

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE 2023 - 2024

1. Introduction

Welcome to the annual scrutiny report, which highlights the key scrutiny activities and developments in North East Lincolnshire Council during the 2023/24 Municipal Year. The report provides a summary of the work undertaken by scrutiny in 2023-24 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. During the past year, 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, holding fact-finding workshops, carrying out visits and working with partners on key areas affecting the residents of North East Lincolnshire.

Areas of focus have included the Children's Services improvement agenda, tackling anti-social behaviour, the latest review of the Local Plan, Greater Lincolnshire devolution proposals, the new approach to managing the Disabled Facilities Grant, and the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. The panels have also been involved in joint work, both internally on key issues such as the review of the Equans partnership and the skills strategy, as well as externally with neighbouring local authority health panels on the Humber Acute Services programme, the forthcoming integrated care proposals, regeneration of Grimsby town centre, the climate emergency, domestic abuse and the development of the Cleethorpes Master Plan. This work has led to a number of recommendations being made to Cabinet with the intention of strengthening final decisions. These have been 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 - early years provision, domestic abuse, adult safeguarding, electric vehicle infrastructure and dentistry as well as the continued monitoring of the skills strategy and the transition to the new delivery model for services currently provided in partnership with Equans. The panels will continue to monitor the Council's budget and performance indicators contained within the Council Plan. Members will also have a keen interest in the scrutiny arrangements to be proposed within the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined Authority to be formed in the coming year.

*Helen Isaacs, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Assistant Chief Executive
May 2024*

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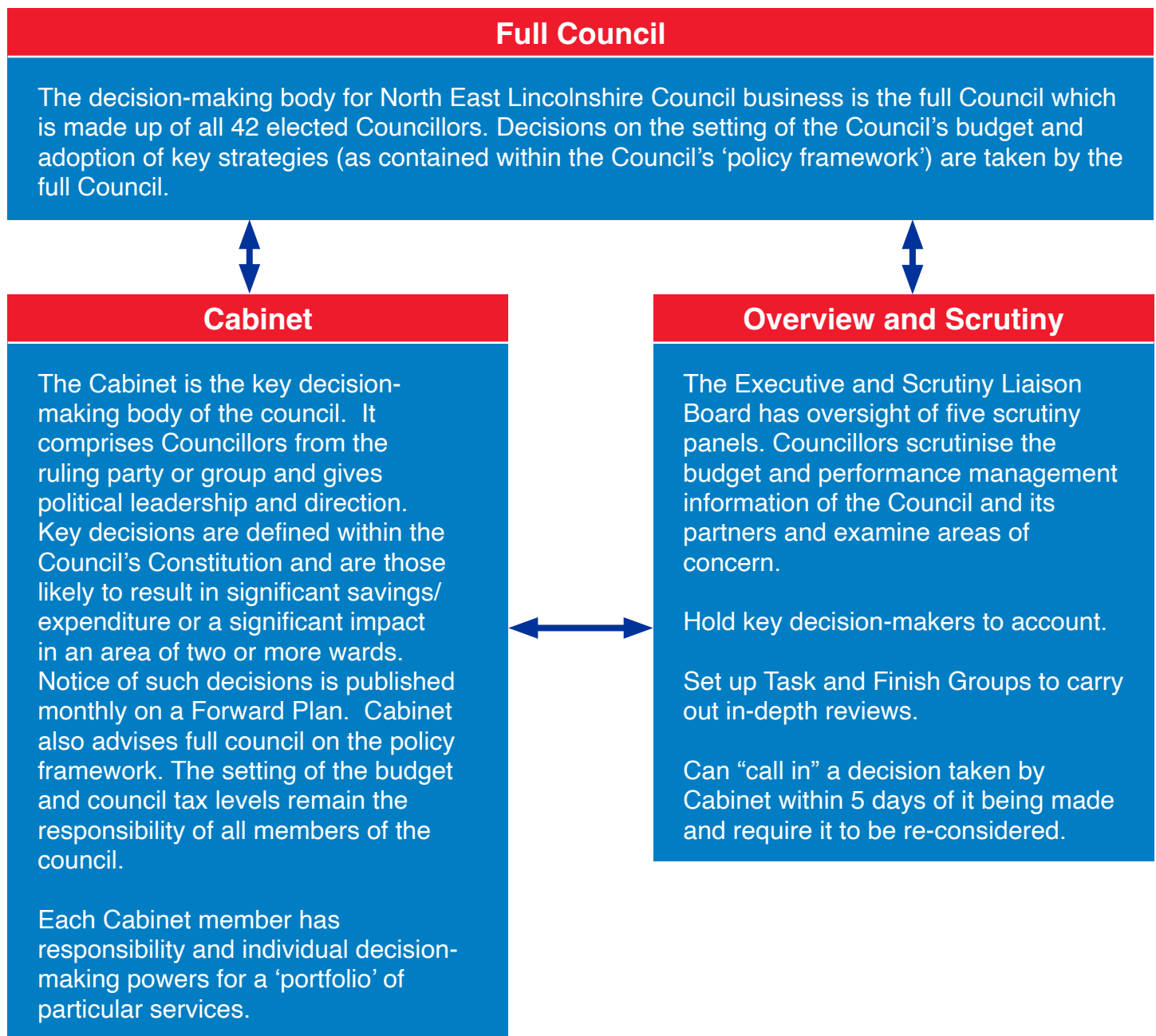
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2. Scrutiny in North East Lincolnshire



