



COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

26th February 2026 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Aisthorpe (in the Chair)
Councillors Bonner, Boyd (substitute for Brookes), Cairns (substitute for Lindley), Patrick, Shutt, Silvester and Wheatley.

Officers in attendance:

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Katie Brown (Director Adults, Housing and Communities)
- Paul Caswell (Safer Towns and Communities, Service Manager)
- Charlotte Dring (Assistant Director Housing and Communities)
- Paul Evans (Assistant Director, Environment, Economy and Infrastructure)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Stronger Place)
- Kath Jickells (Assistant Director Environment)
- Levi Anderson Jordan (Environmental Strategy and Sustainability Manager)
- Lisa Logan (Head of Open Spaces)
- Guy Lonsdale (Assistant Director Finance)
- Joanne Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Head of Law and Assurance and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport)
- Councillor Hudson (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero)
- Inspector Musgrave (HumberSide Police)

There was one member of the press and five members of the public present at the meeting.

SPC.52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for this meeting from Councillor Brookes and Councillor Lindley.

SPC.53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SPC.54 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 8th January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

SPC.55 QUESTION TIME

There were two questions submitted by Mr Dicker for the panel.

Mr Dicker was invited to read out the questions submitted.

Question 1

As many on this committee may know, I am one for asking questions, seeking answers to make informed choices. On many occasions, I also like to refer to original sources. Data was provided to a recent full council debate by one elected member of this council, and I wanted to check it. The only source for the data was from the leader of a populist political group. Not deterred to establish the facts, I researched information using the Office of National Statistics web site for this area. It did take some finding, but the information did not align with the data provided by the elected member. One can come to their own conclusion for the motive of providing information that cannot be confirmed. It is evident that crime, sexual or otherwise, is a problem across all walks of life and not confined to one race or ethnicity. With that in mind, what is being done by the council to work with the police force to combat crimes, such as sexual abuse, regardless of nationality or ethnicity?

The panel's response was as follows:

The Community Safety Partnership is a statutory function through the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and brings together five key statutory agencies, local authority, police, fire, probation and public health. This partnership is dedicated to the prevention and detection of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the local authority played a major role with the police.

The current 4 priorities were ASB, serious violence (including violence against women and girls), serious organised crime and community cohesion.

All crimes and incidents of ASB were investigated thoroughly, regardless of demographics or protected characteristics. With regard to crime, the police follow the guidelines for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1974 with any

investigation. The local authority support investigations with evidence captured on CCTV. In relation to ASB, we would follow the guidelines within the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Question 2.

Recently a rape occurred in Grimsby that understandably has stirred anger and anxiety. There have, however, been conspiracy theories on the ethnicity of the perpetrator stirring up racial tensions despite no information being released (at time of writing). There has also been criminal damage to a property of Polish hospitality owners following the release of a video clip, taken covertly, demanding to know if they were going to house illegal immigrants. The common denominator in both these cases is a small group with convictions for racially motivated attacks. I was shocked to see their latest “Lennon Yaxely” style videos, showing unlicensed people, on behalf of themselves and not a registered charity, distributing devices that have not been approved or checked and open to abuse by placing surveillance equipment and I include the link for members to watch. What measures are in place by the council to safeguard vulnerable people like the homeless, that need appropriately qualified people and at the same time prevent “witch hunters” harassing legal immigrants and sharing covert recordings of them and women?

The panel’s response was as follows:

The Home Options Team worked hard to support residents with their housing situation. They can help people who are rough sleeping; sofa surfing; being asked to leave their current home by family, friends or landlords; involved in disputes with landlords; and people who find themselves in other challenging circumstances. The team were trained to ensure the homelessness legislation was applied correctly and that any vulnerabilities were considered appropriately to safeguard applicants. If residents were struggling with their housing situation, paying their bills, or if it looked like they may be served an eviction notice, they should get in touch with the team as soon as possible. They could do this by filling in a homeless prevention form on the council’s website or by ringing the council on 01472 326296 (Option 1).

The service supported people to stay in their current home where possible. If this was not safe or suitable, the service could assist people to look for alternative accommodation. This could include private rented accommodation, shared ownership, or – where eligible – temporary accommodation or applying for social housing. The council also fund the provision of Housing Related Support, which is provided via a number of local organisations. Housing Related Support supported vulnerable individuals and families across the borough who may need extra support to live independently and maintain their accommodation long term.

