

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE 2025 - 2026

1. Introduction

Welcome to North East Lincolnshire Council's annual scrutiny report, which sets out the key scrutiny activities undertaken during the 2025/26 Municipal Year, highlights the impact of scrutiny's work and outlines likely future work programmes.

Scrutiny has a key role within the Council's governance arrangements to support effective delivery of the council's priorities and provide challenge, as appropriate, to make sure that the basis for decisions being taken by the Council are robust. The five scrutiny panels have been involved in a broad range of work; including providing challenge on key decisions in advance of consideration by Cabinet, monitoring service improvements, carrying out visits and working with partners on key areas affecting the residents of North East Lincolnshire.

Areas of focus have included elective home education, violence against women and girls, regeneration of the resort of Cleethorpes, health inequalities, the NHS 10 year plan, Section 106 Agreement funding and the Corporation Bridge project. There has been continued collaborative work across the panels, particularly in relation to matters crossing the remit of different panels, such as housing and skills. As in previous years, all Members were invited to attend both informal and formal sessions to comment on budget setting proposals prior to final decisions being made by full Council. The panels have also considered the refresh of the Council Plan, contributing directly to the formulation of the key priorities of the organisation. Task and finish work remains a key part of scrutiny's work, enabling Elected Members to focus on specific issues and explore improvements. A prime example of this is the Libraries Select Committee, aimed at establishing what our strategic approach should be for future library provision in North East Lincolnshire. This in-depth work involved engagement with service users and community groups, exploring innovation to help find a way forward on a matter of local importance. Across the year, scrutiny's work has led to a number of recommendations being made to Cabinet with the intention of strengthening final decisions and improving outcomes. These have been broadly welcomed by Cabinet.

Key areas of focus for scrutiny in North East Lincolnshire during the coming year are expected to include a diverse range of subjects – household waste, school transport, teenage pregnancy, road junction safety, houses of multiple occupation (Article 4 directions), and the Grimsby Town of Culture bid. The panels will continue to monitor the Council's budget (including proposals agreed by Council in February 2026 when setting the budget) as well as performance indicators contained with the Council Plan.

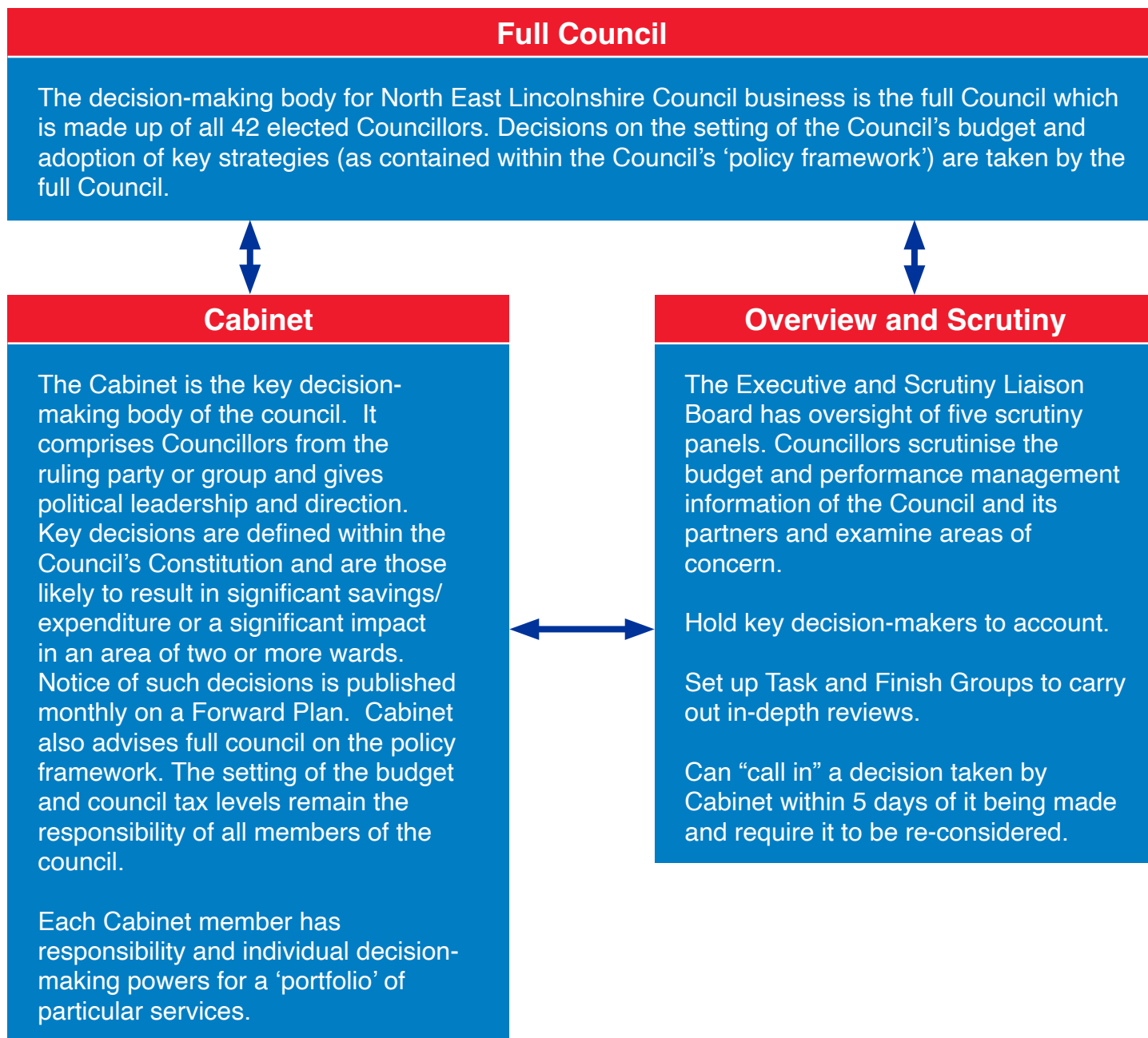
In terms of development, scrutiny chair training was provided by an external trainer with a wealth of experience in local government and training members. The training session led to a number of improvements to how we conduct scrutiny meetings and it is intended that this training will be an ongoing process.

