



ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

22nd January 2026 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillor Holland (in the Chair)
Councillors Cairns (substitute for Brooks) Crofts, Farren, Lindley, Mickleburgh and Morland.

Officers in attendance:

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure)
- Nick Browning (Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism)
- Maggie Johnson (Head of Economy and Funding)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- 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 Dawkins (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy)
- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills)

There were three members of the public and one person from the press present.

SPE.43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillors Brookes and Parkinson.

SPE.44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPE.45 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 27th November 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

SPE.46 QUESTION TIME

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

SPE.47 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.48 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

At SPE.35, the Chair asked when would be coming back to the panel. Ms Borgstrom explained that the recommendations had been supported by the Portfolio Holder and taken onboard by officers during a service review. The review had been approved to go forward, subject to Cabinet and full Council approval of budget investment. Details of the exact implementation was currently going through internal change management process, including Human Resource considerations. An internal change management report was in progress, once they were content that processes had been followed in respect of any staffing impact, officers would be able to bring a report back to show what the plans looked like. She added that it would also include the resort management.

RESOLVED –

1. That a report be received by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel detailing the changes to the Tourism Team and the wider resort management as a result of the Safer Towns Review.

2. That item SPE.36 be removed from the tracking report and all other items be noted.

SPE.49 COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills presenting a refresh of the Council Plan.

The Chair thought that the plan highlighted everything positively but found it more of a strategy rather than a plan. Other panel members found some of the wording to be clunky but supported what it was trying to promote.

RESOLVED – That the panels comments be taken on board and the Council Plan refresh be noted.

SPE.50 GRIMSBY MASTERPLAN AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure the refresh of the Grimsby Masterplan.

Members had a few concerns over the transport strategy and questioned the improvements the Transport Hub would bring. However, officers stated how came under the remit of the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel who had regular updates on the transport improvement plan.

Members asked for further clarification on the eight priorities and how they were identified. Officers indicated that these came from the results from the consultation that took place in 2020. They had noted them to see whether Members had a view as to whether they were still appropriate.

The Chair noted that the retail and leisure sector had moved on, he wondered how officers would make sure that the consultation addressed these issues. Ms Johnson explained that they would pick out the priorities people indicated they come to the town centre to use and build on them.

One member asked about consulting with businesses and how they engaged with them. Ms Johnson explained that the consultation would include all businesses, where they could be part of the discussion around the development of the town centre.

RESOLVED – That the Grimsby Masterplan and Movement Strategy be noted.

SPE.51 CREATIVITY STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN 2025 REVIEW & 2026 PLAN

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure highlighting delivery against 2025's Action Plan including creative programming such as Our Future Starts Here, Freedom Festival on Tour and Festival of the Sea.

One Member wondered whether some of those events had been promoted correctly. Mr Trowsdale stated that they had done their best to promote as much as possible and noted that the turn out for the events did reflect that.

Councillor Dawkins added that he had been in several conversations about local advertising and that for 2026, residents would be seeing more physical advertising of events in Cleethorpes. They were just waiting for proposed plans to go through planning.

The panel congratulated the team on the amount they had achieved with such limited resources.

A member asked whether Officers were considering putting a bid in for the Town of Culture. Mr Trowsdale explained that they were currently considering the evaluation criteria in more detail. Members added that if officers needed their support, then they would like to help as they would be very supportive of the bid going forward.

RESOLVED – That the Creativity Strategy action plan 2025 review and 2026 plan be noted.

SPE.52 STATUS OF THE LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

The panel considered an interim report from the Chair of the Library Services Select Committee on the Library Services Select Committee interim findings.

One member had some concerns around the £3.5million proposal as they were not sure that this had been taken into account as part of the upcoming budget. They did not think the processes were up front enough to be able to commit to spending that sort of money in a single year. Ms Borgstrom explained that a further assurance would take place as part of the capital work process. Once a decision had been made by Cabinet to support the investment, a full business case would be put forward in consultation with the finance team, which would then lead to a decision over which time period the capital would be profiled.

Councillor Jackson believed that the costs needed to be debated by the public and all members of the authority. There needed to be a detailed discussion on whether Elected members thought spending £13million on the central library building was a good value for public money. He stated that they had made a commitment to the future of the building, but this couldn't be at any cost. He said that the question was, what was the acceptable cost. He added that if we were to spend that amount of money on the Library, it would mean that we wouldn't have that money to spend on other things.

