designs discussed and supported the recommendations within the report along with a recommendation that once stage four has been completed, the technical design, costs and timescales of the Pier Garden project would be referred to the panel for review. In terms of the Market Place design concept, Members asked for reassurance on the loss of parking spaces, access for business owners to make sure they can carry on with business needs, traffic flow and materials to be used. After clarification from officers, the Panel moved for agreed to support the recommendations within the report along with a recommendation that the concept design be progressed as anticipated, to stage 4, noting that particular attention be made to adequate solutions to business needs in terms of reasonable access, parking and servicing, together with thought to real time signage and direction to available car parking spaces. Cabinet subsequently received both of these Scrutiny recommendations, but the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy felt that sufficient consultation had already taken place, so the additional recommendations were not essential.

As chairman, it has been pleasing to for the panel to see the positive performance within the resort from a visitor's perspective. The panel did have concerns over the possible move of Cleethorpes Library to the Cleethorpes Leisure Centre and felt that it should remain central to the resort. Concern was also raised at the speed of the Market Place and Pier Gardens projects. The panel will continue to scrutinise key developments during the forthcoming year.

Councillor
Keith Brookes
Chair



Opportunities for further pre-decision scrutiny were afforded with the Library and Archives Service review and the Freshney Place Leisure Scheme. With reference to the Library and Archives report, the panel acknowledged that no decisions had been taken in relation to future library provision and the proposals would be subject to a further round of consultation. However, concerns were raised about the proposed co-location of Cleethorpes Library and Cleethorpes Leisure Centre, particularly around accessibility, parking, reduced footfall and the possible loss of the autism room at the library. With that being said, the panel felt that it was important to get the questions right for the second round of consultation, so they accepted the recommendations within the report but recommended to Cabinet that members of this panel be engaged in the formulation of the Phase 2 consultation questions. This was duly accepted by Cabinet and appropriate preparations are being made for this second round of consultation.

The panel's interest in Freshney Place continued with the consideration of the Freshney Place Business Plan, which reviewed the last 12 months and the second year of the Council's ownership, provided a summary of performance and set out the business plan objectives for the following period. The panel supported the continuation of achieving optimum performance of Freshney Place, whilst strategically driving the tenant mix towards a more varied visitor experience.

The panel considered the next steps to progress the Freshney Place Leisure Scheme. The Chair welcomed a question from a non-panel member who had concerns around the lack of information to support key assumptions within the report. Officers provided further information on those key assumptions within the report and the panel had a thorough debate on the proposals within the report. The panel expressed a will for the scheme to succeed but recommended to Cabinet that further evidence be provided for some of the key assumptions, along with a contingency strategy, to help ensure the scheme's viability and address growing public concern about Council finances. These recommendations were taken on board when the matter was subsequently reported through Cabinet and full Council.

Throughout the year the panel have received the quarterly Council Plan and Finance report and EQUANS summary of performance against key performance indicators. These reports have been welcomed by Members and generated reassurance around performance and the financial position of the Council. The panel have also received data and statistics for the 2023 tourism season in North East Lincolnshire. Some questions were asked around the decrease in footfall on the promenade and new events that had taken place. Nevertheless, the panel welcomed the figures and thought that they needed to be published to show how well North East Lincolnshire had done.

The Cleethorpes Boating Lake had been a hot topic for some members on this panel, so an update on proposed works was very much welcomed. There were some reservations on the costings but, overall, the panel was glad to see that the work was going to be done.

The panel received an update on progress with the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy over the past year and, alongside this, a presentation from the Chief Executive of Lincs Inspire Ltd on the delivery of the leisure service. Members also welcomed an update on the Fishing Heritage Centre and Creative Strategy action plan for 2024/25. Members had concerns around the budget for planned events. The delivery of regeneration in the Kasbah Conservation Area was also considered by the panel and it was agreed that a panel visit would be arranged when appropriate to do so.

