

CABINET

DATE	15th July 2026
REPORT OF	Councillor Tanya Brasted – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Library Services Select Committee
STATUS	Open report with closed appendix 4 of annex 1 being <u>NOT FOR PUBLICATION</u> - Exempt information within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 06/26/04

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The ongoing review of our Library and Archives Service will contribute to priorities across the Council's Outcomes Framework, supporting the delivery of our 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities'. The review process, including the work of the Library Services Select Committee, will inform the future development of the Library and Archives Service, based on consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders to deliver the service in line with the needs of our residents, strategic priorities and available resource.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An interim 'Scrutiny Recommends' report of the Library Services Select Committee was brought to Cabinet on 11 February 2026. This report provides a final summary of the work done by the Select Committee and makes a series of recommendations from Scrutiny for consideration by Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Accepts this report, recognises the work of the Select Committee and notes the contents of Annex 1 Libraries Select Committee Findings report which comprises four appendices (1-Terms of Reference, 2-Method statement, 3-Background paper, 4-CLOSED: Lincs Inspire Contract findings).
2. In principle, support the recommendations of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel as set out in section 1.6 of this report noting that, where applicable, the financial implications require thorough appraisal on a case-by-case basis prior to final decision.

3. Authorises the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage, and the Visitor Economy to progress the recommendations and ensure that associated budgetary implications will be subject to thorough appraisal, including preparation of business cases where required prior to final decision.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The recommendations from Scrutiny are based on the work and findings reported by the Library Services Select Committee which has considered a range of reports and evidence submissions from a variety of sources as part of its work. These recommendations, if accepted, will influence the future development of the library service across North East Lincolnshire and will need to be balanced in future against any associated budgetary implications that will be subject to thorough appraisal, including preparation of business cases where required.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 The Library Services Select Committee was formed following a Full Council resolution in July 2025, with Terms of Reference drawn up by the then Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the political group leaders. The members of the committee were Councillors S.Holland, (Ind) (Chairman), R.Augusta (Lab), S.Basant (Lib Dem), J.Cairns (Con), E.Clough (Lab), N.Pettigrew (Con), K.Swinburn (Con).
- 1.2 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
- 1.3 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 are deemed necessary.
- 1.4 Work included:
 - Eight site visits.
 - Meeting held with Lincs Inspire Ltd management
 - Meeting held with Waltham Parish Council
 - Receipt of various technical reports including asbestos surveys for Grimsby Central Library and a recent report from WT Partnership Ltd for repairs and regeneration works to the same.
 - Receiving 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.
- 1.5 The full findings of the Select Committee are set out within Annex 1 and were supported by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on the 11 March 2026 to be recommended to Cabinet.

1.6 The recommendations are set out below together with some further officer commentary:

- a) That the remaining four library facilities should continue to be staffed and managed by professional, paid librarians, with a core onsite presence. *Subject to Cabinet approval and given this is pre-existing resource, this recommendation can be taken forward and the position confirmed immediately.*
- b) That for a trial period of two years, a 'Libraries Advisory Board' with relevant expertise is established by NELC to provide advice and represent a link between the community and library service operator and NELC as the responsible body, this board should be established as soon as reasonably possible. *Subject to Cabinet approval, this recommendation can be taken forward immediately.*
- c) That NELC and Lincs Inspire Ltd jointly use established practice to commission a report which details the actual and potential social and economic value of the library services and facilities in North East Lincolnshire. *Subject to Cabinet approval, this recommendation can be taken forward immediately.*
- d) That for all library locations, an assurance system is put in place which maximises operational functionality including identification and immediate sourcing of essential spare parts. *Facilities management advise that planned preventative maintenance and cyclical inspections are in place across library locations, supported by a framework for planned and reactive repairs, with processes to source essential spare parts as required.*
- e) That when considering future capital schemes in Cleethorpes and Waltham, an improvement scheme for the garden space at the side of the Cleethorpes library is considered which adds to the visitor experience, and also upgrades to Waltham side room areas. *Subject to Cabinet approval, this would be subject to business case at the appropriate time.*
- f) That due to the lengthy period of time before a permanent facility can be in operation, NELC identifies potential alternative 'medium-term' central locations that will bridge the gap between a temporary 'pop-up' library and Grimsby Central Library being brought back into operation. *Whilst work can commence to identify potential alternatives, subject to Cabinet approval, any proposal would be subject to a business case at the appropriate time.*
- g) 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. *Subject to Cabinet approval, this recommendation can be taken forward immediately and initial preparations have been made.*

- h) Throughout the regeneration works of Grimsby Central Library, including the asbestos removal phase, there should be constructive engagement with the NELC Heritage Officer and Historic England to ensure that the protection of key heritage assets within the building can be advised on and appropriately prioritised. *This engagement has already been undertaken.*
- i) That a mutual review of the contractual arrangements with Lincs Inspire Ltd takes place to ensure that the contract is suitable, meets the requirements of future service provision and enables the reimagining of library services that meets the needs of our communities. *The principle of this has been agreed with Lincs Inspire and the governance is being put in place, subject to Cabinet approval of the principle.*
- j) That in order to prevent further damage to Grimsby Central Library, and in order to provide full, safe access, capital funding should be agreed on an urgent basis, sufficient to allow roof replacement, appropriate remediation to prevent significant water ingress through other openings, and asbestos removal (where appropriate) from the full building, and for the above works to be completed on an urgent basis. *Pursuant to the Cabinet resolution of 11 March 2026 this has been progressed and at the time of writing a tender process is underway.*
- k) That work should commence immediately on the development of a business case for the regeneration of Grimsby Central Library, George Street in line with HM Treasury guidance. Grimsby Central Library, George Street should be retained within the Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan. *Subject to Cabinet approval, the business case recommendation can be taken forward noting and accepting that comprehensive building information will evolve as the asbestos is removed and subsequent RIBA design stages completed. The business case will be reported to Cabinet in 2027 and subject to Scrutiny engagement. At the time of writing, the masterplan engagement is ongoing and the views of the Select Committee will be fed into the final report which itself will be subject to pre-decision Scrutiny and Cabinet decision.*

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

- 3.1 The report and recommendations have a high profile given the level of public interest in the matter, particularly with respect to the future of Grimsby Central Library, with a risk of criticism if there was a public perception that the committee had acted in any way unprofessionally. This risk was mitigated by the Select Committee through:
- Holding as much of the process in public session as possible
 - Being receptive to questions from the public and answering them openly
 - By ensuring that all committee members had opportunity to act equally in proposing and approving or rejecting recommendations
 - Seeking consensus within the committee on all matters where possible
- 3.2 Decision making can often be influenced by public opinion, which opens a risk if not all voices are heard equally. In government this is known as 'popularity bias' and refers to the tendency of officials to prioritise policies, actions or

rhetoric that align with current public opinion, polls or loud vocal minorities rather than evidence-based or long-term considerations. This risk was mitigated by the Select Committee through:

- Members representing a cross-section of the political make-up of the council
- Members being open-minded and taking evidence from a wide variety of sources, including different service areas across the Council
- Making evidence-based decisions wherever possible