Joanne Robinson, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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2. Scrutiny in North East Lincolnshire



Please note that decisions regarding certain functions are determined by 'regulatory' committees of the council such as the Planning Committee and the Licensing and Community Protection Committee. Such decisions do not fall under the remit of Scrutiny. There is co-ordination between Scrutiny and the Audit and Governance Committee on matters of mutual concern.

Overview

Scrutiny is a process that enables Councillors who are not Members of the Council's decision-making process to review and scrutinise matters affecting local people.

The role of Elected Members performing the overview and scrutiny function is to:

- Review and report on issues that affect the economic, environmental and social well-being of local people.
- Act as a check and balance to the Council's decision makers, examining and reviewing decisions and holding the Executive to account.
- Consider the work of public bodies operating outside the Council but which affect local residents, for example, local health services.
- Contribute to the development of future policies and strategies that will help improve services for local people.
- Involve local people in council decision making:
- Scrutiny is carried out using a range of methods, including panel meetings, working groups and select committees, but in all cases the process is non-political and Members from all groups participate.

Our Panels

Our panels and chairs this year were:

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Paul Silvester

Communities Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Nicola Aisthorpe

Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Steve Holland

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Ian Lindley

Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Sheldon Mill

Thanks are noted to Councillors, on all panels, for their contribution to the work of scrutiny over the last Municipal year.

3. Scrutiny



Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

Carrying on from the last municipal year, the panel continued to receive updates on the Children Services Improvement Journey, with members seeking further clarification around future opportunities and how the Family Hub service would be strengthened. After receiving the results and a detailed report on the outcome of the most recent Ofsted inspection, the panel offered its congratulations on achieving an overall 'good' judgement with outstanding leadership but noted that there was no time for complacency. The three recommendations arising from the inspection were seen by the panel as a good place to start to make further improvements. They were reassured that officers were dedicated to continuing with further developments and the transformation plan. In reporting the progress made, Ofsted noted that council members (along with partner agencies and staff) have been relentless in their focus on delivering effective help and support to children and families in North East Lincolnshire. The panel has provided a vital role in providing effective challenge along the improvement journey.

The panel received several detailed reports on the Department for Education Free School Programme. The panel were informed that the

First and foremost, may I take this opportunity to thank members and officers for their continued support, professional input and their valuable contributions to the work programme of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel. It has been a pleasure to chair this panel and throughout the year I believe all members of the panel have been very effective in scrutinising, challenging and holding officers to account for all aspects of the work programme. During the year we have witnessed major improvement across all areas of children's services and I feel scrutiny has played an important role in supporting the improvement journey and the leadership team to achieve the good/outstanding Ofsted Inspection rating. Moving forward it is imperative the panel continues its excellent work and play a vital role in the transformation and further improvement of children's services.

Councillor
Paul Silvester
Chair



SEMH (social and emotional mental health needs) Free School project continued to progress, with the Local Authority securing the land off Freeman Street. Whilst Members noted that this did come at an additional cost, they became aware that the overall costs laid out by the Local Authority were estimated to be a fraction of the ongoing revenue costs that were related to children attending independent, non-maintained, specialist provision and associated transport costs. Leading on from this report, the panel received an additional urgent Cabinet report seeking views on the requirement to secure estimated additional £2.3 million capital funding for the project. This subject attracted attendance from the public as well as the ward councillors for the proposed location of the school. A ward councillor explained that it had been a long journey to get to where they were now with the free school, and, although understanding of the substantial extra costs, asked that the panel recognised the need for this free school and the need to avoid any further delays. The panel welcomed the ward councillor's points, but they had some concerns over the need for the extra resources. Therefore, whilst supporting the recommendations in the Cabinet report, the panel suggested a further recommendation be considered by Cabinet to explore safeguards around exposure to risk of increasing costs and for the panel to retain oversight of the project. This was subsequently agreed to be implemented by Cabinet.

