



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 25th September 2025

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

3rd July 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Aisthorpe (in the Chair)

Councillors Bonner, Brookes, Lindley, Patrick, Shutt, Silvester and Wheatley

Officers in attendance:

- Katie Brown (Director of Adult Services)
- Liz Brummer (Strategic Lead Finance)
- Drew Hughes (Head of Strategy Policy and Performance)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Stronger Place)
- Kath Jickells (Assistant Director Environment)
- Nick Middleton (VCS Coordinator and Relationship Manager)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Service Manager Consultancy and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Ron Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor Stewart Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing Infrastructure and Transport)
- Councillor Dan Humphrey (Scartho Ward Councillor)
- Alfie Crampton (Work Experience)

There was one member of the press present and one member of the public.

SPC.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was noted that at the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on 22nd May 2025, Councillor Aisthorpe had been appointed the Chair and Councillor Patrick, the Deputy Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel for the ensuing Municipal Year.

SPC.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received for this meeting.

SPC.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Silvester declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in SPC.10 as Chief Executive for Foresight due to their large involvement in the Household Support Fund.

SPC.4 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the special meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 27th February 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

SPC.5 QUESTION TIME

The Chair welcomed Alfie Crampton to ask two questions to the Panel.

He noted that even though the government banned disposable vapes, some shops sold cheap refillable ones that people just threw away anyway. He asked how was the council enforcing the rules to protect young people from buying them, and what could be done to tackle the environmental impact from all these vapes being dumped.

Ms Jickells explained that in the UK, it was illegal to sell vapes or e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18. This was part of a broader effort to protect young people from the potential harms of vaping. Retailers who were caught selling to minors could face fines or prosecution. To ensure businesses were aware of their legal obligations, Trading Standards Officers had written to over 300 retailers on the topic of underage sales and the sale of single use vapes. This was also supported by visits to premises to search for illegal disposable vaping devices containing high levels of nicotine.

North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) shared concerns regarding the environmental and public health impacts of smoking and vaping and therefore made sure that this was also a key part of any communications. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill sought to introduce measures to reduce smoking and vaping, particularly among young people by raising the minimum age for purchasing tobacco products and measures for reducing the appeal of vaping to children. It also gave government the ability to introduce a new licensing scheme, which may give local authorities the power to issue licences with accompanying licence conditions to those involved in the retail sale of tobacco and nicotine products, including vapes. Anyone breaching these conditions may face criminal prosecution or civil financial penalties.

While the ban on disposable vapes was a major step forward for environmental protection, the environmental impact of discarded refillable vapes was still a concern, especially if they were not properly recycled. Whilst this was a national concern, at a local government level we could advise on the correct disposal of waste, promote public awareness of recycling schemes

and retail take back schemes and monitor illegal dumping or improper disposal of vapes.

The NELC website provided information on the correct method of disposal for vapes, including a list of shops that take vapes for disposal. Vapes were also included in the educational waste and recycling presentation delivered by our educational officers, which were aimed at secondary schools and adult groups. The presentation included a video created by local litter picking champion, Zac from "Pickwalks", showing how many discarded vapes he collected, often from our local beauty spots. The presentation and subsequent conversations were aimed at getting people thinking about their individual actions and creating a positive behaviour change. The council could also take enforcement action against anyone caught littering. The penalty for this could range from a fixed penalty notice to criminal prosecution.

Mr Crampton then said Armed Forces Days was a brilliant event and it brought lots of people together, but there was an unacceptable amount of litter on our streets. It looked like there weren't enough bins for people to use. What could the council do to make sure there were enough bins at future events to keep our streets clean.

Ms Jickells explained that Armed Forces day (AFD) was organised by AFMET (Armed Forces Major Events Team) with oversight by the Council through the Event Safety Advisory Group. The success of the event had grown over time, and when announced as the National Armed Forces Event, coupled with beautiful weather, the resort was extremely busy.

There was a lot of preparation by the operational teams within the Council to deliver practical support to the event, including additional staff resources, vehicles and bin provision.

The Council provided an extra 30 wheeled bins (240L) in high footfall areas, including Seaview Street, Pier Gardens and Central Promenade. This was to supplement the existing 160 bins normally located around the resort. A small number of bins were removed from key locations for security and counter terrorism prevention.

In addition, an 1100L (giant wheeled bin) was placed on the Central Prom. On average this became full every 30 minutes. A cage van was also labelled up to encourage people to dispose of their waste, this was also successful and was used by many visitors.

Whilst we could place additional bins within the resort, we must be mindful of the impact that this would have on footfall and general pedestrian access but more importantly the logistics of emptying waste containers during a major event. The Council parked and operated a refuse collection vehicle within the event cordon, however the vehicle remained stationary to protect public safety and visitor crowds. This then required heavy wheeled bins to be manoeuvred for quite long distances for emptying and even this became unachievable during peak crowds.