3.3 The work of the Select Committee has also presented opportunities:

- It has helped to shape a consensus approach to a complex issue
- It has helped demonstrate the clear potential for Grimsby Central Library in terms of expanded community use
- It has laid the groundwork for further, focused dialogue with Lincs Inspire Ltd and also key stakeholders such as Waltham Parish Council

3.4 In carrying out its work, the members of the Select Committee were cognisant of the obligations on councils to consider the legal obligations, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Human Rights Act 1998.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There is the option to not consider the Select Committee findings and recommendations from Scrutiny. However, this would not take on board their findings from a detailed process involving a range of reports and evidence submissions from a variety of sources that is set out across Annex 1.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the work of the Select Committee a key consideration in terms of reputation of the Council and the Select Committee process was the need for transparency and demonstrating compliance with the seven Nolan Principles of public life. It is a positive outcome that the findings and recommendations have been unanimously agreed by all members of the Select Committee. Communications have been kept factual and have encouraged direct public engagement with the process as far as possible.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. Capacity within the Capital Budget has been earmarked for the provision of a permanent library in central Grimsby has been approved by Full Council as follows

- 2026/27 - £1m
- 2027/28 - £5m
- 2028/29 - £4m

Whether or not the earmarked provision is directed to be spent on the regeneration of Grimsby Central Library will be dependent on approval of a business case, the development of which is recommended to commence as soon as is practicable. The envisaged use of currently unoccupied parts of the

building may have a material impact in drafting the business case, both in terms of capital costs for the Council and ongoing operational costs.

- 5.2. If a review of the contractual arrangements with Lincs Inspire Ltd is approved, the Select Committee is aware that there may be associated cost implications arising from any service provision changes.
- 5.3. A Library Advisory Board, if established for a trial period, may be helpful in identifying and assisting with the sourcing of external funding, including from the private sector. It is essential that every opportunity to source external funding is taken and thorough applications made, which can be a very time-consuming activity.
- 5.4. Although the Select Committee members have considered financial responsibility and the resources available within its work and recommendations, the committee recognises that the full extent of associated cost implications arising from any changes in service provision has not been explored fully at this stage. Therefore, if the recommendations are approved to move forward, the full financial implications of each recommendation will need to be assessed fully on a case-by-case basis as part of future decision making.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The review of library and archives service covers a wide range of groups across the population with a particular focus on children given the large proportion of existing library users who are 12 years and under at approx. 24%. This includes considering opportunities for connecting children and young people with learning, literacy and wider enrichment activity across services and facilities. There is an opportunity through the recommendations to develop co-located services, building cross sector working to deliver wider outcomes that includes children's health, literacy and social interaction recognising the benefits of early engagement with books and developing the enjoyment of reading from a young age. The Select Committee recommendations look at further opportunities to expand library use and services offered for the benefit of children and young people.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The review of Library and Archives service and work of the Select Committee have considered environmental implications and opportunities to ensure sustainability and low carbon initiatives are incorporated. The recommendations that include consideration for co-location of services support in developing services under one roof, with the benefit of more efficient use of building space and utility consumption.

8. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The Select Committee has considered evidence presented from Public Health representatives within their work as a panel that is set out in Annex 1. The

future library service has an important role now and in the future in supporting the wider determinants of health across our communities.

9. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

The full findings of the Select Committee are set out within Annex 1 and were supported by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on the 11 March 2026 to be recommended to Cabinet.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the Select Committee and recommendations by Scrutiny are yet to be fully costed. Any associated budgetary implications will be subject to thorough appraisal, including the preparation of a capital business case where required, alongside an assessment of value for money. All emerging financial commitments will need to be considered within the framework of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and its overarching obligation to sustain a balanced and financially resilient position.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The above report and annex reflects the depth and scope of the work carried out by the Library Services Select Committee. The recommendations of the select committee have been endorsed and supported by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel and now come to Cabinet for consideration.

11.2 Constitutionally, it is a matter for Cabinet as to what weight, if any, is attached to those recommendations. Cabinet has the discretion to accept, vary or reject such recommendations.

12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

No HR implications.

13. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The review of the library and archives service covers all wards across North East Lincolnshire.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

These can be seen in Annex 1, Section 9.

15. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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NO RESTRICTIONS

COUNCILLOR TANYA BRASTED
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE VISITOR
ECONOMY



DRAFT

**REPORT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE
LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE**

FEBRUARY 2026

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why we had a Select Committee

1.1. The select committee was established to:

- Evaluate the current and future provision of library services across North East Lincolnshire.
- Ensure cognisance of statutory duties in making any recommendations, particularly Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, specifically:
 - Section 7(1) – Duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.
 - Section 7(2) – Duty to consider local needs in service provision.
- Review the outcomes of the Library and Archive Review Phase 2 public consultation and ensure recommendations are informed by community feedback, including the recently submitted community petition.
- Avoid duplication of scrutiny functions and be cognisant of Cabinet’s decision-making authority.

The Select Committee was not convened to consider Towns Fund matters.

What we have done

1.2. Over the course of the Select Committee, the results of the public consultation were received and analysed. The select committee ensured transparency and inclusivity in interpreting consultation themes by focusing on three main areas:

- a) The future of library services in North East Lincolnshire
- b) Contractual arrangements with Lincs Inspire Ltd, who provide library services under a contractual partnership arrangement with NELC
- c) The future of the Grimsby Central Library Building.

1.3. The Select Committee has encouraged participation from external stakeholders and community representatives through open calls for evidence. Members have met with Officers from Lincs Inspire Ltd to discuss current Library provisions and contractual agreements.

1.4. The Select Committee has visited all the current Library Services operating within North East Lincolnshire (Waltham, Immingham, Pop-Up Grimsby Central and Cleethorpes) including the Museums Store and The Archives Office.

- 1.5. The Select Committee received a report from WT who provided Project Management and Quantity Surveying services and advised the Council on the potential costs of refurbishment of the Central Library building.
- 1.6. **The Select Committee has made a number of recommendations across all three areas, but recognises that further extensive work is required before some key decisions can be finalised, particularly with respect of the future of Grimsby Central Library.**

What happens next

- 1.7. The select committee's report will be referred, for approval, to a meeting of the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on 11th March 2026.

Councillor Steve Holland
Chair of the Select Committee

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1. In carrying out its work, the Select Committee were very much aware of the complexities of the issues to be considered and bore the following information in mind:

- National and local studies show that the traditional use of libraries in terms of book borrowing is in decline and that library facilities must adapt accordingly in order to meet changing needs and remain a key part of community life. There are many examples of where this has been done successfully. It is essential therefore to consider the needs of our local communities
- Government guidance requires councils to undertake a robust, objective and evidence-based analysis of local need
- There are legal obligations that must be complied with, including the Equality Act of 2010, Best value Duty 2011 guidance, the Localism Act of 2011 and the Human Rights Act of 1998
- There is a national trend towards establishing 'social value' of community assets such as libraries in an effort to assess their wider economic worth when measured against a number of parameters including public health and wellbeing.
- A formal public consultation process of NELC's Library and Archive Review has been conducted in two phases, the results of which, along with the Select Committee report, will be used develop the library service for the foreseeable future.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1. The following Members were appointed to the Library Services Select Committee on a politically proportionate basis:

Councillors:

- Steve Holland (Independents)
- James Cairns (Conservative)
- Karen Swinburn (Conservative)
- Nick Pettigrew (Conservative)
- Emma Clough (Labour)
- Robson Augusta (Labour)
- Steve Beasant (Liberal Democrats)

3.2. This topic falls with the remit of the following portfolio holder; Councillor Hayden Dawkins (Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy).

