



ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

11th March 2026 at 10.00am

Present:

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

Officers in attendance:

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Nick Browning (Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources (Statutory Scrutiny Officer))
- Clare Swainson (Strategic Lead – Finance)
- Helen Thompson (Strategic Lead - Tourism)
- James Trowsdale (Strategic Lead – Culture)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Dawkins (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy)
- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills)
- Paul Sargent (Queensberry CEO)

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

SPE.56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillors Brookes, Farren and Lindley.

SPE.57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPE.58 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22nd January 2026 be approved as an accurate record.

SPE.59 QUESTION TIME

A question was received from Mr Alex Bradley (not present) regarding the historic vessel Esther.

Mr Bradley noted that the historic vessel Esther was a significant part of Grimsby's maritime heritage, yet it has remained submerged and awaiting restoration for almost fourteen years. Following recent announcements regarding preservation works on the Ross Tiger and the broader regeneration of Alexandra Dock, he asked if the panel could provide a definitive update on the timeline for the restoration of the Esther. Specifically, has the necessary funding for re-floating and stabilization been secured for the 2026/27 financial year, and what were the immediate next steps to prevent further deterioration of the hull.

The Chair explained that they recognised the concerns regarding the Esther and had provided some background regarding the current position of the vessels in our museum collection, including our ongoing efforts to secure funding. The Esther and the Ross Tiger were part of North East Lincolnshire's museum collection. During the 2025-26 financial year, the council used an allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding to support works on the Ross Tiger. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to secure funding in the 2026/27 financial year to re-float and stabilize the Esther because it was both complex and very costly. A further complication was the fact that she sat close to the starboard side of the Ross Tiger which would need to be moved to support access and a lift-out of the Esther. In 2024, the council applied to Arts Council England Museum Development Fund which was a significant piece of work and included major works to raise the Esther and the required movement and works to the Ross Tiger. Unfortunately, this was a national competition and we were not successful in securing this funding.

In terms of the immediate next steps to prevent further deterioration of the Esther's hull, periodic inspections of the vessel had been made with the

consulting engineers and local divers to monitor her condition. There may be a possible future option to scan her and therefore capture her form for a historical record before further deterioration and distortion of her shape, but this was subject to securing funding. Although the council's options were limited, we would continue to seek out alternative funding opportunities for both the Esther and the Ross Tiger.

SPE.60 FORWARD PLAN

The panel considered the current Forward Plan and were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED - That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPE.61 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

At SPE.52 (Library Services Select Committee), Cabinet had received the recommendation at its meeting in February 2026 and requested a report outlining associated costs to make the Central Library watertight for asbestos removal. This report was expected to be received by Cabinet later that day.

Members agreed that SPE.35 and SPE.38 could be removed from the tracking report as actions were in progress or completed. SP.52 would remain on the tracking report until the Cabinet meeting had taken place.

RESOLVED – That items SPE.35 and SPE.38 be removed from the tracking report and all other items be noted.

SPE.62 2025/26 Q3 COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE PERFORMANCE

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills that provided information and analysis of the Council's financial performance during the third quarter of 2025-26.

Clarification was sought regarding the list of Capital Movement overview 'changes to the programme' 2025/26, specifically whether it reflected changes for the quarter or the full financial year, noting potential confusion with the adjacent list of 'changes to the programme' 2026/27 which covered the full year.

Observations were made regarding static tourism numbers, with a suggestion to discuss this in more detail during the dedicated tourism report later in the agenda. Seasonal variations in Cleethorpes promenade footfall were also noted.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPE.63 LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The panel considered the findings report from the Chair of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on the Library Services Select Committee findings.

The Chair acknowledged that the recommendations within the report had been passed unanimously, which reflected a consensus among all members. The committee had visited all appropriate sites across the borough and engaged extensively with staff and management of Lincs Inspire Ltd. Time constraints had prevented out-of-borough visits to observe best practice (e.g., Barnsley, Nottingham), but the report was prioritised for delivery before the end of the municipal year for Cabinet's consideration. The Chair stated that a significant recommendation was to establish an Advisory Libraries Board, which had been welcomed by council officers and Lincs Inspire Ltd.

