



COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

4th September 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Aisthorpe (in the Chair)

Councillors Bonner, Brookes, Kaczmarek (substitute for Shutt), Lindley, Patrick, Silvester and Wheatley.

Officers in attendance:

- Geoff Barnes (Deputy Director of Public Health)
- Katie Brown (Director of Adult Services)
- Rebecca Freeman (Community Safety Partnership Coordinator Manager)
- Victoria Henley (Senior Community Safety Officer)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Stronger Place)
- Kath Jickells (Assistant Director Environment)
- Joanne Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Joanne Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Service Manager Consultancy and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Claire Swainson (Strategic Lead, Finance)

There was one member of the press present.

SPC.13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Shutt and from Councillor Hudson (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero), Councillor Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities) and Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport).

SPC.14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

SPC.15 MINUTES

The panel received the minutes of the special meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 3rd July 2025.

A member referred to the Household Support Fund (HSF) in the previous minutes noting her disappointment with how this had been minuted.

Councillor Wheatley asked that the following be added into the minutes:-

"A member asked about the amount of money that had been allocated for signposting to the Household Support Fund (HSF). Officers gave assurance that the funding was not set in stone and that reallocation could and likely would occur throughout the year".

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the special meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 3rd July 2025 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

SPC.16 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for the panel.

SPC.17 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.

SPC.18 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

At SCP.28, CCTV update, members asked for a further update on CCTV. Mr Hunt advised that they had quarterly performance reports that could be circulated to the panel.

At SCP.64, Weed Control Report, the panel asked for an update on when the trials would be taking place. Ms Paterson noted that the outcome of the trial would be reported back to scrutiny.

Ms Jickells reported that her team were currently engaging PAN (Pesticide Action Network) UK to ensure the council were on the right track with their trials. She understood that the trials would be taking place in April 2026, and would provide a further update to all ward members in due course.

At SCP.38, Food Poverty Action Plan, Ms Paterson noted that the Food Poverty Assessment was on the agenda for today's meeting, which would inform the Food Poverty Action Plan.

At SCP.11, Local Plan Overview Board Development Group, Ms Paterson would ask for an update on the matter.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the quarterly performance reports in relation to CCTV be circulated to this panel.
3. That a further update on the trials taking place for phasing out the use of glyphosate be provided to ward members.

SPC.19 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (STATISTICS /WHITE RIBBON)

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure that provided an overview of data and consultation findings in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

In terms of the White Ribbon accreditation, members wished to understand what work was being done to engage the public.

Ms Freeman advised that the White Ribbon Action Plan was pre-determined by the White Ribbon organisation, and it was for the Council to meet those requirements over a three-year period. Mr Hunt explained that officers and elected members could sign up to become either an ambassador or champion to demonstrate their commitment and advised that the action plan was intentionally internally focused and provided a range of actions for organisations to consider to ensure the programme could be embedded across its workforce.

Ms Freeman noted that officers had been working closely with the communications team to issue press releases. Mr Hunt added that, as part of the action plan, the council could also consider what needed to be done to become more outward focused and to raise awareness around White Ribbon.

The Chair understood from the report that the council were required to deliver against White Ribbon's three-year action plan and asked how scrutiny would be kept updated on progress against these actions.

Mr Hunt suggested that progress against the action plan to include annual updates on how the council were delivering against the action plan be built into this panel's work programme. This would help to demonstrate where the council was making progress. The panel agreed with this item being added to the work programme. Ms Paterson would take this forward and look to schedule this in.

Another member was interested in the campaign that had taken place and how the council were encouraging more males to get involved. Ms Freeman advised that around twenty members of staff had signed up which was positive to report, and more awareness raising would be done to encourage more staff to sign up as the programme advances.

Mr Hunt noted that a member development session had been arranged which would raise awareness and provide information around how elected members could sign up to become an ambassador or champion.

Ms Freeman noted that an All-Member Briefing on Violence Against Women and Girls was to take place on 15th September. Ms Freeman noted that for members that were unable to attend a link would be provided to their website around how to volunteer for ambassador or champion roles.

