



COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

8th January 2026 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Aisthorpe (in the Chair)
Councillors Bonner, Cairns (substitute for Brookes), Lindley, Patrick, Shutt, Silvester and Wheatley.

Officers in attendance:

- Katie Brown (Director Adult Social Care)
- Paul Caswell (Head of Safer Towns and Communities)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management)
- Charlotte Dring (Assistant Director Housing and Communities)
- Gary Edwards (Head of Waste and Operational Services)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Stronger Place)
- Kath Jickells (Assistant Director Environment)
- Levi Anderson Jordan (Environmental Strategy and Sustainability Manager)
- Lisa Logan (Head of Open Spaces)
- Joanne Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Head of Law and Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Claire Swainson (Strategic Lead, Finance)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)

There was one member of the press present at the meeting.

SPC.37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Brookes, and also from Councillor Hudson (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero) and Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport).

SPC.38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPC.39 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 20th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

SPC.40 QUESTION TIME

There were two questions submitted by Mr Dicker for the panel. The Chair read out the questions submitted and the response provided by officers.

Question 1. Would the scrutiny panel confirm what the definition of asylum seekers (refugees) is?

Question 2. I have recently seen a social media segment where a North East Lincolnshire councillor has claimed that refugees are receiving free washing machines instead of British born citizens. As I understand it, when they arrive to this country, they may have access to laundry facilities but that is not always the case. Once approved, they are then expected to find somewhere to live, often without having a job straight away and may, but not always, be provided with small grants to purchase these goods. Will the panel confirm if this is in any way giving preferential treatment to them over British born citizens?

The following response was provided by officers:-

Question 1: The term 'Asylum seeker' or those seeking asylum refers to people who have left their home country, due to persecution, war, or violence and applied for refugee status in another country. They have made the application and are awaiting a formal decision on their application. The right to seek asylum is a legal right under the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees 1951. The vast majority of people who are forced to leave their homes as a result of persecution or war remain in their country.

The Home Office is responsible for the asylum dispersal system and provide the accommodation and financial support for those seeking asylum. An asylum seeker does not have access to public funds such as Universal Credit. The term 'refugee' refers to a person who has been given permission to stay in the UK following their claim for protection under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugees have full access to public funds and the right to stay in the UK.

Question 2: As a local authority we do not provide furniture, washing machines or any other white goods for those seeking asylum. Anything

provided while in asylum dispersal accommodation is facilitated by the Home Office. In relation to refugees, it is not a standard practice to provide washing machines, there are some circumstances in which we may be required to provide this; however, this makes a very small minority of the people we support.

The first instance is that this is required as part of a Home Office resettlement scheme and is within the funding requirements set out by government. The second circumstance would be in response to a refugee or refugee family in an empty property who received 28 or 56 days' notice to leave their accommodation following a positive decision, often leaving people homeless due to lock changes, with no local support connections, family and are only able to access work once their refugee status is granted. Refugees are assessed against the standard homelessness criteria and do not receive priority banding for holding refugee status.

The provision of washing machines or white goods is in line and reflective of local offers that are available to all residents who meet the criteria, either through the 'Household Support Fund' or grants offered by social housing providers. Any funding to support refugees is ring fenced government grants that are used to alleviate pressures on other funding sources such as the Household Support Fund. The Household Support Fund is administered by the council and works closely with local community groups to broker targeted resources needed to improve circumstances for eligible vulnerable households. This can include energy saving products, white goods, emergency vouchers, food provision, debt advice, as well as budget management support.

RESOLVED – That the questions and responses be noted.

SPC.41 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.42 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

At SPC.28, CCTV Update, Ms Paterson stated that officers were preparing the quarterly submission and a briefing note would be prepared with the panel invited to feed back.

At SPC.64 Weed Control, Ms Paterson confirmed that the Assistant Director Environment had publicised the weed control request for sites. The panel agreed that this was now complete and could be removed from the tracking report.

At SPC.19, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), it was confirmed that the Assistant Director of Infrastructure had been advised that both design out crime and VAWG would be referenced in the forthcoming Cabinet report.