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1. The full terms of reference are included in Appendix 1 and for the purposes of the select committee, the committee will assess:

- **Building and Facilities Use:** Opportunities for co-location, community hubs, and diverse usage.
- **Business case development approach for Grimsby Central Library provision:**
 - Remediation and refurbishment options for Grimsby Central Library, including cost analysis
 - Alternative locations if refurbishment proves cost-prohibitive.
 - Cultural and heritage risks and opportunities
 - External funding opportunities (e.g. Arts Council England, Heritage Fund).
- **Contractual Constraints:**
 - Legal and operational flexibility within the Lincs Inspire contract. In CLOSED session
 - Community-led models.
- **Benchmarking:**
 - Comparative analysis of best practice from other authorities, including different operating models
- **Service Continuity:**
 - Interim provision such as a pop-up library in Freshney Place during Grimsby Central Library's closure.
- **Community Wellbeing Impact:**
 - The role of the library in supporting community, educational and social outcomes.

5. RISK AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1. Members had due regard to the management of risk throughout the select committee process. Members remained mindful of financial constraints and the need to deliver services within the resources available. The select committee were attentive to the impact of losing these services, particularly in terms of the use of the historical Grimsby Central Library building.

6. INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED / EVIDENCE GATHERED

- 6.1. The select committee met initially to scope the remit of the review, identify which stakeholders should be invited to provide statements, what site visits they would find useful and the focus for each meeting. From this the Members requested that site visits be conducted at all Lincs Inspire Ltd Libraries (Cleethorpes, Immingham, Interim Pop-Up Grimsby Library and Waltham) as well as the Museums Stores and Archives Office. The method statement can be found at Appendix 2.
- 6.2. The opening session saw the select committee receive a detailed report from officers which outlined the two stage approach to the review with two separate phases of public consultation and engagement, an overview of statutory duties, current building and facilities use, the business case development approach for Grimsby Central Library provision, contractual constraints and community wellbeing impact (see Appendix 3). As highlighted at Section 1.2, the Select Committee decided to focus this review on three key areas, findings on these themes have been captured below.
- 6.3. In summary, the select committee was held over eight sessions with an initial scoping meeting. The sessions were held on the following dates and were themed as follows:

Thursday 20th November 2025

Members of the Select Committee were asked to review the Select Committee's terms of reference and received a background paper on the current library service in North East Lincolnshire. This gave Members the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters. As part of this report the select committee also considered the Cabinet reports on Phase 1 and 2 of the Library and Archives Review and the petition received.

Monday 1st December 2025

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy and the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure were invited to attend this meeting to share their thoughts on where we could expand the use of the library facilities, so they could have a sustainable future and become more embedded as community assets.

Monday 15th December 2025 (closed meeting)

The Chief Executive of Lincs Inspire Ltd and colleagues were invited to discuss the current service library provision, contract and general issues. The Select Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

Wednesday 14th January 2026

This session was specifically dedicated to focus on the Grimsby Central Library building. WT Partnership were invited to present their findings on the

potential costs for stripping out the existing building finishes and carrying out a refurbishment throughout all floors.

Monday 26th January 2026

This session saw Officer's from the Council provide the Select Committee with potential ideas on how the library service could benefit from different service areas. They also welcomed colleagues from the Arts Council England who contributed to a detailed discussion on how library services could be developed, celebrated and protected.

Monday 2nd February 2026

The Select Committee invited external stakeholders to share with them what the library services meant to them, the future of the Central Library building and what the future of the library service could look like.

Wednesday 18th February 2026

The Select Committee went through each library setting to discuss and review any issues or concerns they had. They also looked at the Lincs Inspire contract and what the future of the Grimsby Central Library Building could look like.

Wednesday 25th February 2026

This session was arranged to discuss any areas that may have come up via previous discussions and give the Select Committee the opportunity to deliberate and form recommendations.

7. FINDINGS

The future of library services in North East Lincolnshire

7.1 With regards to what is required of the Library Services, several key findings were identified across all the sessions which were as follows:

- **There is clear evidence that community-run libraries can struggle with long-term sustainability. As library services change and adapt, it is important that staff are properly trained and their knowledge is kept current.** Whilst the Committee acknowledges the very valuable contribution that volunteers may be able to make in expanding the community service offering of our libraries, we consider it imperative that our libraries continue to be professionally run, rather than handed over to community groups.
- **Our libraries need to be incorporated into an overall strategy that addresses identified local need and which offer as wide a variety of activities based around reading, learning and creativity that appeal**

to people of all ages and backgrounds. There are good examples of this already happening, such as the installation of the 'Sensory Room' at Cleethorpes Library, but the Committee feels there is scope for improvement. As Grimsby Library returns to being a permanent facility, there is an opportunity to create a state of the art facility which is designed around meeting the needs of a wide cross-section of the Borough. It is clear that there are many ideas already being formulated, from within NELC, Lincs Inspire Ltd and also from stakeholders with expertise and experience to offer.

- **The social and economic value of our libraries needs to be estimated, both in terms of current value and potential value.** This is particularly important as plans are drawn up for the future of Grimsby Central Library and business cases are prepared. There is a financial cost in providing library services of course, and the Select Committee fully recognises that the Council must balance competing needs and that in terms of future library provision, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will expect the Council to act 'reasonably and rationally'. That said, there is also a clear duty to consider 'social value' in terms of tackling economic inequality, equal opportunity and well-being.

The Select Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- **The remaining four library facilities should continue to be staffed and managed by professional, paid librarians, with a core onsite presence.**
- **That for a trial period of two years, a 'Libraries Advisory Board' with relevant expertise is established by NELC to provide advice and represent a link between the community and library service operator and NELC as the responsible body, this board should be established as soon as reasonably possible.** The Board would act in an advisory capacity only. An example of such a board can be seen here: [Gloucestershire Libraries Advisory Board | Gloucestershire Libraries](#)
- **That NELC and Lincs Inspire Ltd jointly use established practice to commission a report which details the actual and potential social and economic value of the library services and facilities in North East Lincolnshire.** An example of such a report (on a slightly larger scale) is here: [The power of prevention Nov25.pdf](#)

Select Committee Site Visits

7.2 Immingham Library

- The Select Committee was impressed by the service. They found that there wasn't a lot of scope to expand but felt that the current service was fit for purpose.
- The library is located as a part of a mixed-use facility which apparently works very well. It is ideally located next to a large car-park with free parking.
- The library space appears to be utilised to maximum efficiency. The only issue that we saw was that the reception desk was somewhat obscured by a large internal supporting pillar and that some re-arrangement of the internal layout might be beneficial.

