



ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

2nd October 2025 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillor Holland (in the Chair)
Councillors Brookes, Cairns (substitute for Lindley), Crofts, Farren, Kaczmarek (substitute for Morland) Mickleburgh, and Parkinson

Officers in attendance:

- Nick Browning (Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism)
- Samantha Buckley (Strategic Lead Finance)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Stronger Place)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- Lisa Logan (Head of Open Space)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources (Statutory Scrutiny Officer))
- Helen Thompson (Strategic Lead - Tourism)
- James Trowsdale (Strategic Lead – Culture)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Shutt

There were 4 members of the public present.

SPE.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Lindley and Morland.

SPE.19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPE.20 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 31st July 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

SPE.21 QUESTION TIME

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

SPE.22 FORWARD PLAN

The panel considered the current Forward Plan and 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.

SPE.23 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel.

Mrs O'Brien informed the panel that DN.55 (Library and Archives Review) had been completed as it was to be considered at today's meeting.

RESOLVED – That the tracking report be noted and that DN.55 (Library and Archives Review) be removed from future tracking reports.

SPE.24 QUARTER 1 2025/26 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE 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 financial position at the end of quarter 1 2025-26.

One Member sought clarification on why planning income was out of the authority's control and what some of the data included for Council Tax collection meant. Officers present were able to clarify both these issues to members.

Panel Members then went on to comment on the report. They noted that they were struggling to understand what some of the data was trying to show. Ms Robinson explained that using the live dashboard electronically, can alleviate some of these issues, therefore an all-

member's workshop was to be arranged to allow members to explore the new dashboard and then hopefully that would help with understanding some of the data in the report.

One Member mentioned the low numbers of attendance at the Grimsby Auditorium and the large drop of numbers for the footfall on Cleethorpes Promenade and St Peters Avenue. The Elected Member wanted reassurance that we were doing something to tackle the declines. Ms Thompson explained that she would have to take this away and look at the data as she wasn't sure whether the numbers shown were showing the footfall for the whole year and not just quarter one. Mr Browning explained that on the Tourism Dashboard, that was to be received later in the agenda, it included full figures for these areas and weren't consistent with the dashboard. The Chair asked if it could be looked at to make the appropriate changes to the dashboard.

The Chair asked about the performance drop in quarter one, he found it ominous that it was already like this after just a short period of time. He wondered whether a performance improvement plan was in place. Ms Robinson explained that this rating was probably an element of caution from Officers, but plans were in place, they were just not achieving green yet.

The Chair then went on to ask about the increased amount of corporate revenue budget in such a short space of time. He wondered where this money had gone. Ms Buckley stated that she would take this away and circulate the full breakdown of the overspend for quarter 1. The Chair also asked about borrowing costs aligning with the capital programme. The report gave the impression that they were being actively reviewed to ensure borrowing was optimised. However, this was different to what he had previously been told. Ms Buckley explained that if they had grant and corporate funding, they always look to see what was better to use first. She confirmed that it wasn't to change the capital programme.

RESOLVED – That the Quarter One Council Plan Performance and Finance report be noted.

SPE.25 LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES REVIEW PHASE 2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy providing an update on the phase 2 public consultation findings of the library and archives review. This report was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8th October 2025.

The Chair mentioned the information received from a member of the public, highlighting that the petition that Full Council had received also called upon the Council to commit to the library buildings. He wondered why this detail had not been included in the report. Mr Jones explained that when monitoring the report he had considered this, but as the petition

title was included in the narrative, rather than the raft of issues raised, that for the context of the Cabinet report this was sufficient. Mr Jones added that the petition was fully debated by Full Council.

Members had a range of concerns around the timeline of works being carried out in the Grimsby Central Library. Mainly, that it had now been closed for six months and they were none the wiser of the works that were going to take place. One Member sought assurance around the removal of materials, which Officers gave. Another Member expressed dissatisfaction around the time it was taking to realise a clear picture around required works, together with supporting timeline. With this in mind, Councillor Holland proposed that concern be raised with Cabinet that there was no clear timeline available to date on options and the cost for refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library, and that the anticipated timeline, that Cabinet can commit to with a degree of confidence, be shared with the members of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Mickleburgh seconded the motion.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously carried.

The panel then went on to discuss the results of the survey they were told would be completed by the end of August. They wanted confirmation of where we were in terms of works getting done in the Grimsby Central Library. Mr Browning confirmed that we were still in the early stages of analysing what works were needed. He noted that they had recently received the results of the initial structural survey, which would indicate next steps. The panel felt that there was a need for them to see the results of the full structural survey to show that there was a commitment to full transparency. Therefore, Councillor Holland proposed that the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel received the results of the initial Structural Survey of Grimsby Central Library, when made available to Cabinet. Councillor Mickleburgh seconded this and it was unanimously carried by the panel.