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

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Henry Hudson

Economy Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Oliver Freeston

Communities Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Daniel Westcott

Tourism and the Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Keith Brookes

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

During the municipal year 2023/24 the panel has again focused much of its work on monitoring the progress being made in improving the delivery of children's services following the outcome of an Ofsted inspection in October 2021.

The panel has continued to receive an informal briefing with the children's commissioner on the social care improvement plan. This has assisted members with understanding where changes need to be made. It has also informed the panel's consideration of its regular report on the Improvement Plan from the Director of Children's Services. Members sought clarification on various matters under each of the four key priorities within the plan, including consistency of performance; addressing low performance; children missing from education; contacts into the integrated front door; financial pressures; the national shortage of foster carers; and social worker workloads and training. The Director of Children's Services provided assurance to the panel around the type of intervention required; how the council developed support around the child; the work underway with a sufficiency strategy for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities); work between the council and the Department for Education (DFE) for further provision in schools; new practices for dealing with contacts into the integrated front door; and further training and support for social workers.

"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. Throughout the year I believe the panel have been very effective in scrutinising, challenging and holding officers to account for all aspects of the work programme. We are now witnessing real improvement across children's services and I feel scrutiny has played an important role in supporting the improvement journey."

Councillor
Paul Silvester
Chair



The panel have also been given the opportunity to comment on the Childrens Services budget. A budget workshop was arranged to allow Officers and Panel Members to go into more detail around the Childrens Services finances. This allowed to gain a better understanding of the significant overspend in this area. Members enquired what the council were doing to reduce children's education out of area placements. The Director for Childrens Services provided details of the work that had been undertaken to reduce out of area placements and how the council would work to bring children back into North East Lincolnshire. The panel welcomed the reduction in numbers of children in care and were happy to see that the retention of staff and our current recruitment of South African social workers had been a success. Members were reassured that finances were now heading in the right direction, and they were glad to see that improvements were taking place.

One of the bigger issues the panel has discussed was the future of the council's nursery and daycare provisions. A special meeting of this panel was arranged to address the issues arising from the consultation on the proposed closure of certain settings. Panel members questioned officers and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education and it was agreed to include a standing item on the agenda for future meetings so that the panel could monitor progress. The panel also welcomed questions and representations from members of the public on this issue. As a result of the issues arising from the consultation, the Chief Executive commissioned an independent review of the nursery consultation. Once finalised the review report was shared with the panel and members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the independent review team as well as the portfolio holder and officers. Subsequently, the panel referred the report to Full Council to further consider the findings and discuss the recommendations within the report.

The Panel have received reports around the new 'Team Around the Family' approach and progress with the Family Hubs. Panel members were big believers in early intervention and they were happy to see that relationships had progressed with the voluntary sector, schools, and GPs. In terms of using Family Hubs, Members welcomed the targeted approach.

The panel received updates on the current Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service, which resulted in panel members visiting the Launchpad at Littlecoates Primary Academy. The panel found it refreshing to hear that they were looking for more settings within the Borough to replicate the service and that several primary and secondary schools had shown interest. The panel have also been part of the Integrated Front Door improvement journey and recently visited the service, noting how the level of motivation and passion now gave them confidence in the service.

The panel was given the opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of three updated key policies around Special Educational Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision. Members welcomed the report and supported the recommendations the report put forward.