A member had some queries around the data provided in the report, noting that the vast majority of these offences were non domestic abuse related, and asked where these offences were happening, i.e. within schools or on streets etc and in particular felt the council needed to target specific hot spot areas where there were more problems.

Ms Freeman reassured members that there was a whole power dashboard that sat behind that data which included a specific breakdown of the types of offences committed.

A member referred to paragraph 1.16 within the report which referred to female gym users and asked if the council had been liaising with Lincs Inspire on the matter. Ms Henley advised that Lincs Inspire already had really good processes in place, it was generally the 24-hour gyms where there was not always a staff member present where there was more risk.

The member further referred to paragraph 1.29 within the report specifically around the 'Ask for Angela' scheme and whether this could be included in the council's Licensing Policy in future.

Ms Richardson advised that the Licensing Committee reviewed the Licensing Policy every three years, and this was due for consultation as part of the review shortly and was therefore a good time for members to suggest any changes. Ms Paterson would follow up with the Licensing & and Environmental Protection Manager to see if this could be included.

Ms Henley stated that she worked closely with the council's licensing team noting that the Ask for Angela scheme was always well received. Overall, this was a very successful scheme locally and there were good safeguards in place across the borough.

One member was already an ambassador and noted that Humberside Police had an Independent Advisory Group for Violence Against Women and Girls and asked officers whether there was any partnership links between the council and this group.

Ms Freeman noted that she had attended this group, and they were aware of the work her team undertook. Mr Hunt added that serious violence was reported through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) on a quarterly basis of which VAWG was incorporated.

Another member noted that under consultation, it mentioned focus groups and workshops were taking place at various places around the borough such as the YMCA. They asked whether there was any scope to go into work places. Ms Freeman noted that this was included in their VAWG Action Plan. In terms of outside organisations, her team were currently engaging with local employers, particularly around loan working.

Ms Henley detailed some of the work that was being undertaken to promote female wellness in the workplace including publicising this through local businesses and communication streams.

The Chair referred to paragraphs 1.11 - 1.14 within the report which stated that women and girls felt less safe than men when visiting the town centre and more so after dark. Although the Safer Street Ambassadors were welcomed, the Chair asked how these concerns were being addressed through long term planning such as major regeneration developments like the new Transport Hub.

Ms Freeman stated that she had met with the engineers and had fed into design plans to suggest general design out crime elements including the use of multiple exits, street lighting and CCTV. Mr Hunt stated that in terms of new projects, such as the Transport Hub, there needed to be a focus on reduction in crime and a general feeling of safety, and it was how we made that sustainable and worked wider than just the council.

The Chair asked for the panel to be updated regularly on safety aspects.

A member was pleased that the team had reached out to colleges etc, however, was concerned that the council was not engaging on this important topic within secondary schools and, in particular, reaching the Year 7-11 cohort of students. Mr Hunt noted that healthy relationships was built into the school curriculum.

Ms Henley added that due to resource pressures, she was unable to visit all schools within the borough and had focused her time on post-sixteen students where she could have more mature conversations.

Members considered there was some really good work taking place; however, one member would like to see the council promote this further through the national Violence Against Women and Girls Day on 25th November. It was important the council emphasised its commitment to what White Ribbon stood for including wearing white ribbons.

Ms Freeman would take this forward with the council's communications officers.

A member understood that discussions took place in secondary schools around healthy relationships, however, more information was needed around whether young people were being influenced by other public figures. A member commented on the "5 D's" of Bystander Intervention; Direct, Distract, Delegate, Delay, Document and it was felt that the word 'delay' was not the most appropriate word to use and that 'discuss' would fit better.

Ms Freeman noted that the national campaign poster reflected the training that had taken place. She did agree that the word 'discuss' would better replace 'delay' and would look to amend this locally.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted
2. That progress against the Action Plan, to include annual updates on how the council was delivering against the action plan, be built into this panel's work programme.

SPC.20 2025/26 Q1 COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

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 2025/26.

Under environmental performance, a member asked about the percentage of waste collections completed on time, asking what this specifically included. It was confirmed this was everything that was collected.