In relation to Houses of Multiple Occupation there was a current safeguarding protocol between the Home Office and Humberside Police. Locally there was a joint protocol in place regarding the legal housing of immigrants, including safeguarding protocols. In respect to the increase of ‘auditors’ within the borough, it was generally legal in the UK to take overt videos of people where there was no reasonable expectation of privacy, however all cases would be

looked upon individually and appropriate action taken if legislation was broken, with the primary organisation taking the lead, as an example civil trespass (Civil Law), aggravated trespass and racial hatred (Criminal Law).

RESOLVED – That the questions and responses be noted.

SPC.56 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the current Forward Plan, and members 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.

SPC.57 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

At SPC.28, CCTV Update, the Chair was happy that going forward briefing notes could be provided on quarterly CCTV performance.

At SPC.20, bulky waste services performance, it was confirmed that this data had now been included in this quarter's submission, it was agreed that this could therefore be marked complete and removed from tracking.

At SPC.21, Food Poverty Assessment, the Chair noted that the Food Poverty Action Plan was due to come forward by March 2026 and asked Ms Paterson to seek an update from the Deputy Director of Public Health.

At SPC.29, Update from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Ms Paterson advised that more members were needed for the site visit to be viable. Councillor Shutt, Patrick and Aisthorpe confirmed they would like to attend the site visit. Ms Paterson to liaise with the PCC office to arrange.

Ms Paterson confirmed with the panel that SPC.20, SPC.31 and SPC.43 were now marked complete and could be removed from tracking, all other items were to remain on tracking.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.58 CALL IN – FULLER STREET BRIDGE AND THE NORTH WALL, CLEETHORPES

The panel considered a formal request from Councillors Holland and Henderson to call-in the above portfolio holder decision.

Councillor Holland was invited to present the call-in. He advised that Councillor Henderson was unable to attend however wished to reflect his views below.

Councillor Holland was concerned that installing a sign advising residents 'not' to use the bridge at night, if the reason is crime or fear of crime could create wider issues. These could include setting an unhelpful precedent for dealing with crime elsewhere in the borough, creating the impression of new "no-go" areas, risking misinterpretation that could harm the borough's reputation, and attracting negative or disproportionate publicity given the actual crime levels.

Spencer Hunt, Assistant Director for Safer and Stronger Place noted that the petition presented in April 2025 had led to a public meeting where officers reviewed costs and options for lighting, CCTV, and the bridge's structural condition. Crime concerns were investigated, but no actionable incidents were found. Crime levels in the area were very low, and a rapid deployment camera placed there had recorded no incidents. He advised that decisions relied on reported crime data. The bridge also no longer provided access to the beach or the North Wall as sea defence works had changed access routes. Officers advised that the petition reflected the community's concerns, however the conclusion reached was that the council should not encourage people to use the bridge during hours of darkness, not as a result of concerns around crime but because the bridge led onto unadopted waste ground and may be unsafe.

Mr Evans highlighted the hazards associated with high tides and poor weather, noting that public warning signs would be necessary.

Members asked what the signage would state. Mr Evans advised that the signage would advise the public that this was not a maintained footbridge.

Inspector Musgrave noted that Fuller Street did not experience the same crime levels as surrounding areas. The local neighbourhood policing team maintained a strong presence there, and monthly police risk meetings took place where locations with two or more incidents were highlighted and Fuller Street had not appeared as an area of concern.

A member acknowledged and respected the intentions behind the call-in, noting concerns about the bridge being uninviting, especially in the dark. However, he questioned the relevance of the call-in, suggesting that some costings provided were only indicative. He felt criticisms about excessive lighting overlooked the multi-agency work that had already been undertaken, particularly police involvement. Overall, he was unsure what the call-in aimed to achieve.

The Chair asked whether any other agencies could or should be involved in this. Mr Hunt suggested that the Coastguard was potentially the only other agency that could be involved. Ms Borgstrom added that the sea defence belonged to the Environment Agency but in the past they had indicated they did not consider it necessary to enhance day to day maintenance or cleansing of the sea defence paths.

Another member understood the intention behind the call-in but felt that suggesting the area was unsafe through signage or implication could send the wrong message to residents and believed that the area was in fact safe. A member suggested that the crime data be reviewed in six months time.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Stronger Communities commented that there was uncertainty about how frequently the bridge was actually used. Fuller Street Bridge itself was in poor condition, having deteriorated over the past decade. He also highlighted that the surrounding land at the other side of the bridge, owned by Railtrack, regularly flooded in winter. Retro-reflective advisory signage was considered and reinforced that the purpose of the signage was around warning the public about uneven ground and slip/trip hazards during the hours of darkness. The bridge was being kept safe through minor maintenance, but its condition was poor compared with the adjacent Suggitt's Lane bridge.

Overall, he considered there was insufficient evidence of crime in the area, and existing mitigation measures such as increased street-lighting and brightness were considered adequate. Coastal erosion was also a concern here looking to the future.