Other areas that have been scrutinised by the panel this year included:

- North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2021-22
- Neurodevelopment Service
- Specialist free schools
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Department for Education Wraparound Childcare Programme Funding
- The Skills Strategy and Action Plan (see the 'Joint Scrutiny' section for further details).

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:

- Youth Voice and Influence
- Overseas Social Workers/Social Worker Academy
- Early Years Strategy
- Progress of the SEND specialist free school
- A joint workshop with the Communities Scrutiny Panel on Domestic Abuse.
- School Attendance
- Skills Action Plan – progress update be received by a joint meeting of the Economy and Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panels in six months' time.



Communities Scrutiny Panel

The Communities Panel have had a productive year during 2023/24 focusing on key topics agreed within their work programme.

On the subject of waste, the panel requested further information around fly tipping per capita and how this compared with our neighbouring authorities. In addition, a report on how the Council currently dealt with waste on private land was presented to the panel. The panel acknowledged that this issue would always be difficult to tackle and suggested some additional member training on this topic in order to respond better to issues within their wards. Members were also consulted on the Community Recycle Centres and how bulky waste was dealt with in the borough with members feeling that more flexibility was needed within the system. Members explored in depth the process for fly tipping and how officers responded to incidents highlighting the need for more face-to-face enforcement.

The panel received progress updates on the refurbishment of play areas. The panel felt that it was positive to see that all the works would now be completed by the end of the financial year. Members were keen to understand what other budgets would be available for future refurbishments and remained concerned about anti-social behaviour within the parks.

On the topic of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), a performance update presentation was received by the panel on the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). The presentation focused on issuance data, feedback on consultation results and next steps. The presentation also incorporated an update on the review of alcohol PSPOs leading to the introduction of new ASB PSPOs. Members were advised of timescales for introducing relevant signage across the borough. Members were particularly interested in breach data and requested that further police data be reported back to the panel on a six-monthly

"I would say my year as the Communities Scrutiny Panel Chair was certainly interesting throughout, although challenging at times, but in the main and most importantly, productive and beneficial for residents across North East Lincolnshire. Therefore, I would like to thank all the panel for their input (including substitutes), along with the many officers who have brought reports and presentations before the panel."

Councillor
Daniel Westcott
Chair



basis. Some areas of key concern for the panel were around dogs on the beach and dog fouling and the anti-social behaviour aspect of alcohol consumption on the streets, particularly within Grimsby town centre. The panel sought clarification on current legislation and powers. Officers provided assurance around dog control areas and enforcement and methods for dealing with various issues through a joint partnership approach. Further, more in-depth reports will be submitted to future meetings of the panel.

Earlier in the year, the panel were presented with a report on Rough Sleepers which allowed the panel to provide challenge around the number of rough sleepers in the borough and how this would be tackled. Further concerns were raised around temporary accommodation, resulting in the panel asking for a breakdown of temporary accommodation placements and associated costs to be brought back to a future panel meeting.

Another interesting area for the panel this year has been the update on the Council's Public Space CCTV Capital Upgrade Project. The panel paid a visit to the CCTV Control Room and this enabled them to gain a good insight into how the facility operated. A subsequent report to the panel focused on key performance information. The panel were particularly interested in whether any CCTV cameras were specifically located within parks across the borough and the number of Penalty Charge Notices that had been issued outside schools since the new cameras had been introduced. Subsequently, members asked for more information on the cost effectiveness of the CCTV cameras and their future sustainability as well as comparison data.

The panel considered the council's Annual Equality Report, allowing members to comment on equality objectives, community profile and the action plan. Members recognised that this was a significant piece of work and held a dedicated workshop to look into the subject matter in more depth. The workshop resulted in actions around further support on this topic for members to assist in carrying out their roles, as well as the provision of further community data for members. Members were assured that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for North East Lincolnshire would be referred to this panel for comment prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

The panel considered a report on the Depot Rationalisation Project ahead of decision by Cabinet. The panel raised concerns about where the additional money would come from to complete the project, the initial timing of the project and the overspends within the project. Members were happy to support additional financing of the project providing a working group of this panel could be formed to monitor the project going forward.

Throughout the year, the panel have held special meetings to consider feedback from various rounds of public consultation on the Parish Council Community Governance Review. The panel debated some of the matters raised within the consultation resulting in a number of recommendations being made to Council, which were all accepted.