The member felt it was positive to report the percentage of waste collection completed on time and would like to see this highlighted better in the report in future. Another member asked whether the panel could have data for bulky waste services in terms of how they were performing and how successful those collections were.

Ms Robinson asked what specifically members would like to see in the bulky waste performance data. The member confirmed they would like to see the bulky waste collection on time and on date. Ms Robinson confirmed she would take this away to action.

It was also highlighted that the percentage of municipal waste landfilled was extremely low which was also positive to report. This was due to the waste going to an energy from waste plant rather than landfill.

Ms Jickells recognised this was a good news story and that it was also fairly static and not likely to change in the near future.

Ms Robinson advised that these performance indicators were agreed when the Council Plan was developed and noted that the purpose of the indicators were not just purely for scrutiny but for the public as well.

The Chair referred to the financial overview within the report noting her disappointment that at the end of the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year the council was forecasting a £1.5m overspend against its budget and asked officers how confident they were this would be maintained in year and was there any contingency plans in place.

Ms Swainson explained that she looked after a specific area of finance and that the whole financial overview was not within her remit. She did however assure members that a budget monitoring process took place on a monthly basis, and any areas that were underperforming would be identified for improvement. Overall officers within finance were doing all they could by identifying issues early on and reacting to those effectively.

The Chair asked what lessons had been learnt from last year's overspend and how this was being applied this year. Ms Swainson would take this away and provide a response back to the panel.

Under the stronger community's performance data, a member referred to the percentage of PCN appeals upheld. The member wished to clarify whether the number of PCNs upheld was part of the PCNs issued in total. Ms Jickells advised that this was a percentage of the total amount and using a percentage was easier to give a measure against a hundred.

Members felt the use of percentages and numbers was confusing. Ms Robinson agreed to take this on board when collating the data in future.

Under housing the Chair asked about the review of temporary accommodation asking what action was taking place. In response Ms Brown responded that their temporary accommodation numbers were quite static unlike other councils and as an authority we needed the right supply and type of accommodation to meet that demand.

A provisional date had been set for a Joint panel with the Transport Infrastructure Strategic Housing and Communities Panel in early October which would be an opportunity for the panels to explore temporary accommodation pathways and other housing matters in more detail.

The Chair wanted to ensure that this panel were involved in these discussions and supported joint working with the other panels.

On housing matters, a member asked about the number of days taken to process housing benefits claims noting this had reduced. Ms Robinson would take this away for a response.

Ms Robinson noted that during Q1 this was quite a common occurrence and explained that other factors impacted this number including bank holidays. Ms

Robinson would expect this to reduce significantly in Quarter 2 and would bring back a more detailed update to the panel.

A member commented on the number of incidents handed over to Humberside police and whether the police were notified of the councils CCTV footage. Mr Hunt advised that they had robust recording in place stating that evidence provided to police had resulted in a prosecution at court.

Members had noted a considerable reduction in Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)s issued for littering and asked what this had been due to.

A member asked about rough sleepers and the fact there where unsuitable homes and whether the council had identified why that had increased again. Ms Brown stated that they had seen a small increase in rough sleepers and hoped they could get a better picture of this when the next census was complete.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further information be provided to the panel around how bulky waste services were performing to include collection time and date and how successful those collections were.
3. That further information be provided to the panel on lessons learnt from last year's financial overspend and how this was being applied this year.
4. That a more detailed update on the number of days taken to process housing benefits claims be brought back to the panel.

SPC.21 FOOD POVERTY ASSESSMENT

The panel considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care which provided the results and recommendations of the Food Poverty Assessment prior to the development of a Food Poverty Action Plan.

Mr Barnes set out the report noting this had been a significant piece of work undertaken by his team. It was important to note that food poverty had a major impact on peoples living standards and this was the first stage of a piece of work which would inform the Food Poverty Action Plan. He further advised that changes to the Household Support Fund relating to support programmes for people experiencing food poverty will follow the principles and recommendations in the needs assessment.

A member considered this was a well-researched piece of work, however there was little reference to the difficulties for those having to access cheaper foods. He also asked what was being done to target those elderly people who lived in rural areas. Mr Barnes stated that these issues would be considered in the development of the Food Poverty Action Plan. The evidence had shown

that some elderly people were accessing food banks for various reasons including the cost of heating in their homes etc.