The rising numbers of children and young people being Electively Home Educated (EHE) has been of long-standing interest for the panel, so when a pre-Cabinet report on the Elective Home Education Strategy came it was very much welcomed. The panel had some concerns that the strategy did not include reasons why individuals were choosing to home educate, nor how these issues would be dealt with. It was felt that it lacked an understanding of what we were trying to do, so the panel felt that the strategy would be an opportunity to introduce smarter ways of working. Scrutiny Members asked for reassurance that this cohort were not being excluded from services that would be available to them if they were attending mainstream education. The discussion, therefore, ended with the panel recommending to Cabinet that the two-year strategy recognise and bring forward anticipated outcomes and metrics to assure performance of partnership working. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.

Further pre-decision scrutiny was undertaken on the new framework for the provision of home to school transport and the procurement of unregistered alternative provision framework. Both subjects were well received, some questions were raised around the value for money on rates being paid for taxis for school transport and the length of the contract, but overall Members could see the need for the new framework and were happy to support the recommendations within the Cabinet report. In terms of the alternative provision framework, panel members were content with the report but concerns were raised around providers subcontracting the service out to other providers and the location of some of the alternative provision being provided. This led to the panel putting forward two additional recommendations; that the framework terms prohibit subcontracting by providers and that, where possible, the alternative provision placements were made within North East Lincolnshire. Both recommendations were subsequently considered by Cabinet and approved for implementation.

The above are some of the key areas that the panel have focused on and made recommendations to Cabinet with a view to improving outcomes. However, the remit for the panel's work programme for 2025/26 has seen them also consider the Council Plan Resources and Finance reports for all quarters. The panel raised concerns as to whether referrals were in line with expected targets, the substantial increases in Front Door referrals, the forecast overspend for this financial year and

employee vacancies based on what used to be a very agency led service. Members picked up on such increases because previously it had been noted how there had been a substantial improvement. Officers reassured the panel that referrals were now coming through for the right reasons, they didn't have a target to achieve because if a referral was required it would need to be made. Officers acknowledged that they were still facing challenges around forecast overspend and agency staffing, but they were taking a realistic approach on expected expenditure and doing everything they could to retain permanent staff.

The panel also welcomed Chief Superintendent French who had played a big part in the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the panel felt that the changes reflected in presentation of its annual report had been quite incredible. The panel received an update on the creation of more Children's Homes provision within the Borough, which would provide greater choice, enable more children to be matched with local placements, and reduce the Council's reliance on externally commissioned children's homes.

Other areas that have been scrutinised this year included:

- Children's Social Care National reforms
- Family Hubs
- School exclusions, attendance and attainment
- Care Leaver Offer
- Adoption
- Maintained Nurseries and Day Care Provisions
- Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- 0 to 19 offer (Public Health, including Adolescent Lifestyle Survey and schools' response)
- Monitoring process and recommissioning of school transport.
- Children's Mental Health and Integrated Care Board (ICB) update
- Children's Homes/Young Person's voice



Communities Scrutiny Panel

The Communities Scrutiny Panel has had a particularly active and wide ranging year, undertaking extensive scrutiny across community safety, public protection, environmental matters, housing standards, and wider community wellbeing. The panel's work has continued to shape policy, strengthen accountability, and support improved outcomes for residents, while maintaining a proactive approach to forward thinking and emerging issues.

In terms of key highlights and achievements, the panel exercised strong pre-decision scrutiny, including a detailed review of the Household Support Fund allocation (£2.7m). Members challenged how success would be measured and sought assurances on targeting and evaluation, contributing to strengthened monitoring arrangements.

One of the panel's major lines of inquiry this year was the continued scrutiny of the council's work on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), including:

- Review of consultation findings and data trends.
- Oversight of progress towards White Ribbon Accreditation.
- Concerns around 24-hour gym safety, healthy relationships education, and promoting the 'Ask for Angela' Scheme.

During my second consecutive year as Chair, the Communities Scrutiny Panel has continued to build on the open and constructive approach to scrutiny developed during the previous year. The panel has provided evidence-led scrutiny across a wide range of issues, including community safety, housing standards, environmental matters and public wellbeing. Despite regularly having full agendas, members worked collaboratively to keep discussions focused and productive. As Chair, I was pleased this year to support the involvement of a work experience student in panel proceedings. Members welcomed the opportunity for them to experience local democracy first-hand and ask questions directly to officers. I would like to thank panel members, officers and partner organisations for their work and contributions throughout the year.