It was proposed and seconded to release this decision for implementation with a recommendation to review the crime data in six months' time.

RESOLVED - That the decision to improve safety and lighting around Fuller Street Bridge and the North Wall in Cleethorpes be released for implementation, subject to a review of the crime data coming back to the Communities Scrutiny Panel in six months' time.

SPC.59 2025/26 QUARTER 3 COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

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 of the Council's financial performance during the third quarter of 2025-26. It was noted that this report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 11th February 2026 and was referred to all scrutiny panels.

Mr Lonsdale set out the background to the report and highlighted some key areas for consideration.

Under Environmental and Regulatory Services, the Chair noted that the delivery of inland food interventions had reduced and asked if we were still meeting our statutory inspection requests.

Ms Jickells advised that port-related work had come to dominate over inland work, and there was an action plan to address this.

The Chair asked if the Food Standards Agency had raised any performance concerns. Ms Jickells assured that the council was working with the Food Standards Agency on the action plan. The Chair also asked about potential risks. The Chair asked about missed bin collection data being unavailable and the reasoning for this. Ms Jickells explained this was due to switching over to a new system and would ensure all data would be available for the next quarter.

In addition, the Chair asked how the council could be assured that performance had not slipped. Ms Jickells noted that when crews returned to the depot they were aware of operational issues, so if there were to be a major or widespread problem, it would already be known to the council.

Under household waste, a member asked when the introduction of food waste collections would be implemented and how we were preparing for this.

Ms Jickells advised that, previously, collections were carried out using separate, discrete vehicles. However, the service intended to move to a more integrated fleet system. Additional vehicles were needed for residual waste, and the entire fleet was due to be replaced. There was national recognition of a shortage in vehicle availability, causing long lead times of 12–18 months, with the next delivery slots expected around Christmas. The project was ready to progress at full speed and the team was simply waiting for the new vehicles to arrive.

A member asked whether the council was awaiting government funding for this. Officers advised that no specific grant had yet been received for it. It was noted that the government had only provided high-level allocations for certain services. However, assurance was given that this pressure had been built into the council's 2026–27 budget.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.60 GREEN FUTURES ANNUAL REPORT

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure noting the annual updates for each plan. Mr Anderson Jordan set out the background to the report and highlighted some key areas for consideration.

A member asked whether any progress was being made to work with Stagecoach to encourage a transition to electric buses, noting the cost of electric vehicles was continuing to fall. Ms Borgstrom advised that an update on the Stagecoach electrification was being taken to the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Panel next week.

A member wished to note that the figures quoted in the report for residual household waste had used Yorkshire and Humber as a regional comparator, the member noted that "Yorkshire and the Humber" no longer existed as a statistical region. The member stated that a more appropriate comparison would have been with our statistical neighbours.

One member wished to highlight that although this authority had a strong record on reducing waste sent to landfill, this was not something to celebrate as performance had not improved against targets. Mr Anderson Jordan advised that statistics of reducing waste to landfill had in fact improved.

Members raised concerns about the water quality of the coasts and rivers and whether there was anything the council could do to reduce pollution to our waterways.

The Chair asked for an update on what the Council is doing to protect our coast and rivers.

The Chair recommended that a report be brought back to a future meeting on what the council was doing to protect our coast and rivers. This was supported by the panel.

A member queried what data was being gathered to understand the decline in recycling centre usage and sought clarification on where that data was being reported or directed. Mr Anderson Jordan explained that recycling rates had fallen compared with previous years, which accounted for the overall reduction in the recycling rate.

A member noted that the national target was 55% for recycling by 2025, however the current rate was only 38%, with food-waste recycling at 0% and sought clarification on what would be done to meet the next national target set for 2030. Ms Jickells explained that the targets being referred to were national, not local and that the wider waste landscape was changing, with simpler recycling systems being introduced and government-led deposit return schemes, and other national recycling initiatives. If a deposit return scheme were to be implemented, it could significantly reduce plastics and cans in household waste. She added that there was a lot happening nationally, and the impact of these changes would need to be monitored.

The Chair asked whether there were any additional plans to help improve local recycling rates. Ms Jickells explained that a new waste-disposal contract would begin in 2029, which was expected to create further opportunities to improve recycling and reduce residual waste.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a further report be submitted to scrutiny detailing what the council was doing to protect our coast and rivers.

SPC.61 BIODIVERSITY STATUTORY DUTY REPORT

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure seeking the panel's views and consideration of the council's Biodiversity Duty report. Mr Anderson Jordan set out the background to the report and highlighted some key areas for consideration.