The panel also considered a referral from full Council asking for a detailed evaluation of the broadcasting of meetings. A report provided the panel with additional benchmarking information and highlighting the current position with other local authorities across the country. The panel scrutinised and debated the advantages and disadvantages of broadcasting meetings leading them to recommend to Council that an audio-visual system be introduced for the Council Chamber in Grimsby Town Hall initially from 2024-25 Municipal Year.

Within the panel's remit of influencing policy, the panel were consulted on and provided comment on the new Procurement Strategy and Social Value Policy. Members were interested in how many local suppliers/businesses were currently held by the council and asked for further information on the current spend relating to these suppliers and businesses.

The panel have continued to receive regular reports on the Quarterly Finance and Council Plan Performance, allowing them to review and scrutinise more corporate issues. The Provisional Financial Outturn Report also highlighted some key areas for discussion, including the ongoing use of reserves, asset sales and retrieval of council tax owed by landlords within empty properties across the borough. The panel was provided with assurances around the Council's Disposal Programme and Property Rationalisation Plan, how reserves were calculated and the processes in place for council tax recovery, including enforcement action that could take place.

Overall, the panel have had a productive year scrutinising some important areas within their terms of reference. The panel also received briefing notes this year on:

- ASB Summit
- Temporary Accommodation Placements
- PSPO Refresh
- Empty Homes Premium/Collection
- Customer and Member portal
- ASB/PSPO Consultation

Looking forward to the work programme for 2024/25 the panel have suggested the following topics:-

- Play Areas
- Full Detailed Report on PSPO's
- Quarterly police data on PSPO's reported back to this panel on a six-monthly basis.
- Working Group on Depot Rationalisation
- Site visit to the new Border Control Post building



Economy Scrutiny Panel

It has been a demanding year for members of the Economy Scrutiny Panel. In total they were involved in 11 panel meetings, including six special meetings of which three involved collaboration with other panels. The headline matters for debate were devolution, the skills strategy, the local plan, the Equans review, the housing strategy review and the bus service improvement partnership and plan. The panel has significantly influenced the council's policy framework and how it works with its partners. Economy panel members have demonstrated that in terms of formal meetings, key decision items and impact, you can have quantity and quality.

Arguably the biggest item for the panel has been scrutinising the process and proposals leading towards a devolution deal to create a Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority. A special meeting in November followed a well-received all member event. Hence, the panel was doubly informed to challenge and comment prior to Cabinet's special meeting shortly after. At a special meeting in March members met to consider further steps to secure devolution to Greater Lincolnshire, including consideration of the results of the recent public consultation, review of the devolution proposal and a decision on further implementation, including submission of the final Proposal to the Secretary of State with associated delegations. A number of queries were raised around the consultation responses and new powers under the Mayoral Combined County Authority. Members were given assurances around the method in which the consultation had been undertaken and relevant legalities and governance arrangements. The panel supported the recommendations to Council to secure the next steps.

"The panel has had a busy yet interesting Municipal year, culminating in a number of recommendations to Cabinet that can influence Council policy. Some of this work will continue into next year, ensuring that the local area including Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham, get the best services, giving local taxpayers a sense that they are getting value for money. All my thanks and gratitude, and that of the Economy Scrutiny Panel, must go to all who have contributed this year, from residents who have brought issues to Panel, to Councillors and Officers. My particular thanks goes to Democratic Services for their unwavering support."

Councillor
Oliver Freeston
Chair



The panel was asked to review the draft refresh of the North East Lincolnshire Housing Strategy 2023-28, its comments were noted and considered within the consultation period. Members challenged on matters relating to the loss of 900 affordable homes, target dates within the action plan, resources, 16-25 year old care leavers and the impact of 'no fault' evictions on homelessness.

Also in November, a requested briefing note brought the panel up to date with the bus service improvement plan (BSIP) and partnership (with Stagecoach). A BSIP is a public document published on the council's website, intended to set out clearly the vision and plan for improving bus services and growing bus patronage in the local area, in line with the National Bus Strategy. Members welcomed the £2 maximum fare scheme (£1 after 6 p.m.) and requested more information about the electrification of buses.

The council's acquisition of Freshney Place resulted in the management plan and annual report being presented to the panel prior to consideration by the Freshney Place Cabinet Sub-Committee. Members examined the rationale and impact of non-retail uses, the Christmas period, anti-social behaviour, net income and operating costs. The panel received more detailed information on the first 12 months operating costs.