Councillor
Nicola Aisthorpe
Chair



- Scheduling of a specific All-Member Briefing on VAWG
- Agreement that annual updates on the VAWG Action Plan be built into the panel's work programme.

The panel's persistence on this important issue has helped ensure VAWG remains a high corporate priority and continues to benefit from cross departmental focus.

The panel scrutinised the Food Poverty Assessment, highlighting the increasing impact on living standards, access to affordable food, the needs of isolated older residents, and consideration for dietary requirements and food intolerances. This work will directly shape the forthcoming Food Poverty Action Plan.

As the designated Crime and Disorder Committee, the panel reviewed the Community Safety Partnership's Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment. Key areas examined included:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) trends, youth ASB reporting, and neighbourhood policing
- Organised Crime Groups
- Drug enforcement, illicit goods, and the Clear Hold Build Framework
- Town-centre initiatives such as the Operation Mastery and use of passive drug detection dogs.

The committee benefited from direct engagement with partners, including Chief Superintendent French, strengthening joint understanding and co-operation.

Members welcomed an update from the Humberside Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, covering priorities and future changes to governance structures. A forthcoming site visit to the Force Control Room will further enhance understanding of how ASB and crime are managed in real time.

Closed Circuit TV(CCTV) performance continued to be an important focus. Members received updates on system performance, rising fly tipping, the need for additional cameras and enhanced surveillance, and the importance of public reporting through 101 and My Community Alert. A site visit to the CCTV Control Room in January 2026 was well received and strengthened member insight.

The panel scrutinised a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Nuisance Vehicles, asking detailed questions on illegal e-scooters, enforcement and regulation, public awareness and education, and battery safety issues. The panel was highly supportive of the PSPO proposals.

The panel provided challenge on key environmental topics including the replacement of two cremators at Grimsby Crematorium (supportive despite concerns about future energy costs), progress with phase two of the Dynamic Understanding of the Natural Environment (DUNE) Project (Phase 2), the Green Futures Annual Report, and the review of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. As a result of concerns about coastal and river water quality and pollution, the panel asked for an additional report outlining the actions the Council was taking to safeguard local coastal and river environments to be submitted to a future meeting. The panel received an update on Weed Control following on from a previously received petition calling for the Council to phase-out the use of glyphosate in favour of non-chemical alternatives. A detailed discussion on the use of glyphosate

resulted in the panel requesting updated trials to revisit the issue, reflecting the panel's commitment to evidence based decision making.

The panel received a call in relating to the Fuller Street Bridge in Cleethorpes, and members explored options to improve safety, supported by evidence from Humberside Police. The portfolio holder decision was released for implementation, subject to a review of the crime data returning to the Communities Scrutiny Panel in six months' time.

The panel welcomed an update on the Armed Forces Covenant, supporting the next steps and engagement with local charities.

The panel also considered the Council Plan Resources and Finance reports throughout the year. Members provided constructive feedback to help refine priorities and delivery measures.

In addition to its work within the formal meeting setting, the panel received several briefing papers on Food Poverty Assessment, housing standards powers and CCTV rapid deployment cameras. This has strengthened understanding and supported improved scrutiny.

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Food Poverty Action Plan
- Household Waste Delivery Plan
- Annual updates on the VAWG Action Plan
- Weed Control: outcomes of revised trials
- Quarterly CCTV Performance Briefing Notes
- Selective Licensing Review (12 months post implementation)

The Communities Scrutiny Panel has delivered a robust, proactive, and wide-ranging programme of scrutiny during 2025–26. The panel's work has strengthened community safety, supported vulnerable residents, improved environmental awareness, highlighted emerging risks, and ensured accountability and better decision-making. The year has also seen enhanced member engagement, improved cross agency collaboration, and several excellent examples of scrutiny influencing policy direction. The panel will continue to build on these achievements as it moves into the 2026–27 municipal year.



Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel

This municipal year the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel has welcomed a lot of participation from the community, with several members of the public asking questions of the panel. These had particularly been focused on the review of the library service, seeking assurance that proper steps had been taken to ensure that Grimsby Central Library materials were stored safely, that risks had been properly assessed and around engagement with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Part of this stemmed from the Officer Decision call in which was considered by the panel on the temporary library relocation to Freshney Place Shopping Centre. The panel called a special meeting to discuss the issues raised, but after deliberation they were happy to release the decision for implementation, with one minor amendment that the review period be reduced from twelve months to every three months. This also linked to the panel receiving a pre-Cabinet report on the Libraries and Archives Review phase two public consultation findings. Members had a range of concerns around the timeline of works being done in the Grimsby Central Library. After a detailed discussion the panel made additional recommendations asking that an anticipated timeline for the Grimsby Central Library works be shared with members of the panel and that the panel receive the results of the initial Structural Survey of Grimsby Central Library. These recommendations were later received by Cabinet and were approved for implementation. In addition to this, a Library Services Select Committee was established during the Municipal Year resulting from a resolution of full Council. The Select Committee reported to the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny

The Economy Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel sat for a total of 11 hours over the last municipal year. The future of library services in the Borough was a key focus for the panel, which received and considered a report from the Library Services Select Committee and then made a large number of recommendations to Cabinet, most of which will be considered in the forthcoming municipal year. Other key areas of scrutiny included the Cleethorpes regeneration projects, the Council's economic performance, and the Skills Action Plan. The latter is critical in improving the Borough's offering to potential large employers, increasing the standard of living of people who work and live here and retaining young people.

I would like to thank other panel members for their diligence and council officers for giving freely of their time in helping me get a better understanding of the detail of their work and the challenges they face. Work next year will include input into a new visitor/tourism plan which will take us forward in increasing visitor numbers and boosting that part of our economy.

Councillor
Steve Holland
Chair



Panel. Further details of the findings of this Select Committee can be found in the 'Task and Finish Scrutiny' section of this report.

As part of their tourism remit, the panel received a report that summarised the data and statistics for the 2024 tourist season. Concerns were raised around the need for a direct train from London to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Following on from this, the panel recommended to Cabinet that it lobby for a direct train service to Grimsby and Cleethorpes, due to the low level of tourists arriving by train. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet. The panel also focused on the Safer Town review which reviewed 'resort and event management' and 'town centre management'. A core part of the findings was the recommendation of wider service reorganisation and to support this an additional £400,000 was approved as part of Council budget setting to increase resources within staffing in these areas. Members welcomed what this increase in resources could potentially bring forward.

A large focus for the panel has been on the three Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects in Cleethorpes. Concerns had been raised about the disturbance of the area whilst these developments were being implemented, as well as major road closures and the pedestrianisation of the Market Place, Cleethorpes. This resulted in several questions for the portfolio holder in relation to the impact on local businesses, the availability of public toilets whilst the development was being implemented and traffic calming measures for Cleethorpes Market Place. Overall, the panel welcomed the schemes but were keen to receive regular updates on progress.

The Committee has also reviewed the Local Visitor Levy consultation which led to a detailed discussion on the subject and some concerns about the detrimental impact on the visitor economy. Some Members said that the money charged could be put back into the resort, but the concerns were that the money would not make it back to North East Lincolnshire. With all that in mind, the panel could not support the introduction of a visitor levy on overnight stays in England.

Other areas that have been scrutinised this year included:

- Grimsby Masterplan and Movement Strategy
- Creative Strategy
- Sport and Physical Strategy
- Kasbah Tour and update

In addition to priority outcomes within the panel's terms of reference, the following topics have been suggested for consideration for next year's scrutiny work programme:

- St James Minster Clock
- Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway
- Town of Culture update
- LUF Cleethorpes Projects updates
- Grimsby Masterplan
- Three monthly – Grimsby Library location reviews
- Future of Library Services



Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

During the course of the year, the panel agreed to set a theme for each of the meetings which included health inequalities, the NHS 10 year plan, Adult Safeguarding, oral health and access to dentists. This enabled the panel to scrutinise the themed areas in depth.

Throughout the year the panel received the Council Plan Resources and Finance report. The panel asked for reassurance around the adult social care budget, taking into account the pressures of an ageing population as this was a growing area of concern for the panel to monitor.

Following a Council resolution in December 2024 which requested that North East Lincolnshire Council become a 'Marmot' Place, the panel was provided with the opportunity to consider the resulting Cabinet report that sought a formal decision. A Marmot Place recognises that health and health inequalities are mostly shaped by the wider social determinants of health such as education, employment and living conditions, and takes action to improve health and reduce health inequalities. The report was welcomed by the panel because they could see the positive benefits of this approach which provided a structured, evidence-based method to tackle health inequalities, align with national priorities, and embed fairness and prevention across all council activity. It would strengthen community outcomes, attract external investment, and enhance the borough's reputation as a leader in health equity, which the panel felt would benefit residents of North East Lincolnshire.

It has been a successful year for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel and I would like to thank panel members for their significant contributions. It has been a challenging year, as members navigated through the vast changes affecting health and social care. One of the biggest topics was the CQC Inspection Outcome Report for ASC. The panel recognised and acknowledged the areas for improvement and will continue to monitor the progress that is required over the coming year. The panel's scrutiny of services was meticulous, and I am pleased to say that a comprehensive programme of scrutiny was completed, despite the challenges and complexity of many of the reports received.

Overall, a very successful year for the panel, and this has only been made possible by the diligence and commitment of officers and panel members alike.