At SPC.20, 2025/26 Q1 Council Plan Resources and Finance Performance Report, Ms Paterson noted that the Assistant Director Policy and Resources had asked her performance team to speak to the service area to see whether this data was available. Ms Robinson assured members that this data would be included in the next quarterly submission.

At JSPCT.17, Housing Overview, Ms Paterson advised that the housing register data would take a few months to cleanse and details would be forwarded in due course. Ms Paterson would request a further update for the panel from the Director of Adult Social Care.

At SPC.29, Update from Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Ms Paterson had contacted the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) office to organise a site visit and was awaiting a response back.

At SPC.31 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV Update), Ms Paterson advised that a site visit had been organised for 12th January 2026.

At SPC.34, Questions to Portfolio Holder, Ms Paterson asked officers to clarify resolutions two and three within the tracking document. A brief discussion took place regarding reporting incidents. Mr Hunt advised that there was no data or evidence to support the concerns raised by the panel member around public safety at taxi ranks, and therefore officers were unable to provide a report. Officers assured members that taxi ranks were covered by public space CCTV.

Subsequently, the panel agreed to remove resolution two and three from the tracking report for SPC.34 and asked officers to look into lighting at taxi ranks to address the matter. In terms of action four, the Chair had requested a further report be brought back to scrutiny with anonymised data showing how persistent anti-social behaviour and repeated breaches were handled and asked that this remained on the tracking report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That SPC.64 Weed Control be removed from the tracking report.
3. That SPC.34, Questions to Portfolio Holder resolutions two and three, be removed from the tracking report.
4. That SPC.34, Questions to Portfolio Holder resolution four remain on the tracking report.

SPC.43 COUNCIL REFRESH PLAN

The panel received a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills presenting a refresh of the Council Plan. Ms Robinson set out the report in brief and highlighted the key areas for consideration; she noted that it was good practice to review the plan on an annual basis.

A member noted that the average monthly private rent for a house in North East Lincolnshire was reported as £596 and asked whether this figure was reviewed annually. Ms Robinson agreed to check the data source and confirm how frequently this was updated.

Another member made some suggestions around how the council could better measure itself against its priorities. Under sustainable housing, it was suggested that more needed to be included around the council's ambition to create more social housing within the borough. Under Greener future, the member noted that although there was some good work taking place around recycling, the council's recycling rates had plateaued and there was no clear ambition to increase recycling rates.

Also, under accessible and engaging council, there was no reference to how the council would be more inclusive for those residents that struggled with access to technology and ICT.

Another member felt that overall, this was a good report but would like to see more reference to specific outcomes of how the council were going to achieve their ambitions. A member referred to requirements to deliver new and affordable homes, stating that it did not explain how the council were going to get there and how this would be achieved.

RESOLVED

1. That the Council Plan Refresh report be noted.
2. That further information be provided to the panel around the average monthly private rent reported as £596, specifically how frequently it was updated.

SPC.44 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) FOR NUISANCE VEHICLES

The panel received the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Nuisance Vehicles ahead of it going to Cabinet on 14th January 2026. Mr Caswell set out the report in brief and highlighted some of the key issues for consideration.

A member asked about e-scooters and at what point these could be seized from individuals. Mr Caswell explained that the e-scooters were crushed if they were uninsured.

Another member asked if the PSPO's would apply to motorists travelling illegally on roads which was currently a major issue. Mr Caswell explained that the police could use substantive powers under the Road Traffic Act if offences were committed on a public highway. The PSPOs provided powers for the council to prosecute for prohibited behaviour in parks and open spaces.

A member raised concerns around e-scooters and felt more awareness was needed for parents around this. Mr Caswell advised that a recent operation in the town centre had seen nine illegal scooters seized and subsequently crushed. The council wanted to warn parents of the dangers of these scooters and were working with the council's communications team to deliver a further communication around this.

A member noted that e-scooters came at a significant cost and felt the awareness for people around the dangers needed building into the relevant consultation. The member also raised concerns around the fire risk of battery charging e-scooters within homes and asked that this could also be factored into things.

A member asked how often the council would be patrolling parks and open spaces to understand if anti-social behaviour was still occurring. Mr Caswell advised that there were two dedicated officers that worked within Operation Yellow Fin qualified in road traffic law. Once due diligence had been completed, teams would be briefed on how to use the PSPOs.