A Panel Member commented on the commitment made around open and transparent engagement for such works and the resultant cost. The Member also raised the point of Lincs Inspire's role and was assured that, going forward, work would be carried out with Lincs Inspire to understand what could be achieved within the extant contractual framework.

One Member asked for reassurance around the consultation findings not being pre-determined as a debate at Full Council upon receipt of the petition as the recommendations made to Cabinet were similar to the report on the consultation findings. The Member was assured that the recommendations made at Full Council in July to Cabinet, were heavily caveated around the outcome of the consultation. Further, Officers explained that the consultation results had been found to be largely supportive of and in line with the Full Council recommendations to Cabinet. That was why the Full Council resolution wording and papers were very similar.

The Chair also questioned when the 'pop-up' library was anticipated to open in Freshney Place. This could not be readily confirmed and officers agreed to revert in early course. The Chair asked if members could have sight of a copy of the project plan and timeline for the temporary central library move, which was agreed by officers. The Chair then raised the point that there was no mention of the Library Services Select Committee that was approved by Full Council being mentioned in the recommendations to Cabinet. He believed that the findings of the Library Services Select Committee needed to feed into the emerging library service strategy, and so he proposed that an amended version of recommendation 3 be recommended to Cabinet to incorporate the findings of the Library Services Select Committee when establishing options and costs for the repair and refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library. Councillor Crofts seconded the motion. A vote unanimously supported this proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET-

1. That the recommendations included in the report be supported, with the additional recommendations that;
 - a. concern be raised with Cabinet that there was no clear timeline available to date on options and the cost for refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library, and that the anticipated timeline, that Cabinet can commit to with a degree of confidence, be shared with the members of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel.
 - b. That the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel receive the results of the initial Structural Survey of Grimsby Central Library, when made available to Cabinet.
2. That recommendation 3 be amended to read:
 - a. Authorises the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage, and the Visitor Economy to establish options and costs for the repair and refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library, refine the library service needs assessment and develop the emerging library service strategy informed by the findings of the two phases of public consultation and engagement and *also the findings of the Library Services Select Committee*.

RESOLVED – That the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel receive a copy of the project plan and timeline for the temporary central library move.

The panel received a report that summarised the data and statistics for the 2024 tourism season in North East Lincolnshire, reported via the Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment Monitor (STEAM) and from other local data sources and intelligence.

Observations were made around the need for a direct train from London to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Councillor Mickleburgh thought it would be useful if they recommended to Cabinet the encouragement of the reinstatement of a direct train service from London to Grimsby and Cleethorpes, due to the low level of tourists arriving by train. Councillor Farren seconded this. This was then unanimously carried by the panel.

The Chair also raised the need for expanding the team for event management. The visitor numbers were down, and he wondered whether it was due to not having enough resources to be able to promote and do the work needed to increase the number of visitors. The Chair considered making a recommendation to Cabinet for a business case to employ two employees for two years.

Mr Hunt explained that event management provision would be looked at as part of the Safer Towns Review, which was to be considered next on the agenda, and he explained how the review had highlighted the need for more resources. Members welcomed these findings and believed that they need to look at this resource as a whole for the resort, not just for event management.

The Chair proposed that this panel's concerns with the lack of resources being put into the Tourism Team, which was evidently holding back the full economic potential of tourism, be forwarded to Cabinet. Councillor Mickleburgh second this. The panel unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

1. That Cabinet note the very low number of visitors arriving by train and consider using the influence it has to endeavour to increase that number, by adding its voice to the call for a direct train service between Cleethorpes and London for example.
2. That Cabinet note that the Economy, Culture and Tourism Panel expressed concerns with the lack of resources being put into the Tourism Team, which they deemed to be holding back the full economic potential for tourism.

SPE.27 SAFER TOWNS REVIEW

The panel considered the Safer Towns Review that details the findings and recommendations defined and developed for the workstreams of Resort and Events Management, and Town Centre Management.

Members welcomed this report and the need to broaden the resort management team. The Chair wondered whether visitors had been asked whether they felt safe. Mr Hunt confirmed that a consultation had taken place to collate residents' views. They had also engaged with the members of public via activities out in the community. Members thought it all sounded very positive.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET – That the recommendations included in the report be supported by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel.

SPE.28 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no panel members' questions to the Portfolio Holder.

SPE.29 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 11.55 a.m.