The panel continued its scrutiny of the North East Lincolnshire local plan. A local plan guides decisions on future development proposals and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area. The first formal statutory consultation stage in the preparation process provided a pre-decision opportunity for the panel to review potential options. Members provided challenge on a number of matters including the review methodology, the balance between economic growth and housing assessment, the challenge of increasing the numbers of viable affordable housing, the consultation process (including plans for engagement with children and young people, scrutiny and elected members), flood risks, links to local transport plan, and the technical language used within the consultation document. The recommendations to Cabinet were supported with an additional request to make the consultation document more accessible and user friendly.

Discussion of the concessionary fares scheme prior to Cabinet decision raised a number of concerns for the panel. These were largely related to efforts to increase the number of passengers, particularly those who qualify for concessions or free travel. Whilst the recommendations to Cabinet were supported, the panel requested that the results of a survey, together with usage analysis would be reported to a future meeting.

A requested briefing note brought the panel up to date on the impact of the Gypsy and Traveller negotiated stopover sites (NSS). Evidence would indicate that the NSS was the right approach for North East Lincolnshire. Members raised the nature of support offered, anti-social behaviour and damage, and lessons learned. The panel asked for a further report in 12 months.

The panel was updated on the South Humberside Industrial Investment Programme (SHIIP) and this prompted questions on disposals and acquisitions, use of land at Moody Lane, business rate income, and evaluation of success of the project.

The panel considered two call-ins during the year. One regarding an unsuccessful petition for a zebra crossing in St Nicholas Drive. During the ensuing debate, members had some sympathy with residents but ultimately agreed with the portfolio holder's decision that the evidence did not support a zebra crossing. The portfolio holder would continue to monitor the situation but at the moment the needs of the residents were being met at peak times by an existing school crossing patrol. The other call-in related to the repair and renovation of Corporation Road Bridge, which the panel had previously been updated on. Cabinet's decision was released for implementation.

This year a new quarterly combined report replaced separate monitoring reports about delivery of the council plan and financial reporting. Throughout the year, in a challenging financial climate, the panel has questioned matters relating to funding gaps, overspends, budget variances, depletion in reserves, project management skills gap, new homes bonus, and sale of buildings and land.

For a number of years, including this one, the panel has continued its scrutiny, via quarterly reporting, of Equans' performance and improvement. During 2023/24 members have raised issues relating to residents' parking schemes, footpath inspections, overnight parking of motor homes, top town market, on-demand bus services, empty homes (local targets, enforcement, compulsory purchase orders, overgrown gardens and impact on communities, support for neighbours, council tax liability), the licensing of houses in multiple occupation, road safety, affordable and social housing.

Last but not least, at the last scheduled meeting of the municipal year, the panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport providing a draft version of the Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy. Members raised a number of concerns including whether the infrastructure was being placed in the right locations to match the need for residents and visitors. Although the panel supported the recommendations listed in the report, they recommended an additional recommendation to Cabinet, that the Electric Vehicle Strategy specifically captures the on-street parking requirements for residents in terrace or similar properties. This recommendation was subsequently accepted by Cabinet.

The following work remains of interest to the panel and will be carried forward into next year's scrutiny work programme:

- LTP Annual delivery plan
- Concessionary fares survey results and analysis
- Corporate Asset Management and Commercial Estates Plan
- Grimsby Market Hall design brief
- Bus Service Improvement; Partnership and Plan
- Our Green Futures Annual Report
- Electric Vehicle Strategy update
- Electrification of buses
- Freshney Place



Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

This year has seen the panel form joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) with neighbouring local authorities to formally responded to the 'Humber Acute Services Programme' consultation by the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. Members of the panel attended the joint panel meeting on a couple of occasions and also fed back into the final response. Members were keen to understand the implications on patient transport, the ambulance waiting times in A&E and whether work was being planned with East Midlands Ambulance Service to ensure that the transfer of patients under the new proposals was seamless. It was also suggested that car parking be made free of charge for those carers and loved ones who would have to travel out of area to visit patients.

Members found this interesting as some had not previously been involved with working as part of a joint consultation before. They welcomed the opportunity to participate and feed back views on behalf of North East Lincolnshire Council. The consultation has now closed, and the panel will receive the outcome of the consultation and the next steps from the ICB at a future meeting in the new municipal year.