7.3 Cleethorpes Library

- The library is well situated on Cleethorpes seafront for the use of residents and visitors alike.
- The space is well-utilised, and the Sensory Room is an excellent addition to the community services offered.
- Committee members felt that more can be made of the space at the side of the building in terms of improving the visitor experience as funding allows, and that there is scope for a large, digital information display screen that could advertise events, visitor information and so on.
- Members were impressed with the service Lincs Inspire were providing, particularly the work they were doing with young people and the room dedicated to SEND.
- Some concerns were raised on having to turn walk ins away if there was a scheduled class already using the building. Members wondered whether something could be done to inform people before they arrive at the venue.
- It was good to see that a service was being provided to send reading material to care homes, but Members hoped that this could be expanded on to other community services.
- The Select Committee identified the need to improve the garden for visitors, especially because it was in a high visitor attraction area, some capital expenditure would be required for this.
- Members encouraged that the Pier Gardens development tie in with the Library as the link between them would easily be adapted.

7.4 Waltham Library

- The library is clearly an integral part of the village and well used by local residents. It is also used by residents from a wider catchment area.
- It is well situated, with adjacent free parking and on the main bus route in and out of the village.
- There are two side rooms off the main library space which the Committee feels could be utilised to greater effect in terms of community benefit. Our meeting with Waltham Parish Councillors confirmed this.

- There is clear scope for a helpful conversation between Lincs Inspire Ltd, the Parish Council and NELC in terms of expanding the use of the independent side room which has its own access. Some capital investment would be required for this and consideration to improving frontage of the building.
- Concerns were raised about the heating not working during the Winter. The Select Committee wondered whether the appropriate maintenance was being offered to this setting.
- It was welcomed that there was a volunteer service that delivered books out to residents, but it was unfortunate that the library wasn't engaging well with nearby schools.

7.5 Temporary Pop-Up Library

- Members visited the facility on a weekday morning. Whilst the space has been utilised to best effect, the Committee considers the space to be too small to be considered anything other than a temporary facility.
- Library staff confirmed that there is simply not enough space for it to function effectively. Staff did state that they felt more secure working in the unit.
- The location, opposite an open style café is considered to be less than ideal given the level of ambient noise created.
- The Committee notes that the operation of the 'pop-up' library is subject to formal review every three months, and that an initial report will be provided to the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on the 11th March 2026.
- Given that it is estimated to take up to three years to bring Grimsby Central Library back into use, the Committee expresses deep concern that over that time, local need will not be met, and residents will not have access to a 'comprehensive library service'. Officers were content that the Council was meeting its duty during this temporary period, explaining that in addition to the pop-up library, the wider library service across the borough is provided, some services were being provided elsewhere and were accessible. They acknowledged that the service was different, but data showed that people were still using the service.
- Part of the Select Committee raised concerns that because of the time it would take to re-open the library, the temporary setting was not adequate. However, other Members were content that with the 3 monthly scrutiny reviews on the pop-up library, if concerns were raised then alternative locations could be looked at.
- The Committee notes that since the closure of Grimsby Central Library in March 2025, access to research and reference materials has been extremely limited. It is understood that Lincs Inspire Ltd intends to provide access by appointment at the temporary storage facilities in Cleethorpes and the Committee welcomes this initiative.

The Select Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- **That for all library locations, an assurance system is put in place which maximises operational functionality including identification and immediate sourcing of essential spare parts.**
- **That when considering future capital schemes in Cleethorpes and Waltham, an improvement scheme for the garden space at the side of the Cleethorpes library is considered which adds to the visitor experience, and also upgrades to Waltham side room areas.**
- **That due to the lengthy period of time before a permanent facility can be in operation, NELC identifies potential alternative ‘medium-term’ central locations that will bridge the gap between a temporary ‘pop-up’ library and Grimsby Central Library being brought back into operation.**

Concepts from Council Officers and Art Council England

- 7.6 Arts Council England believed that Libraries were the first option of culture in the community. It was always useful to have a trusted space where there was a wide range of opportunities to explore culture and creativity. They highlighted that the key to longevity and sustainability of a library was to understand the locality and what was already available close by. There were a range of different operating models for libraries, but having a library of multiple uses would build up the ecology of the place and add additional value to North East Lincolnshire. Understanding universal library offers would help as well as the local demographic needs and priorities.
- 7.7 *Deputy Director of Public Health* - Libraries were no longer seen as a place where you just go for literature, they now had the opportunity to evolve into community hubs that supported mental, physical and social health. It could be a place where people go to access reliable health information, navigate NHS and digital health services, health focused programmes and access partner services. Several community activities could be delivered through libraries if suitable facilities were in place, particularly, social prescribing activities and joint events for health screenings, wellbeing fairs and drop-in clinics. Providing an approach like this could help increase footfall and ensure that libraries were utilised by a significantly larger proportion of the population. Through partnerships with other organisations, these changes could be implemented at a low cost and help with income generation.
- 7.8 *Service Director Education Inclusion and Integration* – It had become apparent that late teens to mid-20’s were very unlikely to use library settings.

The use tended to start again when they had children. The Covid pandemic had a significant impact on children and young people's language development and libraries were key to support their development in this. The sensory room at Cleethorpes Library had been welcomed as it encouraged development, but a large population were now electively home educating so when a family was reluctant to meet professionals in their home settings, it would be nice to have a setting that was less threatening, like a library. The example of Family Hubs was cited and how they had started to co-locate family services. They believed this was the same sort of format a library setting could take on. Schools and Academies were now invested in their own internal libraries, but having a place that offered themed activities or historical heritage projects could make them want to venture out. It would also be beneficial to have somewhere that offered the use of laptops instead of young people always using their mobile phones.

- 7.9 The Officer highlighted the concern members had over the drop off of attendance at a certain age from young people. They identified that young people didn't just stop going at a certain age, it was incremental, so it would be good if a service could be provided to help them become a regular visitor from an early age. Members wondered that if half a floor was dedicated to education, how would the Officer utilise it. They explained that it would be beneficial to have somewhere they can provide education packages to hard-to-reach families, as well as a co-location with services, particularly for people with special educational needs and disabilities. They noted that the Grimsby Central Library was in a great location that was close to bus routes and close to the Horizon Youth Zone, which would also have crossover with the library.
- 7.10 *Head of Skills* – The key points raised were around career awareness and a gateway for Maths and English to higher education. Access to training was a challenge because of availability for college spaces. Therefore, there was a need to have somewhere that could provide learning providers with a space to hire out in a central location. It may not always be about delivering the service but to have the opportunity to be able to signpost to services that also worked in favour of the Skills Strategy. The Officer mentioned the careers café that had recently opened in the town centre, which had shown the need for signposting and a drop in service where individuals could have a centre point to see what was available from businesses and training providers. They added that from the Skills Survey they had learned that people wanted to know where they could access services from and the option to learn close to home. The majority didn't know where to go for information and support. There was a lack of awareness of what was available and how they could access it. Members welcomed the Officers thoughts on what they would do with the space. The Officer believed that for the skills agenda it would be useful to have flexible classroom space where they could provide a one to one service as well as a space that could be hired out for meetings, either long or short term, as they knew a raft of providers that could offer different provisions. As part of their business plan they had received an appetite from

providers who wanted to work with North East Lincolnshire Council to create an integrated model that would provide the whole package.