As noted earlier in this report, the panel has continued to jointly monitor the Skills Strategy with the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Other areas that have been scrutinised this year included:

- Progress with the RLNI Lifeboat Station
- South Humber Industrial Investment Programme (SHIIP)

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Devolution (specifically around Tourism)
- Freshney Place Leisure Scheme
- Pier Gardens and Market Place, Cleethorpes
- Boating Lake
- Sea Road Development
- Library and Archives Review
- Fishing Heritage Centre update
- Tourism Dashboard
- Lincs Inspire – Annual Report



Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

During the course of the year, the panel focused primarily on mental health because they felt it was a growing concern, especially around the increasing demand on mental health services across North East Lincolnshire. As a result, key partners were invited to attend the panel to explain the work they were doing in this area. This included NAVIGO, who were supporting people with mental health across our community, the East Midlands Ambulance Service, who explained how mental health calls were triaged to enable residents to get the most appropriate help when in crisis, and the Health and Care Partnership, who presented an update on the All Age Mental Health Strategy 2023 – 2028.

Listening to these organisations talking about the work they were doing in partnership with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and the Mental Health Alliance to provide help and support to residents and how the strategy was embedded across the health care system, provided reassurance for the panel that mental health was at the forefront of their priorities. The panel agreed they would continue to support the implementation of the five-year strategy, where residents could access support for their mental health seamlessly and where they were involved in all decisions about their care and treatment.

For the last couple of municipal years, the panel have been concerned over the high numbers of people on the waiting list to be assessed and

As the Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all members and officers for their dedication and collaborative spirit throughout the past year. Your unwavering commitment to addressing the pressing issues in our community, particularly in the realm of mental health, has been inspiring. The collective efforts in inviting key partners, such as NAVIGO and the East Midlands Ambulance Service, to discuss their initiatives have significantly enhanced our understanding and support for the All Age Mental Health Strategy 2023-2028, ensuring that mental health remains a priority for our residents.

I am also proud to highlight three key achievements from our work this year. Firstly, we have successfully reduced waiting times for assessments and adaptations through the implementation of a new framework for managing the Disabled Facilities Grant, which has brought relief to many households seeking to live independently. Secondly, the comprehensive review of the Director of Public Health's annual report has led to a focused dialogue on critical public health issues, including rising obesity rates and the need for promoting healthy living within our community. Lastly, our commitment to safeguarding vulnerable adults has been reaffirmed through the thorough examination of the Adult Safeguarding Annual Report, ensuring that our protective measures remain robust and effective. Thank you once again for your hard work and dedication; together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Councillor
Karl Wilson
Chair



receive adaptations to help them live more independently in their own homes. On a six-monthly basis, the panel considered reports updating them on progress on the new framework approach to managing the Disabled Facilities Grant and how the waiting times were being communicated to residents. The panel welcomed the progress that had been made and felt that the introduction of the new framework for delivery had brought a positive reduction in the waiting times.

The Director of Public Health's annual report was welcomed by the members. The panel raised concerns about the increase in obesity (especially in children), the number of fast-food outlets which detracted from healthy eating and the increase in drug taking. The panel were keen to promote the natural assets across the borough such as parks, open spaces and the resort for exercise and fresh air.

The panel reviewed and provided feedback on the North East Lincolnshire All Age Housing with Care Strategy which was subsequently adopted by Cabinet.

Statutorily, the panel received the Adult Services Annual Complaints Report, including Ombudsman complaints. This provided an opportunity for the panel to consider the activity and analysis of complaints and compliments.

The Adult Safeguarding Annual report was presented to the panel allowing them to challenge and seek reassurance that vulnerable adults were being kept safe.

The use of artificial intelligence technology (AI) is developing at pace and the panel were keen to understand how AI could be used within health and adult social care. The panel were pleased to hear that conversations were taking place across the authority and with partners about what AI transformation looked like, the impact and the most effective use in prevention and transformation of services.

In addition, the panel considered reports on:

- Quarterly Council Plan, Resources and Finance monitoring report
- 2023/24 Council Plan Year End Performance and Provisional Financial Outturn Report
- Humber Acute Review Consultation Outcome
- The procurement of the Support at Home contract
- Urgent and Emergency Care post Covid

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Impact of oral health services on residents.
- Monitor the adult safeguarding outcomes.
- Focus on two areas of health inequalities within North East Lincolnshire and what can be done to improve these.
- The impact of the NHS reorganisation on local services.
- Gain an understanding of how the use of AI in health and adult social care is used to improve and transform service delivery.



Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel

During the municipal year 2024/25 the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Panel focused on their busy work programme covering key ongoing projects and reacting to several Cabinet reports.

The panel received comprehensive updates on the Corporation Bridge Project discussing the status of each span, assurances around the date of completion and funding. Several members visited the Corporation Bridge site and received access to witness firsthand progress made. The visit highlighted ongoing issues that contractors endured and confirmed what officers had alluded to during panel meeting updates. Members welcomed that the updates provided were now both clear and transparent.

A Cabinet report on the redevelopment of town centre car parks and the creation of the Grimsby Town transport hub was received. The panel sought assurances that due diligence had been carried out when considering the costings and validity of the project. Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council) endorsed the need for a parking survey and Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) supported members need for accessibility routes to the nearby train station. The panel had concerns regarding the demolition of the transport hub site and recommended that a useable site be opened as soon as possible to eliminate any unsightly, unusable areas as a result of the phased development approach. The panel requested a further update be given to the panel once the feasibility study was complete and outline designs

It has been a very busy year for the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing scrutiny panel, with members getting out of the Town Hall and visiting the Council's CCTV control centre, and Swan House; both impressive facilities in their own right. Some members also got to visit Corporation bridge, to monitor both the challenges that this major project presents and the progress made to date. This project remains a key point of interest to both scrutiny committee members and residents, and we all look forward to its completion.

Task and finish groups are an important part of scrutiny work, with two such groups carrying work over to next year; Traffic Management Coordination is to be finalised whilst Affordable and Social Housing has been added to the 2025/26 work programme.

As Chair I would like to thank fellow members of the panel for their enthusiastic engagement in the scrutiny process, and council officers for their professional support of the panel's work.

We look forward to a busy and challenging year ahead, with strategic housing, electrification of buses, and completion of Corporation Bridge being just some of the key items of the 2025/26 work programme.

Councillor
Sheldon Mill
Chair



had been acquired. Members also requested more details on finances, expected tender timelines, sustainability concepts and HSE responsibilities.

The Panel's views were sought on the government's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The panel supported the need for our growth plans to be ambitious but, in general, felt that the housing targets for North East Lincolnshire included as part of the consultation were too high. The panel made a number of comments on the proposals and asked for these to be forwarded to Cabinet. The panel's comments were warmly received by Cabinet and formed part of the Council's response to government. Towards the end of the Municipal Year, the panel was asked to consider a Cabinet report on the Local Plan preparation timetable. The Cabinet report updated members on the council's statutory requirements to produce an up-to-date Local Development Scheme (LDS) and, in response to members questions, it was confirmed that a needs assessment would take place. The panel also enquired about neighbourhood plans but was advised that a strong local plan was the best approach.

A key piece of work for the panel during the year was the establishment of a task and finish group to look at Traffic Management Co-ordination. This has involved formalising plans and strategies, looking at improving communication, benchmarking best practice and ensuring the smooth transitions from Equans to in house provision of services. A visit to the council's security control room by members of the working group proved to be very informative. In addition, the working group heard from representatives of Cadent, who showed their commitment to working with members on improving communications with residents and several suggestions were warmly received on both sides. This work is being finalised but is expected to result in a recommendation to Cabinet to establish a Traffic Management Charter that utility companies would also be invited to sign up to.

The panel had requested a further piece of task and finish work around affordable and social housing. Unfortunately, resourcing issues prevented the commencement of this work and has impacted on other areas of work, including the completion of the traffic management co-ordination work. It is expected that this task and finish work will be completed during the next Municipal Year.

The panel considered a formal request to call-in the decision taken by the Freshney Place Cabinet Sub Committee on Freshney Place car park maintenance. The panel recommended the release of the decision with a recommendation that the Freshney Place Sub Committee refer the matter to the Audit and Governance Committee to consider transparency of finances around car park maintenance.

Questions around the Scartho Cemetery Lodge disposal were taken by Councillor Harness (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets) who advised that due diligence had been carried out when deciding on the disposal of the property.