Following previous concerns over the high numbers of people on the waiting list to be assessed and receive adaptations to help them live more independently in their own homes, the panel has received six-monthly updates on progress with the new approach to managing the Disabled Facilities Grant. Whilst members acknowledged the progress made to date, they were concerned over the number of residents still on the waiting list and were keen to continue monitoring progress.

The Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2022/23 raised questions around the underspend in the Adult Social Care budget. Although members appreciated the savings were being used to help mitigate the council's overall financial position, they would have liked to see those savings redirected within adult social care to improve and streamline services for residents.

"Another busy year for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, in particular taking part in the joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) with neighbouring local authorities to formally responded to the 'Humber Acute Services Programme' consultation by the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. This was new to some members of the panel, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their time to attend the additional meetings and contribution. As a panel we have maintained our focus on the health and wellbeing of our residents through scrutinising partners and providers to ensure that they are providing timely, efficient, and effective health services."

Councillor
Henry Hudson
Chair



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The panel had previously expressed concern over the lack of dental practices offering NHS appointments in the area and the level of dental oral health services being offered for children in particular. The panel welcomed and were reassured by the approach being taken by the Integrated Care Board to work with dental practices to help them offer NHS appointments. They also heard about the number of different initiatives offered by Public Health to help encourage and improve dental oral health for children within schools, family hubs and dental practices.

The Mental Health Strategy 2023-2028 was presented to the panel. Members felt the strategy was a breath of fresh air, especially as it was presented by 'experts by experience' who co-produced the strategy alongside organisations within the Health and Care Partnership.

The continuing commitment to co-production within health and social care will give further opportunities for people with lived experience to attend and present items to the panel.

Children's public health nursing and the school nursing service was added to the panel's terms of reference at the start of the municipal year and it was important that the panel received a briefing paper providing an overview of the service. As a result, the panel requested a workshop so that they could understand public health services, data and funding in greater detail.

North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board annual report was received, and members heard about the increase in numbers of reported cases of modern day slavery. Members were reassured about the work taking place with the victims and partner organisations to be aware of the signs of modern day slavery.

With the introduction of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams the panel were given an update on the work of this health and care partnership programme, which highlighted the joined up working across the borough to improve health and social outcomes, reduce inequalities, make sure service users are satisfied, treat everyone fairly, and use resources effectively. The panel welcomed this approach and, in particular, the collaboration in implementing a population health and strengths-based approach, creating personalised care plans, and having shared goals.

The Health and Care Act 2022 gives CQC new regulatory powers that enables a meaningful and independent assessment of care at a local authority level. CQC assessment will focus on how local authorities discharge their duties under Part 1 of The Care Act (2014). Part of the review process will involve looking at scrutiny's role in governance, oversight of adult social care and the panel have had and will continue to receive regular updates on North East Lincolnshire's inspection readiness ahead of any future inspection.

In addition, the panel considered reports on:

- Council Plan Refresh
- Quarterly Council Plan, Resources and Finance monitoring report
- Overview of the CQC regulation of adult social care.
- Section 75 Agreement
- Adult Social Care Complaints and Ombudsman 2022/23 Report

The following work remains of interest to the panel and will be carried forward into next year's scrutiny work programme:

- Ambulance response time including times ambulances are waiting at the hospital with patients.
- Dentistry – to continue to monitor the situation to ensure residents have access to dental services.
- Hospital Discharge and, in particular, the proportion of people waiting to go back to other areas e.g. Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire.
- Adult Safeguarding - to receive the baseline figures to enable the panel to seek reassurance that vulnerable adults are being kept safe.



Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel

During the municipal year 2023/24 the panel have focused much of its work on upcoming strategies and high-profile regeneration projects.

Opportunities arose for the panel to influence policy via pre-Cabinet reports on the physical activity strategy and habitat management plan. These were received with enthusiasm by members. They've received routine finance and council plan monitoring reports which have also prompted good questions throughout the year. Good news was delivered via the Arts Council priority place support grant and members gave feedback on draft priorities and were kept informed on activities.

An impressive presentation was provided by officers on the Sea Road Development. It allowed Members to visualise the project in detail and allowed the panel to clear up any concerns they had. Later on in the year, the panel also received a presentation outlining the current progress of the projects and an overview of the consultation regarding Market Place and Pier Gardens. They were well received, and Members welcomed the plans coming to fruition.