- 7.11 *Strategic Lead for Culture and Heritage* – There had recently been a greater demand for spaces where people could do artistic things. A Library space would help fill that gap. The Officer indicated that it would be useful to have the opportunity to use a space in different ways which would address a range of different outcomes and allow people to be more creative and want to do more. The Select Committee wondered whether the officer thought people would come see it. The Officer believed that we shouldn't stunt the growth of what individuals could offer. There was definitely a want and a need for it and it would be encouraging to be able to put on show interesting things.

External Stakeholders

- 7.12 The Select Committee welcomed Friends of Grimsby Library, the Chief Executive from Centre 4, the Chief Executive from CARE, Civic Society and a local architect to share their experiences of the Grimsby Central Library building and what kind of services they would like to see it provide.

The range of ideas that were shared with the Select Committee were:

- Café
- Foyer
- Meeting Rooms
- Theatre space
- Flexible space
- Space to hire
- Children's area

- 7.13 The most common reoccurring statement was that there was a desire to do it right and the need to make it more sustainable. The Chief Executive from CARE welcomed the renovation of the building but asked that whoever was to acquire it to not duplicate what CARE were already doing. The Civic Society gave a very detailed presentation on the building including the historical reasonings behind the design of the current building. Friends of Grimsby Library gave a passionate speech on the need for the building to be kept and presented a vision with the support of a local architect, but they acknowledged that the service needed to adjust to suit the times that we were now in.

The Select Committee therefore makes the following recommendation:

- **That one or more full day workshop(s) takes place during Q2 of the 2026 calendar year which brings 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.

7.14 The Select Committee recognises the heritage value of Grimsby Central Library and, based on experience of previous works across the Borough over many years, that the wholesale asbestos removal and subsequent refurbishment required may cause unnecessary damage to, or even destruction of, key internal heritage assets. The Select Committee, having sighted asbestos survey reports and the asbestos management plan, does understand that asbestos removal/ encapsulation will be very difficult in some areas and will be a challenging operation. In order to ensure that preservation of heritage assets is properly prioritised, the Select Committee considers that consultation and early engagement with heritage experts should take place throughout the repair and regeneration works. In addition, future design planning for Central Library should take into account the professional views of the library service providers based on their experience gained over decades of use.

The Select Committee therefore proposes the following:

- **Throughout the regeneration works of Grimsby Central Library, including the asbestos removal phase, there should be constructive engagement with the NELC Heritage Officer and Historic England to ensure that the protection of key heritage assets within the building can be advised on and appropriately prioritised.**

Functionality of the Contract for Services in place with Lincs Inspire Ltd

7.15 With regards to the functionality of the Contract for Services in place with Lincs Inspire Ltd this is contained within Appendix 4 (Closed).

The Select Committee therefore makes the following recommendation:

- **That a mutual review of the contractual arrangements with Lincs Inspire Ltd takes place to ensure that the contract is suitable, meets the requirements of future service provision and enables the reimagining of library services that meets the needs of our communities.**

The future of the Grimsby Central Library Building, George Street

7.16 The Select Committee has been tasked with assessing 'remediation and refurbishment options for Grimsby Central Library, including lifecycle cost analysis' and identifying alternative locations if refurbishment proves cost-prohibitive.

7.17 The position of Cabinet, as confirmed in the Cabinet Report of 8th October 2025 is as follows: 'In principle, the current Grimsby Central Library be reopened, subject to confirmation of the options and costs for refurbishment. Such options to be subject full and transparent engagement'

7.18 The Select Committee made an interim recommendation which was accepted by the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel on 22nd January 2026 as follows:

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

7.19 At its meeting of 13th February, Cabinet resolved to 'receive a report to outline the associated costs to enable the central library to be made water tight (sic) to allow the appropriate removal of asbestos'. The Select Committee understands that the requested report will be forthcoming shortly.

7.20 The Select Committee is in receipt of a report issued by WT Partnership Ltd, issued on 6th January 2026. WT Partnership Ltd are an independent organisation to NELC and has a strong track record and experience in carrying out similar cost estimate studies of scale on large and complex projects.

7.21 The Select Committee notes that the cost estimates for various regeneration options are high-level, and are indicative of potential costs, including substantive estimates for risk and inflation. The Select Committee makes the following recommendation:

- **That work should commence immediately on the development of a business case for the regeneration of Grimsby Central Library, George Street in line with HM Treasury guidance. Grimsby Central Library, George Street should be retained within the Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan.**

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **That the remaining four library facilities should continue to be staffed and managed by professional, paid librarians, with a core onsite presence.**
2. **That for a trial period of two years, a 'Libraries Advisory Board' with relevant expertise is established by NELC to provide advice and**

represent a link between the community and library service operator and NELC as the responsible body, this board should be established as soon as reasonably possible.

3. That NELC and Lincs Inspire Ltd jointly use established practice to commission a report which details the actual and potential social and economic value of the library services and facilities in North East Lincolnshire.
4. That for all library locations, an assurance system is put in place which maximises operational functionality including identification and immediate sourcing of essential spare parts.
5. That when considering future capital schemes in Cleethorpes and Waltham, an improvement scheme for the garden space at the side of the Cleethorpes library is considered which adds to the visitor experience, and also upgrades to Waltham side room areas.
6. That due to the lengthy period of time before a permanent facility can be in operation, NELC identifies potential alternative 'medium-term' central locations that will bridge the gap between a temporary 'pop-up' library and Grimsby Central Library being brought back into operation.
7. That one or more full day workshop(s) takes place during Q2 of the 2026 calendar year which brings 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.
8. Throughout the regeneration works of Grimsby Central Library, including the asbestos removal phase, there should be constructive engagement with the NELC Heritage Officer and Historic England to ensure that the protection of key heritage assets within the building can be advised on and appropriately prioritised
9. That a mutual review of the contractual arrangements with Lincs Inspire Ltd takes place to ensure that the contract is suitable, meets the requirements of future service provision and enables the reimagining of library services that meets the needs of our communities.
10. That in order to prevent further damage to Grimsby Central Library, and in order to provide full, safe access, capital funding should be agreed on an urgent basis, sufficient to allow roof replacement, appropriate remediation to prevent significant water ingress through other openings, and asbestos removal (where appropriate) from the

full building, and for the above works to be completed on an urgent basis.