Another member asked how CCTV was used to identify people using e-scooters. Mr Hunt advised that real time data was used through the police to monitor activity in parks which then enabled CCTV to be deployed in response to any intelligence received.

Another member was highly supportive of the work that was being done to address this issue but asked how the council would tackle those cohort of criminals operating at nighttime. Ms Caswell assured members that this cohort would be dealt with via a joint model used to tackle organised crime.

Members asked whether other local authorities had introduced borough wide PSPOs and how successful these had been. Mr Caswell noted that his team had worked with other local authorities in the region and the feedback had shown that the PSPOs worked well providing they were utilised properly.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments made be noted.

SPC.45 REPLACEMENT OF CREMATORS AT GRIMSBY CREMATORIUM

The panel received a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure seeking views from the panel to progress plans for two replacement cremators.

Mr Dowson set out the report in brief and highlighted some of the key issues for consideration.

A member enquired whether solar panels could be used to offset running costs. Mr Dowson stated that his team were looking at funding through Salix and would take this away.

A member asked how efficient and reliable electric cremators were in terms of energy consumption compared with those that were gas. Ms Jickells stated there was no data to suggest that electric cremators would be any worse. However, she added that the council had the relevant maintenance contracts in place to ensure their upkeep.

In response to a query around the cremator's lifespan, Ms Logan confirmed that the gas cremators had a 12–20-year lifespan and the electric ones were slightly more.

A member asked whether, alongside any installation of solar panels, there would be heat recovery from the cremators. Ms Jickells explained that some heat recovery was already in place and linked to the wider building.

A member questioned why a funding grant received two years earlier was only now being brought to scrutiny. Mr Dowson explained that Salix had been assessing multiple buildings across the council's estate, and several surveys had identified additional work requirements. He noted that work had been ongoing to reach this stage and that a wider package of works was still being developed, which had contributed to the delay.

Ms Jickells emphasised the importance of having a robust design plan and accurate costings in place before progressing further and procuring contractors.

A further discussion ensued around funding. Ms Jickells explained that a feasibility study was required first, including meeting specific criteria and demonstrating that carbon-saving benefits reached the necessary threshold before the project could progress.

A member noted the uncertainty around future energy tariffs, particularly the shift in costs between gas and air-source heat pumps and highlighted the potential implications for the wider borough.

Overall, the panel were supportive of the proposals.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

SPC.46 DUNE PROJECT FUNDING

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure noting progression of the DUNE Project to Phase 2.

Mr Levi Anderson Jordan set out the report in brief and highlighted some of the key issues for consideration.

A member asked if the River Freshney had been included in these plans. Mr Anderson Jordan stated that although the River Freshney had not been included within the current bid, his team were looking at separate bids for chalk streams and advised that further details would be brought to scrutiny for consideration.

A member raised concerns around inadequate public conveniences near Humberston Fitties car park. Mr Anderson Jordan advised that the park rangers were aware that there were no facilities at this location.

The Chair asked how environmental protection would remain central. Mr Anderson Jordan stated that key signage around the resort encouraged the public to stay in specific areas, i.e. established footpaths.

The Chair considered this a great report and looked forward to what phase 2 would bring.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.47 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY UPDATE

The panel received a report from the Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure noting the progress of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Mr Anderson Jordan set out the report in brief and highlighted some of the key issues for consideration.

A member noted that the public consultation dates were incorrect and asked if these could be corrected. Mr Anderson Jordan advised that these would be amended.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.48 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions to the Portfolio Holder for this meeting.

SPC.49 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.

SPC.50 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the press and public be requested to leave on the grounds that discussion of the following business was likely to disclose exempt information within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

SPC.51 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY UPDATE

The panel considered the closed appendix to SPC.47.

Members sought clarification on a number of matters within the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Recovery Strategy, further to which officers provided responses.

Mr Anderson Jordan stated that at the end of the review period, the project would come back to scrutiny with a detailed report outlining completed actions and proposals for the next stage.

RESOLVED – That the appendix to the report now submitted (and considered at SPC.47) be noted.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.30 p.m.