Councillor
Ian Lindley
Chair



Members were reassured that the Marmot Place outcomes would be reported back through the quarterly finance and performance reports, which the panel would have the opportunity to monitor throughout the municipal year. The panel suggested that a paragraph be added to the Cabinet and Scrutiny report templates around the Marmot principles so that any potential impact could be considered when making key decisions.

Health inequalities featured in the panel's work programme themed meeting, where the focus was around screening and immunisation, teenage conception, smoking in pregnancy, and healthy life expectancy. There were good discussions around each of these areas and as a result the panel agreed to focus during the next municipal year on reducing the teenage pregnancy rates and look at where the panel could make a difference.

A comprehensive briefing on the NHS 10-Year Plan outlined significant shifts towards prevention and community-based care. The panel recommended that scrutiny of domestic abuse services fall under the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, pending discussion at the Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board. This decision was made in recognition of the significant health and wellbeing implications of domestic abuse and the current placement of funding within Public Health, despite portfolio holder responsibility falling under the remit of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection Outcome report for Adult Social Care was presented, detailing areas for improvement and the Council's action plan. A decision was made to receive regular updates from the CQC improvement board and to request data on care package efficiency and refusals of service.

As statutorily required, the panel received the Adult Services Annual Complaints Report including details of Ombudsman complaints. This was an opportunity for the panel to consider the activity and analysis of complaints and compliments.

The Adult Safeguarding Annual report was presented to the panel allowing them to challenge and seek reassurance that vulnerable adults were being kept safe.

The panel reviewed the position of oral health and dental commissioning in North East Lincolnshire, with a particular focus on deprivation, access to services, and prevention. Members highlighted the impact of poor oral health on children, families, and older adults, and stressed the importance of early intervention and sustained oral health promotion. Strong emphasis was placed on ensuring that commissioning and procurement decisions were balanced and informed by patient and resident experience, not solely cost. The panel sought assurance that public feedback and engagement activity, including work with Healthwatch, would meaningfully influence commissioning intentions and tender scoring. The discussion clarified that oral health promotion services were preventative in nature, focusing on education, awareness, and outreach rather than direct dental treatment. Current and proposed activity included work in schools, family hubs, care homes, and through health visiting services, alongside initiatives to promote toothbrushing and improve access to basic oral health resources.

Members also considered the need for better data and intelligence to inform future planning, including refreshed needs assessments across a wider range of age groups. Concerns were raised about access to NHS dental services, transport barriers following service relocation, and ongoing challenges in both adult and children's dental access, particularly in deprived areas. The panel agreed to seek further assurance on patient focused procurement, requested additional data on children's access by ward, and added oral health to the work programme for future progress updates.

Other areas that had been scrutinised this year included:

- Future Section 75 Arrangements. (The Section 75 arrangement in North East Lincolnshire is a formal partnership between North East Lincolnshire Council and NHS partners that brings together health and social care services under shared governance and pooled funding arrangements. It supports integrated working, joint commissioning, and coordinated service delivery to improve outcomes for local residents, particularly in adult health, care and community services).
- CQC Inspection update for Adult Social Services
- Digital Opportunities within Health and Social Care

The panel requested that the following work be carried forward into next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Teenage Pregnancy
- General Diagnostics
- Marmot
- Section 75 Arrangements
- Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust Special Measures oversight.



Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel

The Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel has continued with its extensive workload having two additional joint meetings with the Communities Scrutiny Panel, predominately around Selective Licensing, and a special meeting called to give opportune consideration of a key issue outside of its five scheduled panel meetings.

The Corporation Bridge restoration project has continued to be high on the panel's agenda throughout the 2025/26 municipal year. The decision during 2025 to seek a change in contractor and ongoing issues around costings and completion of the project resulted in the panel seeking transparency for both residents and local businesses. A special meeting of the panel gave members an opportunity to consider a report on the process taken to procure a new contractor and completion options. The panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet its preferred option for completion of the project. It is expected this item will remain a work programme item during 2026/27.

The panel has taken the opportunity to conduct pre-decision scrutiny of several important Cabinet decisions.

It has been another busy year for the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing scrutiny committee with developments across a number of key areas.

The panel welcomed progress with the Corporation Road bridge project which has been a standing item on our agenda throughout the year and we will continue to scrutinise the project closely. The panel was involved in the production of a Traffic Management Charter and we hope the development of this charter will assist with the smooth running of our highways network and have a positive impact for residents and utility companies. The panel also had shared with us an exciting vision of a new bus station in the heart of Grimsby and we hope that funding bids are successful to allow this impressive vision to become reality. This alongside the potential introduction of electric buses across the borough means a modern and efficient bus service for our residents is within reach. Strategic housing has been a key focus in the year with new housing in Grimsby town centre and plans for refurbishing housing in parts of the East Marsh. Affordable and Social Housing remains a key focus for both this panel and local residents.