11. That work should commence immediately on the development of a business case for the regeneration of Grimsby Central Library, George Street in line with HM Treasury guidance. Grimsby Central Library, George Street should be retained within the Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION

9.1. The following reports are background documentation for the select committee and can be found on the Council's website:

- [Public Libraries and Archive review phase 2 consultation summary](#)
- [2.-Library-and-Archives-Review-Phase-2-Cabinet-Report-1.pdf](#)
- [3.-Background-Information-Community-hubs-and-operating-models.pdf](#)
- [Microsoft Word - Grimsby Library Cost Estimate Report 060126 Rev B SUMMARY](#)

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1. The Select Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation and took the opportunity to attend and engage with the process; this included residents, Elected Members, Friends of Grimsby Library, The Civic Society, CARE, Centre-4, Lincs Inspire and Arts Council England.

10.2. The Select Committee was supported by:

- North East Lincolnshire Council
 - Beverly O'Brien, Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer
 - Simon Jones, Monitoring Officer
 - Nick Browning, Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism
 - Damien Jaines-White, Assistant Director Regeneration
 - Jenni Steel, Service Director – Education, Inclusion and Integration
 - Amy Rogers, Head of Skills
 - James Trowsdale, Strategic Lead for Culture and Heritage
 - Geoff Barnes, Deputy Director of Public Health
 - Stephanie Ledgerwood, Head of Professional Services
 - Chris Fairbrother, Head of Estates and Asset Strategy
- Lincs Inspire Ltd
 - Tanya Bratton – HR & Compliance Director

- Dave Huddlston - Finance Director
 - Dick Marshall - Company Secretary
 - Sue Wells - Chief Executive
-
- Arts Council England
 - Luke Burton (National Director for Libraries)
 - Ellie Whalley (Relationship Manager for Libraries, North)
 - Bobbie Robertson (Senior Relationship Manager)

End



Internal Ref:	
Next review date	
Version No.	V01.00

Select Committee	SELECT COMMITTEE: Library Services
Date	21 st Nov '25
Document Version	V1.1
Author	

SELECT COMMITTEE: LIBRARY SERVICES

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose & Aim of the Select Committee

The Select Committee is convened to:

- Evaluate the current and future provision of library services across North East Lincolnshire.
- Ensure cognisance of statutory duties in making any recommendations, particularly Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, specifically:
 - Section 7(1) – Duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.
 - Section 7(2) – Duty to consider local needs in service provision.
- Review the outcomes of the Library and Archive Review Phase 2 public consultation and ensure recommendations are informed by community feedback, including the recently submitted community petition.
- Avoid duplication of scrutiny functions and be cognisant of Cabinet’s decision-making authority.
- The Select Committee is not convened to consider Towns Fund matters.

2. Consultation Oversight

The Committee will:

- Receive and analyse the results of the public consultation.
- Ensure transparency and inclusivity in interpreting consultation themes.
- Encourage participation from external stakeholders and community representatives through open calls for evidence and by direct invitation if appropriate.
- Receive written questions from members of the public subject to general constitutional compliance and submitted at least four working days in advance of relevant meeting.

3. Evaluation Framework

The Committee will assess:

- **Building and Facilities Use:** Opportunities for co-location, community hubs, and diverse usage.
- **Business case development approach for Grimsby Central Library provision:**
 - Remediation and refurbishment options for Grimsby Central Library, including lifecycle cost analysis
 - Alternative locations if refurbishment proves cost-prohibitive.
 - Cultural and heritage risks and opportunities
 - External funding opportunities (e.g. Arts Council England, Heritage Fund).
- **Contractual Constraints:**
 - Legal and operational flexibility within the Lincs Inspire contract. In CLOSED session
 - Community-led models.
- **Benchmarking:**

- Comparative analysis of best practice from other authorities, including different operating models
- **Service Continuity:**
 - Interim provision such as a pop-up library in Freshney Place during Grimsby Central Library's closure.
- **Community Wellbeing Impact:**
 - The role of the library in supporting community, educational, cultural, heritage and social outcomes.

4. Decision Criteria

Recommendations will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Criterion	Objective
Statutory compliance	Ensure
Community accessibility	Maximise
Value for Money	Ensure
Long-term sustainability	Maximise
Innovation and adaptability	Encourage
Stakeholder engagement	Maximise
Contractual feasibility	Ensure
Transitional disruption	Minimise
Compliance with Marmot Principles	Maximise

5. Membership and Composition

- Political proportionality: 3 Conservative / 2 Labour / 1 Independent / 1 Liberal Democrat
- Chair. Chair of Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel.
- Officers and external experts may be invited to provide evidence, including up to date technical reports where required to provide the level of oversight set out in this ToR.
- Substitutes to be permitted (Nominations to be invited (Not Cabinet Members)) and a matter for each group as to whether or not substitutes are nominated by them.

6. Governance and Procedure

- Operates as a task and finish group from October to January 2026, subject to review mid-January 2026.
- Meetings will follow Council Procedure Rules (Article 5 Appendix 1).
- First meeting will ratify scope and Terms of Reference
- All meetings will be held in public except where consideration of business falls within the definition of exempt information within Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
- Site visits will be organised as necessary

7. Reporting and Accountability

- Interim updates to the Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel, where time allows.
- Recommendations submitted to Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel for consideration and onward transmission to Cabinet.

8. Legal and Constitutional Compliance

- All actions must comply with:
 - The North East Lincolnshire Council Constitution
 - Statutory obligations under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.
 - Legal advice will be sought on contractual matters where necessary.

9. Reference Materials

- The following documents/websites may be referred to by the select committee for guidance and to further understanding of best practice:
 - [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#)
 - [Libraries as a Statutory Service](#)
 - [Strategic Planning of Library Services](#)
 - [Libraries Connected](#)
 - [CILIP](#)
 - Benchmarking from similar buildings (age/type/condition) either from Council's own asset list or from retained contractor experience.
 - HM Treasury Guide to Developing the Project Business Case "Better Business Cases: For Better Outcomes" [Guide to developing the Project Business Case](#)
 - Grimsby Town Masterplan
 - Cleethorpes Masterplan
 - Library Bylaws

LIBRARIES SELECT COMMITTEE – DRAFT METHOD STATEMENT**Method Statement**

The following table outlines the methodology which will be used by the Select Committee to deliver the key requirements/deliverables of the agreed Terms of Reference.