The Chair proposed an amendment to recommendation (G) to include a specific timeframe. The amended recommendation would now read "that one or more full day workshop(s) takes place during quarter two of the 2026 calendar year, which would bring key stakeholders together to assess the future potential uses for Grimsby Central Library in terms of meeting local community needs, scope for space sharing and funding opportunities. Outcomes from the workshop(s) should feed into the development of a business case." The rationale for Quarter 2 was to allow for May elections, the start of the new municipal year, and sufficient officer planning time before summer holidays.

One Councillor supported the Chair's amendment, commending the committee's constructive suggestions. He noted the temporary library now had three computers and suggested potential expansion to four, they also highlighted the importance of access to reference materials for heritage research.

Another Member raised a query regarding the financial considerations, specifically a £4 million allocation from capital receipts, which he believed was specifically earmarked for Grimsby Central Library. The Monitoring Officer was asked to verify this.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that a Labour amendment at the Budget Council had created a local heritage reserve fund of

approximately £4 million from asset sales, with a "priority call" on this reserve for Grimsby Central Library, rather than specific earmarking.

Further discussion touched on the value of benchmarking best practice and the potential role of the proposed advisory board in this.

Councillor Mickleburgh proposed that the recommendations within the report and, with the amendment to recommendation G suggested by the Chair, be recommended to Cabinet. Councillor Crofts seconded this. This was unanimously supported by the panel.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET –

That the recommendations within the report, subject to the amendment to recommendation G as noted above, be approved.

SPE.64 CLEETHORPES DRAFT WAYFINDING STRATEGY AND CONCEPT DESIGN

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy seeking support and approval of the proposed wayfinding strategy, concept design and an allocation of £300K Pride in Place funding to support the delivery of the wayfinding strategy.

Members noted that a workshop for this strategy had been held in January which had seen committee members and Cleethorpes councillors attend. It was observed that some comments and observations from this workshop had been incorporated into the updated plan, such as the inclusion of Cleethorpes Library as a destination.

One Member praised the report, particularly the inclusion of estimated walking times between key points. The panel were happy to receive the report and endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations stated within the Cabinet report be supported.

SPE.65 FRESHNEY PLACE BUSINESS PLAN

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills summarising performance and setting out of the business plan objectives for the following period.

One Member raised a concern about Freshney Place access, noting that it only opened at 9.00 am, which could be inconvenient for early visitors.

Another Member sought clarification on paragraph 5.3 of the report regarding the actual net operating income (NOI) versus the target for

2025. The Member noted that the NOI forecast for 2025/26 was significantly higher than what was achieved and requested further clarity. Mr Jaines-White explained that this was due to a number of changes, including the decision to place the temporary market in a tenanted unit, the loss of a small number of retailers through national closures and anticipated impacts of the leisure development whilst under construction.

The Chair also observed that this year's report contained less detail on capital expenditure compared to the previous year's report. After a detailed discussion on financial aspects, the subject was deferred to be discussed as part of the closed session.

RESOLVED – That the Freshney Place Business Plan be noted.

SPE.66 TEMPORARY LIBRARY – THREE MONTH REVIEW

The panel considered a three-month review of the temporary library offer in Grimsby Town Centre.

One member suggested that clearer information should be provided to the public on how to access collections from the temporary library.

The Chair went on to suggest implementing a simple customer satisfaction feedback system at the library exit, similar to those in airports (e.g., smiley/grumpy faces), to gauge public sentiment. He emphasised the importance of sustained promotion and focus on the temporary service until the main library building was addressed, particularly to ensure young people continued to engage with library services for educational purposes.

A question was raised regarding whether the reported increases in footfall, issues, and printouts were genuine increases in usage or simply a displacement of users from the closed Grimsby Central Library to Cleethorpes and Waltham. Mr Browning confirmed that he would take this question back to Lincs Inspire Ltd and see whether this was displacement or whether it was genuine new usage sign-ups.

The Chair suggested exploring the possibility of extending Saturday opening hours to include the afternoon, given it was one of the busiest days.

RESOLVED – That the three-month review report on the temporary Grimsby library be noted.