A member noted that under biodiversity net gain rules, housing developers may be permitted to send their biodiversity contributions to sites outside the area. Mr Anderson Jordan noted that biodiversity net gain required developments to deliver a 10% improvement in biodiversity. Policy also set a hierarchy that prioritised delivering this uplift on the development site itself. Mr Anderson Jordan advised that where that was not possible, off-site measures

could be used, but these should still be located as locally as possible, in line with government guidance.

A member noted that around 30% of biodiversity contributions were being directed elsewhere and asked whether capturing data on this was straightforward. Mr Anderson-Jordan explained that all biodiversity information was recorded on the biodiversity register, and each case was assessed individually as part of the planning application process.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.62 WEED CONTROL UPDATE

The panel considered a report from the Assistant Director Environment, which provided an update on progress to identify suitable locations for weed control trials and consultation with ward councillors. Ms Logan set out the background to the report and highlighted some key areas for consideration.

Councillor Humphrey was invited to make representations to the panel.

Councillor Humphrey referenced an email from the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities and comments by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero at a full Council meeting. He also confirmed that he had sought views and submitted his responses to officers. Councillor Humphrey felt that the council's scrutiny report lacked detail and did not align with key themes such as stronger communities and a greener future.

Councillor Hudson reminded Councillor Humphrey that responses needed to be submitted within the established deadlines. Councillor Humphrey disputed this and stated that his submission was submitted in time, and emphasised that, during a consultation exercise, it was important to consider the number of reasons given and what was said, as this was a core purpose of scrutiny.

Members felt that the process had been complicated and could have been simplified. Members simply suggesting having areas in five or six wards for a dictated period of time where Glyphosate was not used so that outcomes could be determined.

A further detailed discussion took place with members keen to put forward their wards again, noting that the deadline had caused some challenges. As such members recommended that the trials were reconsidered by officers before any decision was formally made to pause them.

One member was concerned around Glyphosate getting into local rivers and felt that the trials should go forward. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero had a differing view and explained that Glyphosate had been approved for use on waterways and he did not consider it dangerous. He added that the European Union had passed it for another 15 years and in his view it was legal, safe and tested.

Other members were disappointed that officers were proposing that the trials should not commence as there had been a low response to the consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities was concerned that weeds such as horsetail a perennial weed, could be quite aggressive and there were examples within his ward where this weed had attached itself to pathways and, as such, Glyphosate was needed to control the spread of this further.

The Chair confirmed that there were now potentially six wards that had been suggested for the trials; Scartho, East Marsh, Heneage, South, West Marsh and Sidney Sussex. The Chair saw no harm in seeing how the trials went.

Ms Jickells warned that there were consequences in revisiting the trials as there was no clear alternative to the use of Glyphosate and also, there would be implications to the adopted highway, which the council had a duty to maintain. It was also reiterated that successful change required engagement with residents.

There was a general consensus from the panel to re-look at the trials again with six ward areas now being put forward by the panel. Ms Logan reiterated that a deadline of 5th January 2026 had been put in place to allow officers time to plan for the trials, as weed control was due to commence.

It was recommended that the six ward areas be put forward for officers to look at the feasibility of implementing a trial, recognising the short notice, and that a further report be submitted to this panel.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the weed control trials be revisited to take place within the six ward areas of Scartho, East Marsh, Heneage, South, West Marsh and Sidney Sussex.
3. That the results of the trials be submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Panel in due course.

SPC.63 ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The panel considered a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure that provided feedback on the outcome of the Armed Forces Covenant review and proposed next steps. Ms Dring set out the background to the report and highlighted some key areas for consideration.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities noted that currently the armed forces were funded through Citizens Advice and wished to confirm if that would cease going forward. Ms Borgstrom noted that this was about the councils' role and not about the vital role the Voluntary, Community, or Social Enterprise (VCSE) played in providing support and advice to the public.

Officers stated that the council recognised the valuable work delivered by many charities in the borough. This review was not about questioning their contribution, but about understanding how the local authority needed to adapt and shape its own role going forward within that wider landscape.

A member was concerned why it had taken seven months to start the recruitment process.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.64 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2025/26 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

The panel considered a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer which reflected on the 2025/26 municipal year, and the work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Panel. The panel also considered, within its terms of reference, any suggestions to be included in the 2026/27 work programme.

Ms Paterson outlined some outstanding items for consideration and asked the panel if this work was still of interest to them. The panel agreed to let these items carry forward into next year's work programme.

The panel had no further suggestions for next year's work programme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.65 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions to the Portfolio Holder for this meeting.

SPC.66 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and Portfolio Holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.57 p.m.