The data and statistics for the 2022 tourism season within North East Lincolnshire were also received and Members were content with the update they received on the Clee Fields project. However, the Panel did have some concerns over the refurbishment of the upper floors in Grimsby's Central Library. The report pointed out that there may be a need to close or relocate the library during the construction period. Members were worried that this would leave Grimsby without a library service. Officers confirmed that they were looking at a range of options to see what was feasible.

"During the year the members looked have looked at several different aspects of Tourism and the Visitor Economy. Particularly, the Creative Strategy which was of keen interest to members looking at transforming our town centres to be vibrant and dynamic destination for visitors and residents alike. I would like to thank the members and the officers for the work they have done during the current year."

Councillor
Keith Brookes
Chair



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The Panel have welcomed a range of speakers. One came to ask a question during public question time, leading members to think of ideas on how to encourage birdwatchers and other wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy what was on offer in the Borough. A local business owner also put their views forward on the Sea Road Development. The panel also welcomed a question from one panel member to the Portfolio Holder for Culture Heritage and Visitor Economy, which focused on the commemorative plaques that had been removed from sites in Cleethorpes and Grimsby.

The panel received an update on the Council's status as a Heritage Place and how this has supported several projects across North East Lincolnshire. Members welcomed the report and how much investment had been put into the borough. They were glad to see that officers had a sharper focus on heritage, that there had been direct investment in the Council's own assets and there was now more engagement with private sector owners.

Panel members received the Creativity Strategy Action Plan. Members welcomed the report and the progress that had been made. The panel also received the events calendar for 2024. This received praise from the panel and a query as to whether it would be possible to come up with performance indicators to help track the improvements, we were making year on year.

A Sport and Physical Activity report also made a reappearance later in the year, but this time it was for the panel to scrutinise the sport and physical activity dashboard. Members were keen to ensure that services were available to families that were hard to engage in physical activity. Members were informed that an element of this was part of the service delivery specification.

The panel received an update on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RLNI) development. Remedial compulsory works were currently being undertaken after the site has been stood still for quite a while. The panel was assured that a return to full construction mode was expected in February 2024, with a finish date of construction in October 2024. The building would then be fully kitted out as soon as possible afterwards.

A report was received on the development of the resort hub, including the Resort Team and Tourist Information Centre. The panel was also updated on the maintenance of the Cleethorpes Country Park. Members hoped maintenance could be done on a more regular basis and that volunteers may come forward to form voluntary groups or community engagement teams to bring community pride in the area.

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:

- Boating Lake – update on any future works.
- Lincs Inspire – annual users survey results and to invite the Chief Executive.
- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy – progress against the headline indicators.
- Creativity Strategy and Action Plan – annual update on progress.
- Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre Collection update (including historic vessels)

Joint Scrutiny Panels

The year has seen good collaboration on significant issues cutting across the remits of individual scrutiny panels.

The Economy Scrutiny Panel and the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel held two joint meetings to scrutinise a key area of council policy, the skills strategy. The first meeting allowed thorough challenge of the proposed skills strategy and action plan prior to decision by Cabinet. This resulted in two recommendations to being made to and accepted by Cabinet. One of these was for a further report to be presented to the joint panel after six months with SMART objectives and progress against the action plan. The panels met again in February to review progress, which was broadly welcomed. Further monitoring of this key area of work will continue.

The ending of the Council's contracted partnership arrangements with Equans in 2025 required a special joint scrutiny meeting with the Communities Scrutiny Panel and the Economy Scrutiny Panel. The report to the joint panel outlined a proposed delivery model and the findings of a review. The joint panel was in favour of the proposals for a hybrid approach to future service delivery. Members raised a number of issues. Importantly the joint panel's deliberations prompted the Leader to amend the financial considerations in his reports to Council and Cabinet. The panel also garnered the Leader's support for a recommendation leading to an enhanced role for scrutiny through the establishment of temporary scrutiny arrangements to enable the overview and scrutiny of the transition to the new delivery model.

Scrutiny has also continued its involvement in the budget setting process with all Members invited to attend both informal and formal sessions to comment on proposals prior to final decisions being made by full Council.

4. 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
- EQUANS
- Humberside Police
- East Midland Ambulance Service
- NHS Foundation Trust

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:

Scrutiny and Democratic Services
North East Lincolnshire Council
Municipal Offices
Town Hall Square
GRIMSBY
DN31 1HU

Tel: 01472 324121

Email: democracy@nelincs.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/your-council/decision-making/scrutiny/>