SPE.67 UK TOWN OF CULTURE

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure reviewing the plan for Grimsby to

submit an Expression of Interest to the UK Town of Culture 2028 competition.

One Member expressed some cynicism, questioning the timing of the bid given current local offerings (e.g., lack of a decent library, cinema still years away, no standalone art galleries). Officers explained that the application served to bring various schemes together and aligned with potential future plans for the central library, presenting an opportunity to foster pride in the area. The Member suggested greater promotion of the legend of Grim and Havelock as a unique cultural asset.

Another Member urged embracing the broader arts and culture sector, which held significant economic value, beyond our fishing industry heritage. They stressed the importance of creating a positive narrative for Grimsby and using the bid as an opportunity, even when competing against more affluent areas. They encouraged positive public messaging. Officers confirmed this was the plan.

A panel member supported the application, highlighting Grimsby's unique story and its potential to provide culture for everyone through existing partnerships (Horizon Onside Youth Zone, colleges, schools, libraries, Navigo, armed forces). The capacity to deliver the programme with dedicated council officers, councillors, and partner organisations was really welcoming.

Councillor Jackson emphasised Grimsby's unique geographical location on the Humber and the sea as a defining aspect of its culture, both historically and for future industrial development. He stressed the importance of gaining strategic benefits from the process, regardless of the bid's outcome.

Councillor Dawkins expressed confidence that Grimsby would progress past the expression of interest stage and be a strong contender to receive the award.

RESOLVED – That the submission of UK Town of Culture 2028 Expression of Interest be supported.

SPE.68 SAFER TOWN REVIEW

The panel received a briefing note that detailed the change in resources as part of the Safer Town Review.

The report was welcomed, particularly the allocation of additional resources. Discussion focused on the tourism action plan and marketing approach to maximise opportunities. The Chair cited Scarborough's tourism plan as an example, noting its clear, trackable targets for year-on-year visitor growth and thematic development (e.g., green tourism).

Councillor Dawkins described Cleethorpes as a "sleeping giant", highlighting the potential impact of future developments like Pleasure Island and upcoming announcements from Meridian for attracting larger events, which would boost local businesses.

It was noted that progress on this review would return to scrutiny in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the update on the Safer Town Review be noted.

SPE.69 ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2025/26 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer which reflected on the 2025/26 municipal year and the work undertaken by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel. The panel also considered suggestions to be included in the 2026/27 work programme.

The panel requested the following to be added to the work programme for 2026/27:

- St James Minster Clock
- Cleethorpes coast light railway.
- Town of Culture update
- Physical activity and health (a joint meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel)
- Cleethorpes Levelling Up Fund projects
- Grimsby masterplan.
- Cleethorpes Library
- Three month review on interim Grimsby Library location
- Future library services – standing item.
- Lincs Inspire annual report.

RESOLVED – That the report and members' comments be noted.

SPE.70 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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

Councillor Mickleburgh noted that Cleethorpes Pier was the only structure of its kind between Saltburn Pier and Skegness Pier. It dated from 1873, with the pavilion largely unaltered in external appearance with its staging intact dating from 1905. As such he thought that it merited

listing as Grade 2 by the relevant government department, especially as the newer Empire Theatre had a similar listing. Could steps be taken to try and get Cleethorpes Pier listed status, in view of its iconic status locally?

The Portfolio Holder explained that the council has secured funding from the Heritage Fund for a new project called Cleethorpes Heritage Revealed. This was a development phase for a proposed new heritage-based capital grant scheme in Cleethorpes along similar lines to the successful Townscape Heritage project. Included as part of this development phase would be a review of the Cleethorpes Central Seafront Conservation Area Assessment (the existing was from 2016). The Pier was included within this review of the Conservation Area Assessment and by Summer 2026 we would have an independent report that would provide recommendations for proposed amendments to the document, and this would include how the condition of heritage buildings had changed since 2016.

Therefore, the guidance was that this matter should be considered further once the review of the Conservation Area Assessment was complete and up to date findings that may come forward later this year. That said, it was worth noting that the Pier was not in Council ownership, and anyone could submit a listing application to Historic England and all applicants were treated the same. Guidance on criteria / process for listing was on Historic England website but at a headline level the key criteria was architectural and historic significance in a national context.