Another member asked what was being done to target those people that suffered with food intolerances such as Celiac disease that needed access to gluten free products and how this would be addressed. Mr Barnes advised that this was not something that had been considered within this particular piece of work however was something that could be fed into wider discussions over a Food Strategy in future.

Another member asked whether use of food banks should be means tested. Mr Barnes did not think food banks should be means tested purely because people were only required to use them on a temporary basis due to changes in their circumstances.

Mr Barnes noted that often there was a stigma with the use of food banks, and it was known that many people who needed support with food were not accessing support due to the stigma.

Another member referred to the data noting that two thirds of people that visited food banks were in rented accommodation and asked whether the rising cost of rent was a significant cause of people using food banks. Mr Barnes noted this was a very complex area highlighting that both rental costs and the cost of living had gone up over the last few years.

Members asked about the loss of the Food Coordinator post within the council and that given the scale of recommendations within the report was this something that could be re-instated to ensure the actions were taken forward. Ms Brown noted that not all food banks were funded from the council, many were ran voluntarily. In terms of the resources required to deliver those recommendations, this was something that would be looked at alongside the action plan in terms of what the council needed to do to achieve those actions.

A member felt there was an unmet demand in the community and asked how the council intended to meet that demand. Mr Barnes noted that the cost of a healthy diet was more than that of an unhealthy diet and was one reason for the increase in obesity in recent years. This was an issue for Public Health to address in terms of trying to offer healthy nutritious food at a lower price.

A detailed discussion ensued with members seeking assurance that food banks were accessible in the evenings as much as during the daytime. Members also felt the use of community allotments should be encouraged and that the Grimsby Company Shop should be in a more accessible location for people to use. The data also showed that people accessing food banks often lived alone in small properties where there was often limited access to cooking facilities.

In response it was noted that these considerations would be taken on board.

The Chair referred to the risk aspects within the report noting that food poverty was clearly a high-level risk. The Chair noted that the original notice of motion

which included a commitment to a Food Poverty Action Plan was passed by Full Council back in 2023, it was now clear from the report that this would not be ready until 2026 and asked officers if there was a reason for the delay. Officers acknowledged the risk aspects raised by the panel and explained various factors had led to the delay including staff resource.

The Chair asked for the three-year delay to be formally recorded as risk within the report. Ms Richardson Smith advised the Chair that members were not permitted to amend the risk implications within an officer's report retrospectively.

The Chair felt the panel needed to monitor progress of the Food Poverty Action Plan and asked for a more specific timescale in 2026 when this would come before scrutiny. Mr Barnes noted that there were some staffing issues that he needed to firstly address and was aiming to have something ready by the first quarter of the year.

Members discussed what was a reasonable timescale for this piece of work noting that this should be received by the panel no later than March 2026.

The Chair asked how the panel monitor could best monitor progress against the action plan. Ms Paterson advised this would be best monitored via this panel's tracking report.

This was proposed and seconded and agreed by the panel.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Food Poverty Action Plan be added to this panels Tracking Report to monitor progress against the Action Plan.

SPC.22 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero was unable to attend the meeting.

Ms Paterson read out the question on behalf of Councillor Humphrey.

'What are Councillor Hudson's views on how public open space in North East Lincolnshire is currently managed by unregulated private companies within the existing legal framework; does he think they should favour use of local contractors for works, does he think they should set a cap for the amounts they charge annually, and does he think they should promise not to levy illegal late payment charges?'

A response provided by officers which was tabled at the meeting, members were given sufficient time to read the response.

On reading the response members were not satisfied that it answered the question asked by Councillor Humphrey, as such the panel asked that a full response from Councillor Hudson be provided to the panel at the earliest opportunity.

Ms Richardson Smith concurred that a revised response needed to be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero and this would be followed up by officers.

RESOLVED –

1. That the question put be noted.
2. That a new response be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero and this be circulated to both the panel and to Councillor Humphrey.

SPC.23 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.