One Member raised concerns about spending the initial £3million if the building were to end up getting demolished. They asked if it would be a waste of time and resources.

Councillor Dawkins added that they had always been committed to keeping the building, but it was subject to cost. If they were to decide to demolish then the asbestos would have to be removed first so the initial works would not be wasted. He believed that it needed to be a Full Council decision to look at all the facts and figures, in coalition with the public to have their say. He stated that if we were to spend £13 million or more, then it may affect what the Council has to spend over many years.

The Chair explained that the Select Committee had acknowledged that the building had been neglected for many years and they came to a conclusion that the works mentioned in their recommendation were needed urgently.

Councillor Mickleburgh moved for the Select Committee's recommendation to be recommended to Cabinet. Councillor Crofts seconded this. The panel voted unanimously to support the proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

That in order to prevent further damage to the Central Library building, and in order to provide full, safe access, capital funding should be agreed on an urgent basis, sufficient to allow roof replacement, appropriate remediation to prevent significant water ingress through other openings, and asbestos removal (where appropriate) from the full building, and for the above works to be completed on an urgent basis.

SPE.53 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Chair introduced Councillor Morland who had submitted a question for Councillor Dawkins – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy.

Councillor Morland said the demolition of Abbey Walk Car Park had involved a significant amount of public scrutiny in the local and social

platforms. In light of the Twentieth Century Society indicating that the friezes of local artist Harold Gosney on Abbey Walk Car Park were of significant and architectural artistic merit, was a decision taken to instruct and include in the contract with the demolition firm to save as many of the friezes as possible. If there was not, why not and why has the Local Authority not made a formal agreement with the demolition company which would mean some could have been saved.

Councillor Dawkins replied that with regards to any contractor agreement he could confirm that a clause to investigate saving the artworks did form part of the tender process and the council were in talks with the contractor around the method, costs and risks associated with this undertaking. Additionally, there were several factors impeding the removal of the friezes in a safe and secure manner.

- Each one was cast onto the structure itself and not just attached or bolted.
- Safe removal by machine was not guaranteed, this was why the council cannot commit to them being safely removed and preserved.
- The condition of each casting and how they would hold up to removal was unknown, again the council cannot guarantee preservation without damage.
- Any damage to the frescos would impact on future use and preservation/storage.
- Each one was estimated to weigh between 1 and 2 tonnes, so manual removal was not a safe or achievable option.
- The best chance of preservation was removal of the bottom casts but again the council cannot guarantee this due to damage during demolition, machine pressure, damage from the structure's rebar during removal, structural integratory of the casts.
- 3D modelling that has already taken place was the only preservation method the council can guarantee.

SPE.54 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call-in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

SPE.55 URGENT BUSINESS – LOCAL VISITOR LEVY CONSULTATION

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure on the Local Visitor Levy Consultation. The report was considered as urgent business due to consultation timescales.

One Member of the panel recognised the decline in the numbers of people visiting Cleethorpes and believed that if they were to support a levy for Cleethorpes that would put another barrier in place for gaining

more visitors. Members noted that we were only a town and did not have a problem with the number of visitors the town had. They wanted to attract people to come to the area not add a deterrent.

The Chair gave an example of Liverpool, where they had to pay the city an extra £1. He stated that the extra money could help make a difference to the area. Another member had thought the same, but was conscious that it may not make its way back to North East Lincolnshire as it was the Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire who would receive the levy back. The elected member asked whether the consultation would include the opinion of local businesses and hoteliers. Officers confirmed that it would.

Councillor Dawkins stated that when staying in accommodation you already paid VAT and this levy would be an unwanted extra. He explained that he could not support it. He believed it would have a big impact on the resort, particularly because most people who come to Cleethorpes looked for budget holidays.

The Chair stated that they needed a clearer direction on how the levy would be collected, distributed and used. Ms Borgstrom explained that this report was to get a consensus on how officers should respond to the consultation. They were guided by members, so it was useful to capture this conversation and any recommendations the panel decided to put forward to Cabinet.

With that in mind, Councillor Lindley proposed that the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel did not support the introduction of a visitor levy on overnight stays in England. Councillor Mickleburgh seconded the proposal. The proposal was supported unanimously by the panel.

RESOLVED - That the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel did not support the introduction of a visitor levy on overnight stays in England.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11.33 a.m.