Three further questions were submitted by Councillor Morland for the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy.

For the first question Councillor Morland mentioned that the local authority missed an opportunity to pedestrianise Sea View Street in Cleethorpes when it had the opportunity. This was a narrow thoroughfare with no traffic calming measures installed for pedestrian safety. Cars used it as a rat run and often speed. This was bad planning and a missed opportunity to make pedestrians safe in that area. As it was proposed to pedestrianise Cleethorpes Market Place with vehicular access to local takeaway eateries for customers, it was desired that traffic calming measures should be implemented. We did not want the Market Place to be as unsafe as Sea View Street for pedestrians. It would be possible for a rat run to be established between St Peter's Avenue and Alexandra Road via Short Street and Market Street, which should be avoided at all costs. Pedestrian safety, especially with families and children expected to use the area, must be prioritised. In light of the above what traffic calming measures were going to be implemented to make this a safe area for pedestrians.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that Seaview Street residents and business owners had previously opted against pedestrianisation. The Marketplace had been designed with pedestrian safety as paramount. It would not be

open to through traffic. Bollards would control access for deliveries only. Lay-bys would be provided for short-stay collection at takeaway eateries. No rat run was anticipated, but further measures would be considered if needed post-completion.

Secondly, Councillor Morland mentioned how local businesses and members of the public had expressed a concern that with the closure of Pier Gardens from Sea Road to High Cliff for 15 months, what provision would be made for public lavatories. As Sea Road toilets were already out of commission and Pier Gardens site no longer available for provisional toilets, this could be a potential health risk. The only public conveniences available would be those in Grant Street Car Park and those near the leisure centre. This was well over half a mile distance between the two. This would severely disadvantage elderly adults, disabled people, children and those with an ambulant or health condition. Therefore, he asked what provision would be made available during the 15 months and would the local authority be providing more public conveniences on completion of the Pier Gardens than existed before this development was proposed.

Councillor Dawkins reported that options for temporary toilet locations were being explored across several locations between Sea Road and the Leisure Centre with a preferred location within the Central Promenade area depending on availability of connections. The plan was to bring this additional temporary provision into the resort for the peak season period.

The Pier Gardens project did not include public toilet provision; however, the Sea Road development included public toilet provision. It replaced the previous toilet block at Sea Road with new public convenience / toilet provision that included additional accessible toilets and a changing places facility.

Thirdly, Councillor Morland mentioned that, after consultation with several Cleethorpes business owners, they wanted to know what economic impact, study, report or survey was carried out amongst the local business community, occupying Alexandra Road and the lower promenade.

These premises run parallel to the Pier Gardens development and would be greatly affected by the project that was expected to last 15 months. The fenced off area from Sea Road to High Cliff was preventing any pedestrian movement upwards and downwards as well as removing vast areas that were once used by visitors for seating purposes. It was understood that the businesses described would be losing income. Therefore, the business owners have asked why fence off the whole of Pier Gardens. Could this not be done in thirds to allow movement between the upper and lower sections of said businesses. They have also asked if financial compensation would be available due to loss of income.

Councillor Dawkins explained that Officers had explored all options to maintain access, but due to the Principal Contractor's responsibilities under Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM) 2015 and extensive identified risks (moving machinery, excavations, tree works), public access through the site was not possible. Allowing access would breach health and safety obligations. Signage would be provided to indicate "businesses as usual". The Portfolio Holder expressed belief that businesses would see an increase in trade once the works were completed.

RESOLVED – That the questions and responses be noted.

SPE.71 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

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

SPE.72 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

SPE.73 LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The panel considered the closed appendix referred to at SPE.63. Member's raised questions on the Lincs Inspire Contract. Officers present were able to clarify such concerns.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

SPE.74 FRESHNEY PLACE BUSINESS PLAN

The panel considered the closed appendix referred to at SPE.65. Members brought up a discussion on finance and expenditures.

RESOLVED – That the Freshney Place Business Plan be noted.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.10 p.m.