Action/Deliverable	Method	Comments/Update
Evaluate the current and future provision of library services across North East Lincolnshire.	The scope of work will be divided into 3 key areas to allow a focused approach: 1. Library services required. 2. Functionality of the Contract for Services in place with Lincs Inspire Ltd. 3. The future of the Grimsby Central Library building. For each of the 3 key areas, there will be three distinct phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence gathering • Analysis and benchmarking • Conclusions and recommendations 	
Ensure cognisance of statutory duties in making any recommendations.	Members will familiarise themselves with all statutory obligations and relevant guidance and take advice as required from Council Officers.	
Review the outcomes of the Library and Archive Review Phase 2 public consultation and ensure recommendations are informed by community feedback, including the recently submitted community petition.	Community feedback will be actively sort by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open invitation to residents and interested groups to give evidence led by the NELC communications team • Direct engagement with known interested parties, including the local Civic Society and parish and village councils 	
Receipt and analysis of the results of the public consultation	A key summary of the outcomes of the public consultation taking into account any further community feedback gained during the collation of evidence will be formulated and form part of the final Select Committee report.	
Consideration of local needs in service provision	This will take into account; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs identified to date in the consultation process 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input from relevant NELC service areas, including Public Health, Education and Adult Social Care • Learnings from previous service changes • Discussion with Lincs Inspire Ltd 	
Consideration of the need to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.	With the assistance of officers, a transparent cost-analysis will be examined. As far as is reasonably practicable, actual and potential social and community value will be quantified. In terms of defining a ‘comprehensive’ library service, Government guidance and appropriate bench-marking will be used.	
Ensure transparency and inclusivity in interpreting consultation themes.	Meetings will be held in public whenever possible, and the public will be given the opportunity to submit written questions. If meeting time permits, and solely at the Chair’s discretion, the public may be invited to ask questions directly at the end of meetings.	
Assessment of Building and Facilities Use: (Opportunities for co-location, community hubs, and diverse usage.)	There will be site meetings undertaken to all facilities, with accompanying engagement with library staff. Increased use of all facilities will be prominent in all discussions. Best practice will be explored at every opportunity. Different models will be assessed in terms of effectiveness as community hubs, and options for direct community liaison explored.	
Benchmarking against best practice from other authorities, including different operating models.	A ‘contrast and compare’ benchmarking exercise will be undertaken with as much thoroughness as resources allow. As a minimum, three other authorities will be benchmarked against, including our nearest neighbour, North Lincolnshire.	
Measuring the effectiveness of interim provision	A number of performance indicators will be recommended (in collaboration with officers) to measure the effectiveness of the ‘pop-up’ library in Freshney Place, and these will be refreshed on at least a quarterly basis. Lincs Inspire Ltd will be asked to	

	provide data, including sporadic customer satisfaction surveys.	
Cost analysis of remediation and refurbishment options for Grimsby Central Library	<p>Initial cost analysis will be based around 3 core options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to return to the 'as was' position before closure to allow library services to return • As above, but to include provision for the Archives Service • Total refurbishment to allow the whole building to be brought back into use. <p>Initial survey and cost estimates reports will be supported by officers. Further, more detailed work may be required. Various business case options may be considered as the potential uses of the building in addition to library/archives services are explored.</p>	
Identify alternative locations if the refurbishment options above are cost-prohibitive	The identification of alternative locations will not be pursued by the Select Committee until a decision is made by NELC that refurbishment options are cost-prohibitive. Such decision is very unlikely to be finalised prior to the Select Committee making a final report.	
Explore external funding opportunities	External funding opportunities will be explored, working in collaboration with council officers, Lincs Inspire Ltd, the Grimsby Town Board and engaging with other key stakeholders.	

-LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DATE	20/11/2025
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Library Services Background Paper
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Library Service contributes to priorities across the Council Plan supporting the delivery of our 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities'.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides an overview of background information relating to the library service in North East Lincolnshire within the drafts terms of reference of the select committee.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The report is presented to select committee members for consideration as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Library service: statutory duty and guidance

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area. However, the meaning of "comprehensive" and "efficient" are not defined and the legislation does not state a minimum number of libraries that must be provided. A Local Authority in complying with its duty shall have particular regard to the desirability of:
 - securing adequate amounts of books and other printed matter, pictures, films and other materials which are sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and special requirements of both adults and children
 - encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service and provide advice of its use

- 1.2 Government guidance [Libraries as a statutory service - GOV.UK](#), outlines that a comprehensive and efficient service will differ between Councils. There are no longer prescribed national standards, which risked ignoring the specific circumstances or needs of individual library authorities. It therefore falls to each Council to decide how much to spend on libraries and how to manage and deliver the service. But it makes it clear this has to be done in consultation with the community, based on evidence of local needs, and in accordance with their statutory duties. Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.

Library service in North East Lincolnshire

- 1.3 The current statutory public library service is operated by Lincs Inspire Limited (LIL) on behalf of the Council, from four key sites across the borough; Grimsby Central Library (currently closed on a temporary basis with pop-up service provision in Freshney Place), Cleethorpes Library, Immingham Library and Waltham Library. In addition, a range of services are available including the home delivery service and online resources. LIL “Libraries Strategy 2024 – 2026 sets out their approach to current service delivery and future aspiration [Libraries' Strategy 2024-2026 - Lincs Inspire](#).
- 1.4 The public library service supports communities with much more than just books, with the delivery of the services across the ‘Universal Library Offers’ [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#) covering reading, information & digital, culture & creativity and health & wellbeing. The role that libraries play forms an important part of our local infrastructure contributing to the Council’s priorities of creating a stronger economy and stronger communities.

Library service review and public consultation

- 1.5 In recent years developments in technology, coupled with the Covid pandemic has led to changes in the way people live their lives and access a range of different services, this includes how they use the library service. In a climate of rising costs, the changes observed in service usage coupled with the competing priorities across the wide range of local services that the Council deliver prompted a review of the library service in 2024.
- 1.6 The Council has followed a two-stage approach to the review with two separate phases of public consultation and engagement, as well as data analysis:
- Phase-1 Public Consultation – firstly, finding out how people use (or do not use) library and archives services, what is important to them and what people see as the priorities and opportunities for the services in the future.
 - Phase-2 Public Consultation – secondly, look at how the Council may need to develop, and potentially change, elements of our library and archives services. Stage two to be informed through work and analysis from stage one.
- 1.7 The Council completed phase-1 of the public consultation and engagement on the statutory library service between January to March 2024. In total 888 responses were received via the survey (631 completed responses), with a further 251 voices captured across in person sessions at community sessions, staff and public focus groups. This first phase generated a wealth of views, experiences, ideas and suggestions for the future of these services that were reported in detail to Cabinet in December 2024: [9.-Library-and-Archives-Review-Phase-1-Cabinet-Report.pdf](#).
- 1.8 The Council completed phase-2 of the public consultation and engagement on the statutory library service between April to July 2025. In total 1,442 responses were received via the survey (1,006 completed responses) together with 320 voices captured across in-person sessions at community sessions, staff and

public focus groups. This second phase generated a wealth of views on future library service strategy themes and options for library service branch locations that were reported in detail to Cabinet in October 2025: [5.-Library-and-Archives-Review-Phase-2-Cabinet-Report.pdf](#). Further detail on the findings and full summary of phase-2 public consultation and engagement is included within Appendix 1.

- 1.9 In addition, a petition containing 4,780 signatures was considered for debate at Full Council in July 2025 requesting that the Council protect library services and commit to providing a first-class library service across all libraries [7-Petition-for-Debate-Save-Our-Libraries.pdf](#).
- 1.10 On 8th October Cabinet members approved recommendations to retain Cleethorpes and Waltham Libraries in their existing locations (note Immingham Library already retained) and to explore initiatives to better utilise the available space. [4.-Decision-Notice-Cabinet-8th-October-2025.pdf](#) resolved:
- That the engagement and consultation with our communities during our phase-2 of public consultation, involving residents, partners and services be noted
 - That the following were agreed and supported:
 - a) Cleethorpes Library remain open and initiatives to better utilise the available space and facilities be pursued.
 - b) Waltham Library remain open and initiatives to better utilise the available space and facilities be pursued.
 - c) In principle, the current Grimsby Central Library be reopened, subject to confirmation of the options and costs for refurbishment. Such options to be subject to full and transparent engagement.
 - That the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage, and the Visitor Economy be authorised to establish options and costs for the repair and refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library, refine the library service needs assessment and develop the emerging library service strategy informed by the findings of the two phases of public consultation and engagement and also the findings of the Library Services Select Committee.
 - That the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage, and the Visitor Economy be instructed to report further to Cabinet to:
 - a) present recommended refinements to the needs assessment,
 - b) present a proposed library service strategy,
 - c) present options and costs for refurbishment of Grimsby Central Library.