We had in recent years tried to promote recycling and waste segregation, but it was our experience that some visitors behaved differently once they started to drink alcohol and were less inclined to deal with their waste responsibly. Feedback from our operatives also showed that trade waste was often left behind for the Council to remove.

The Council was aware that there has been an ongoing community conversation online about the litter created at AFD with prospective volunteers identified for beach cleans at the end of the days next year. The River Canoe Cleaner had also suggested the idea of a paper-free carnival parade. We were always receptive to new and alternative ideas, including opportunities to encourage community action for litter picking. Any volunteers willing to support the Council and available at 6am on Sunday morning were welcome to action some of the hot spot areas next year.

The council will reflect on the feedback we have received following the event and consider how we work collaboratively with communities ahead of next year's event. People had generally become more responsible with their waste, i.e. bagging what they had and placing next to a bin, however, we would explore fixed signs in the resort asking people to keep the resort tidy.

SPC.6 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.

The Panel had some concerns about the Weed Control report that was due to be received by Cabinet on 16th July and whether its recommendations to Cabinet had been taken into account.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPC.7 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Ms O'Brien stated that item SPC.63 had been completed and could be removed from the tracking report with the panel's agreement. The Chair also asked that an action for food poverty be added to the tracking report to note when the panel would be receiving an update on it.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted and item SPC.63 be removed.
2. That food poverty be added to the tracking report to note when updates would be received by this panel.

SPC.8 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

The panel considered its work programme for 2025/26.

RESOLVED – That the Communities Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2025/26 be approved.

SPC.9 COUNCIL PLAN YEAR END PERFORMANCE & PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN REVIEW 2024-2025

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the Council Plan year end performance and provisional financial outturn review for 2024/25.

A panel member asked about the Capital Summary and for details on the slippage on the schemes listed. Ms Brummer explained that there could be different reasons in terms of wider slippage but they did try to take these into account when they plan. In terms of why there was slippage, Ms Brummer explained that she would have to take that away and get the details for the Member.

The panel asked for clarification on resources for Selective Licensing and household recycling rates. Officers present provided clarification but also added that they already did a lot of work to improve the quality of recycling. One Member added that it took time for people to understand what could and couldn't be recycled. Members thought it would be useful if they added recycling education to the panel's work programme.

The Chair added some concerns around kerbside food collections. She wondered whether the grant would fully cover costs. Another Member had concerns over challenges for staff and how it may affect their physical health. Ms Jickells explained that they were currently working on the business case which would look at everything and she stated that the workforce would be at the centre of that.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Note - Councillor Silvester left the meeting at this point.

SPC.10 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The panel considered and received a presentation outlining how the Council intended to use the Household Support Fund grant. This report was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16th July 2025.

The Panel asked for clarification on the following points:

- Work done with food banks
- Charity Fund

Officers present provided the necessary clarification.

The Chair asked how success would be measured. Ms Brown explained that they would be receiving baseline data now, which would help put assurance in place around the household support fund. It would note what it had been doing and comparative data on what it was doing.

All the Panel Members were content with the recommendations in the report and were happy to support them.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and support be given to Cabinet on the recommendations included within the report received.

SPC.11 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities received the following question from Councillor Humphrey.

'At the full Council meeting of 12th December 2024, the Council leader Councillor Philip Jackson appointed you to lead on the Greenbelt issue despite him stating it was a private issue. What is your remit as Greenbelt lead and what have you achieved towards that remit in the subsequent seven months for the benefit of residents who have recently received their annual Greenbelt bills?'

Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, responded on behalf of Councillor Hudson whose portfolio this came under. He stated that the extract from the minutes referred to his role as a ward member. He was not a lead as such for Cabinet/Council, more a facilitator between ward members and officers. The Leader referred to a potential "*policy*" solution in the Local Plan. This was noted and a possible solution would follow. Councillor Shepherd noted that it was a very common scenario whereby a developer sold off the plots, transferred the common parts (open spaces) to a management company and homeowners paid an annual service charge for the management company to maintain. This was nothing to do with the council. It was not public land and it was in the private ownership either of the developer or management company. Councillor Shepherd stated that all homeowners would have been advised of this by their solicitors on buying the property and during any searches. They would be (presumably) advised of the risks. There were usually mutual covenants for the homeowner to pay the service charge, and the management company to perform their function. If there were any arrears, this immediately placed a homeowner on the back foot. Any breakdown in that relationship was a matter for the homeowner and the management company. Homeowners should be advised to seek their own independent advice from their solicitors either individually or as a collective. Council tax and such a service charge were nothing to do with each other.

The Chair added that she was aware that this has been an ongoing issue for some time. She wondered if there was a way to help prevent and strengthen the Local Plan on this matter. Ms Jickells felt that it may be useful if a discussion was brought up at the Local Plan Overview Board Development Group to make sure major developments included detailed management plans.

RESOLVED –

1. That the question and answer be noted.
2. That it be recommended to the Local Plan Overview Board Development Group to make sure that major developments included a detailed management plan that contained detailed information on regular maintenance.

SPC.12 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and Portfolio Holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.54 p.m.