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure which provided an update on progress with delivering the council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. The report highlighted that 50% of households in North East Lincolnshire had limited or no access to off street parking. Officers advised members that this was one of the many potential obstacles and hazards they faced. Members showed concern that this would adversely affect residents without off street parking who would have no access to reasonable charging options. Considered solutions involved the installation of charging points in streetlights. The panel requested confirmation of costing when using this option be given to members once available. Members also sought clarification on how the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Capability Fund would be spent over multiple years. It was noted that investigative work around electric vehicle charging installation was taking place in both Nottingham and London and the panel intend to look further into this issue once that work had been completed.

The panel continued to receive updates on the quarterly finance reports and questioned matters relating to key priorities, budget variances, underspends within the capital programme, and property rationalisation and disposals. The panel received a brief update on perceived financial challenges devolution would have on the council's finances.

The panel received a presentation on the Alexandra Dock Regeneration Plans which formed part of a long-term Masterplan. Although this did not form part of the pre-decision scrutiny, officers welcomed feedback from members. Officers advised on work carried out to date and the procurement of a development partner Keepmoat. Members were assured that every effort was being made to reduce the number of buy to let properties within the development, although no guarantees were given. With respect to potential commercial leasehold properties within the development, officers confirmed that Keepmoat were not long-term stockholders and leasehold development opportunities could fall under the council's remit.

With regard to the adoption of the North East Lincolnshire Council Concessionary Fares Scheme, members were advised of the council's statutory duty to provide free bus travel for eligible pass holders. Members funding concerns were noted although it was hoped that the position would become clearer once national funding allocations had been announced.

The panel welcomed an update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and it was encouraged by increased passenger numbers but felt that consideration should be given to funding other areas in North East Lincolnshire, for example, Immingham with the opening of its new youth centre.

Within the panel's remit, the panel continued to scrutinise Equans quarterly performance information. Members raised a number of key issues they wished officers to expand on and receive further updates. The perceived reduction in stall holder numbers on the Grimsby Top Town market was one area of concern as was the reduction in Phone N Ride passengers.

Briefing notes were received by the panel on flood risk management and emergency Planning. The panel agreed to undertake a site visit to Swan House to understand how that facility was working and also to the CCTV security room as part of its traffic management investigation.

Looking forward to the work programme for 2025/26, the panel have several items to carry forward:

- Home Options project
- Transport Hub developments
- Corporation Bridge project
- Local Plan review
- Electrification of buses
- Affordable and Social Housing (task and finish group)
- Electric Vehicle Strategy progress

4. Get involved in scrutiny

One of the key roles of scrutiny is to work on behalf of residents to address the issues that are causing concern to people who live and work in the borough. We are using this report to tell you what we have done and we want you to tell us what you think we should be doing next. Please use the contact details at the end of this report if you would like us to focus on a particular issue in future.

All agendas and minutes of scrutiny panels as well as reports from scrutiny working groups are available by following the links on our website – nelincs.gov.uk

This report is also an opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has contributed to the scrutiny process over the past twelve months. To be able to function effectively, scrutiny relies on the invaluable knowledge and expertise of witnesses. Last year a wide range of individuals and organisations assisted us in our work, including:

- Service users
- EQUANS
- Humberside Police
- East Midland Ambulance Service
- NHS Foundation Trust

But we are not content to leave it there...

Members of the public are:

- Welcome to attend scheduled scrutiny panel meetings to observe local scrutiny in action. To find out what is being discussed and what to expect please have a look at the website or contact the scrutiny team.
- Encouraged to make suggestions for future scrutiny reviews by contacting your local councillor or the scrutiny team. You can do this by email, post or telephone.
- Able to approach councillors with your views on specific issues so that these can be added into the debate on the scrutiny panels
- Able to speak on specific issues, with the prior permission of the panel chair.

Scrutiny cannot promise to form the same conclusions as you do but your comments will be acknowledged and considered.

Sometimes we receive correspondence that raise issues outside of scrutiny or the council's remit – should this happen we will forward your comments to the relevant service or partner organisation and ask them to provide you with a response.

If you would like further information about scrutiny,
please use the contact details below:

Scrutiny and Democratic Services
North East Lincolnshire Council
Municipal Offices
Town Hall Square
GRIMSBY
DN31 1HU

Tel: 01472 324121

Email: democracy@nelincs.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/your-council/decision-making/scrutiny/>