Select Committee: evaluation framework

- 1.11 The draft terms of reference sets out an evaluation framework and the report covers headline background information at this early stage as an introduction to committee members. The committee may consider requesting further information as part of their work across these areas.

Building and facilities use

- 1.12 The current opening hours of the library branches are highlighted in Table 1 below. As a summary, three of the four library branches are closed one day during the week Monday to Friday, with all libraries operating on a Saturday morning 9:00am to 1:00pm and are closed on a Sunday. The exception to this is at Immingham Library that does not close for a day during the week as part of a previous agreement with Immingham Town Council to maintain service opening hours.

Table 1 – Library and public archives branch opening hours

Branch	Opening hours per week
Grimsby Central Library*	40 hours (closed Monday & Sunday)
Cleethorpes Library	40 hours (closed Friday & Sunday)
Immingham Library	44 hours (closed Sunday)
Waltham Library	36 hours (closed Monday, Sunday & lunchtimes)

**Grimsby Central Library temporary closure with ongoing pop-up service provision in Freshney Place*

- 1.13 As part of the library service review, a central theme of the emerging library strategy is around the co-location of services, where libraries can act as community hubs, sharing space with other community activity and services. This offers opportunities to increase usage through the overlap of different users and visitors, improve accessibility and support greater efficiency. To support the development of the emerging strategy, the public were consulted on the following themes established from phase-1 and these themes received strong support across phase-2 consultation (see Appendix 1):
- The library service should extend opening hours to improve availability and access to services on weekends and evenings
 - The library service should be fully accessible and improve facilities to support user experience including availability of toilets and use of flexible spaces like meeting rooms, activity and exhibition space
 - The library service should be about more than “just books” and the service should focus on the programming of engaging activities, events and groups for all ages
 - There should be a focus on promotion and marketing of what is on offer across libraries to attract new users to the service.
 - The library service should focus on its culture, creative and heritage offer. Whether through further activities, events, exhibitions or by exploring opportunities to link the Library Local History collection and the Public Archive
 - Investment in ICT equipment and software within libraries remains important to support access and learning, complementing the ongoing use of online library resources, which are accessible 24/7
 - Future library and archives service resources should be prioritised to support residents and local areas of greatest need that may benefit most from accessing these services
- 1.14 Library service usage data is compiled by LIL as the library service operator and is provided to the Council on a quarterly basis and can be brought forward to the committee for consideration.

Business case development approach for Grimsby Central Library provision and service continuity

- 1.15 Grimsby Central Library was closed at the end of March 2025 on a temporary basis after a water leak raised the risk of asbestos disturbance. Cabinet has approved, in principle, the reopening of Grimsby Central Library building, subject to confirmation of the options and costs for refurbishment.
- 1.16 Work is underway to develop options and costs for refurbishment and given the presence of asbestos across the building and associated risk, combined with long standing maintenance challenges, this will take time to develop and be completed in several stages. To support full and transparent engagement further information on this process can be brought forward to the committee for consideration.
- 1.17 During the period of closure of Grimsby Central Library, a pop-up library has been opened within Freshney Place on a temporary basis to support service continuity and provide a library service presence within Grimsby Town Centre. More information is available at [Grimsby Library - Lincs Inspire](#).

Contractual constraints

- 1.18 LIL operate the library service on behalf of the Council under a contract agreement that commenced in May 2015 for an initial twenty five-year period, with the option to extend the arrangement by up to ten-years. The contract will therefore end in April 2040; however, this is subject to potential extension to 2050. The partnership with LIL covers several services in addition to libraries, including the Archives, Leisure Centres, Sports Development and the Auditorium. Further information on the contract arrangements and finances can be brought forward to the committee for consideration within CLOSED session.

Benchmarking and community wellbeing impact

- 1.19 The route for benchmarking library services may have limitations based on a lack of a 'national data hub', this was highlighted through Baroness Sanderson report published in January 2024 [An Independent Review of English Public Libraries](#) that included reference to a fundamental challenge; "*A lack of comprehensive data on our libraries. We do not have an accurate national picture of how libraries are performing across the country. Nor are libraries able to prove, to an acceptable standard, just how much they contribute to key agendas from literacy to skills to health and wellbeing*".
- 1.20 While this is a factor to be mindful of when making comparisons with other areas, further information can be brought forward to the committee to consider on library service data and service funding arrangements that is available from other local authorities, while exploring the range of operating models across the sector and the different approaches to service delivery. Within this approach to benchmarking, the wider role that the library service plays through social value in supporting community, educational, health and social outcomes will be an important consideration.

- 1.21 For information that is available on Libraries, it is worth noting annual participation survey data that provides an indications on engagement with arts, culture, libraries etc. (latest report published July 2025 by DCMS [Annual Libraries Report 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#)). In addition, there is also the Arts Council England data sets that hold the numbers of libraries, opening times and other information across all participating services ([Facts and figures | Libraries Connected](#)).

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The report is presented to the committee as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire. There are no specific risks or opportunities identified from the background information provided.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The report is presented to the committee as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire. There are no specific considerations on reputation and communications from the background information provided, although it is recognised that reporting on the library service in general may bring forward positive and negative reputational implications for the Council.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The report is presented to the committee as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire. There are no specific financial considerations as the report is for information purposes and not recommending change in resources.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The report is presented to the committee as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire. There are no specific implications as the report is for information purposes. That said, the library services cover a wide range of groups across the population with a particular focus on children given the large proportion of existing library users who are 12 years and under. This includes considering opportunities for connecting children and young people with learning, literacy and wider enrichment activity across services and facilities. The service has a role to play in enhancing cross sector working to deliver wider outcomes that includes children's health, literacy and social interaction recognising the benefits of early engagement with books and developing the enjoyment of reading from a young age.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The report is presented to the committee as background information on the library service in North East Lincolnshire. There are no specific climate change and environmental implications as the report is for information purposes.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to

policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The library service covers all wards across North East Lincolnshire.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet report September 2024: [9.-Library-and-Archives-Review-Phase-1-Cabinet-Report.pdf](#)

Cabinet report October 2025: [5.-Library-and-Archives-Review-Phase-2-Cabinet-Report.pdf](#)

Full council petition July 2025: [7-Petition-for-Debate-Save-Our-Libraries.pdf](#)

Cabinet decision notice October 2025: [4.-Decision-Notice-Cabinet-8th-October-2025.pdf](#)

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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