As Chair I would like to thank fellow members of the panel for their enthusiastic engagement in the scrutiny process and I would also like to thank the council officers for their professional support of the panel's work.

We look forward to a challenging year ahead with a focus upon the provision of electric charging points for vehicles owned by residents with no private driveway access; progress on delivery of our modern bus station alongside modernisation of the bus fleet and finally the much anticipated opening of Corporation Road bridge.

Councillor
Sheldon Mill
Chair



There was a thorough challenge of the Grimsby West Masterplan which resulted in a unanimous recommendation that Cabinet reject the plan subject to the following being addressed: flood risk and waterflow and pollution into the River Freshney; completion of a traffic assessment; and more graphic detail on the Freshney Valley Country Park. Cabinet's decision, in line with recommendations from the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel, was to defer the item to a future meeting to allow the issues raised by the panel to be addressed.

The panel were fully invested in the pre-decision scrutiny of the updated version of the Statement of Community Involvement, especially around community involvement in the allocation of Section 106 Agreement Funding (legally binding contracts between developers and local planning authorities that secure contributions or obligations to make a development acceptable in planning terms). As a result of a comprehensive briefing note it was agreed that a meeting be arranged involving the Chair of this panel, the Chair of the Planning Committee and relevant officers to discuss what could be done to enable ward councillors to become more involved in the allocation of Section 106 Agreement funding. The meeting resulted in a very positive outcome as it was agreed that, once validated, all major planning applications that were likely to be subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement, would be the subject of a communication to all ward councillors within the ward(s) of the development to inform them of the potential Section 106 Agreement requirements.

Further opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny included:

- Review of Subsidised Bus services - the panel showed concern for the over subscription of the 'Phone N Ride' service and the lack of service received by residents who resided out of town.
- Draft Local Plan - the panel agreed to support the report's recommendations subject to the plan offering an opportunity to support the delivery of affordable and social housing.
- Grimsby to Walpole National Grid Electricity Line - the panel agreed with the report's recommendations after highlighting their concerns around the scheme and reiterating their objection to the proposed overhead pylons.
- Concessionary Fares Scheme – recommendations were endorsed.
- Response to government consultation on reform of planning committee - the panel felt that it was important to retain some form of call-in mechanism.

The panel considered a detailed scrutiny briefing note on public consultation for the new Grimsby Town Transport Hub and at the January 2026 scrutiny meeting the panel received a detailed report where they broadly welcomed the concept design proposals contained within the report. With funding not yet secured for phase 2, members enquired what the design concept may look like if this phase could not proceed. A question to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport was received asking for a commitment to ensure that women's safety was explicitly referenced and built into future Transport Hub reports and design concepts. The Portfolio Holder responded that this approach would be considered at the next design stage. The panel commented on accessibility issues and, noted the importance of monitoring how accessibility, tackling anti-social behaviour and violence against women and girls was incorporated into the design of the Transport Hub and requested that these matters be referenced in future reports on this project.

Within the remit of the panel an update was given on the East Marsh Retrofit Scheme. Members expressed concerns at the relatively low levels of engagement. Officers responded that engagement to date had purely been with property owners. The deadline for this work was the end of January 2026, and work would then commence with those that had engaged, as well as tenants. The panel sought assurance that previous recommendations had been followed up and requested information on empty homes in the area. Officers confirmed that work continued with legal colleagues to ensure the panel's concerns would be incorporated in the scheme. Support for the ambition of the scheme was received but concern around numbers involved and how residents in neighbouring streets

would benefit was highlighted. Officers advised that work would be conducted with highways to look at how street scape could be improved to benefit all residents.

A report on the work and conclusions of the traffic management co-ordination working group (started in the previous Municipal Year) and its presentation of the subsequent Streetworks Charter was considered by the panel and it was resolved that the charter be endorsed for agreement by Cabinet subject to the report being strengthened to make clear expected standards within the wording on reinstatements.

At the final meeting of the 2025/26 municipal year the panel considered a report on the electrification of buses. Members were very keen to know why investment from the local provider had not yet been implemented in North East Lincolnshire as is the case in Hull and requested that a representative of the company be invited to explain their future investment plans for the area.

In response to a member of the public's question on junction safety, the panel felt they would like to receive assurances over council policies with regards to safety of highway junctions and requested this be added to the 2026/27 work programme.

Throughout the year the panel received quarterly Council Plan Resources and Finance performance reports. In addition to this the panel received the final Equans summary of performance report before services returned in house, which prompted questions on how future updates would be reported.

The panel also received a number of questions for the portfolio holder during the year. These were on a variety of issues - the Corporation Bridge Restoration Project, Cleethorpes Regeneration Scheme parking and loading bay issues, the safety of women and girls and anti-social behaviour issues surrounding the new Grimsby Town Centre Transport Hub development, and bus service improvements.

Other areas that had been scrutinised this year included:

- Local Transport Grant
- The Electric Vehicle Strategy
- Alexandra Dock Regeneration
- Strategic Asset Management update
- Car Parking Strategy

The panel requested that the following work be carried forward into next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Corporation Bridge restoration project
- Grimsby West Master Plan
- Affordable Housing performance information
- Selective Licensing
- Junction safety
- Electrification of buses

4. Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups

Task and finish groups are appointed to investigate issues in more detail and report their findings and recommendations back to the appropriate panel. Task and finish groups are required to scope the piece of work and identify clear objectives and benefits of the review. The reviews are generally time limited.

There are two types of task and finish group –

- Select Committees, which provide public deep dive investigations into specific issues and are formal, public meetings.
- Working Groups, which are informal, advisory groups focused on developing policy and assisting Cabinet or Scrutiny internally. As such, they are not held in public.

Over the last twelve months, the following issues have been reviewed via task and finish groups:

- Library Services Select Committee
- Equans Transition Working Group

Further information about each review can be found below.

Library Services Select Committee

This Select Committee was formed following consideration by full Council of a petition requesting that the Council protect library services and commit to providing a first-class library service across all libraries. The petition stemmed from a review of library services being undertaken by the council.

The Select Committee was chaired by Councillor Holland and reported to the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel.

The work scope of the Select Committee was divided into three key areas to provide focus:

- The future of library services in North East Lincolnshire.
- The functionality of the contract for services with Lincs Inspire Ltd who provide library services on behalf of the council.
- The future of the Grimsby Central Library Building

For each of the three work scope areas, the process was to gather evidence, analyse the results and benchmark if appropriate and then make recommendations that were deemed necessary.

During its work, the Select Committee carried out eight site visits, met with Lincs Inspire management and Waltham Parish Council, received various technical reports on Grimsby Central Library and received evidence from a variety of sources, including Council Officers, the Arts Council for England and community groups including the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society. The Select Committee produced an interim report in January 2026, acknowledging that the Grimsby Central Library building had been neglected for many years and concluding that urgent works were required. This interim report was presented to the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel and the panel supported its recommendation 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 from the full building, and for the above works to be completed on an urgent basis. This recommendation was duly received by Cabinet and led to the commencement of a procurement exercise for removal of the majority of the asbestos containing materials in the building.

The Select Committee continued its deliberations and, once it had concluded, the scrutiny panel received their findings as well as a cohort of recommendations. The panel welcomed the findings and were more than happy to support the recommendations going to Cabinet.

Equans Transition Working Group

This working group was established to enable the overview and scrutiny of the transition to the new delivery model following the conclusion of the Equans contract on 30th June 2025.

The working group received regular updates on the following:

- Gateway Reviews
- Financial risks
- Service Transformation Plans
- TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) and Human Resources issues
- Health and safety matters
- Contract novations and procurement
- Project plan, risk and communications

The Gateway Reviews were undertaken at various stages of the transition and allowed the group to monitor progress. The group recommended that a further post-transfer review be undertaken and the outcome reported back to the working group prior to the concluding of its work. The working group reported to the Communities Scrutiny Panel and has helped ensure an effective transition of services back in house from July 2025.

5. Get involved in scrutiny

One of the key roles of scrutiny is to work on behalf of residents to address the issues that are causing concern to people who live and work in the borough. We are using this report to tell you what we have done and we want you to tell us what you think we should be doing next. Please use the contact details at the end of this report if you would like us to focus on a particular issue in future.

All agendas and minutes of scrutiny panels as well as reports from scrutiny working groups are available by following the links on our website – nelincs.gov.uk

This report is also an opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has contributed to the scrutiny process over the past twelve months. To be able to function effectively, scrutiny relies on the invaluable knowledge and expertise of witnesses. Last year a wide range of individuals and organisations assisted us in our work, including:

- Service users
- Humberside Police
- Lincs Inspire
- Health professionals

But we are not content to leave it there...

Members of the public are:

- Welcome to attend scheduled scrutiny panel meetings to observe local scrutiny in action. To find out what is being discussed and what to expect please have a look at the website or contact the scrutiny team.
- Encouraged to make suggestions for future scrutiny reviews by contacting your local councillor or the scrutiny team. You can do this by email, post or telephone.
- Able to approach councillors with your views on specific issues so that these can be added into the debate on the scrutiny panels
- Able to speak on specific issues, with the prior permission of the panel chair.

Scrutiny cannot promise to form the same conclusions as you do but your comments will be acknowledged and considered.

Sometimes we receive correspondence that raise issues outside of scrutiny or the council's remit – should this happen we will forward your comments to the relevant service or partner organisation and ask them to provide you with a response.

If you would like further information about scrutiny,
please use the contact details below:

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Municipal Offices
Town Hall Square
GRIMSBY
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Tel: 01472 324121

Email: democracy@nelincs.gov.uk

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