

Meeting of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 5 January 2021, 10.00 am

Meeting held virtually, via Skype

Committee Members present

Councillor Judy Stevens (Chairman)
Councillor Hilary Westropp (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Jill Thomas

Other Members Present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Louise Clack
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Jacky Smith
Councillor Amanda Wheeler
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Ray Wootten

Cabinet Members

Councillor Kelham Cooke, the Leader of the Council
Councillor Annie Mason, the Cabinet Member for Communities
Councillor Adam Stokes, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy

Officers

Gary Smith (Strategic Director, Commercial and Operations)
Shahin Ismail (Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
Richard Wyles (Interim Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer))
Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)
Karen Whitfield (Head of Leisure)
Michael Cross (Head of Arts and Culture)
Dan Snowdon (Interim Head of Governance)
Phil Jordan (Principal Planning Officer)
Paul Stokes (Corporate Operations Lead)
Shelley Thirkell (Acting Principal Democratic Officer)
Ginny Beckett (Visitor Economy Officer)
Susan Hislop (Democratic Officer)
Mary Powell (Visitor Economy Lead, InvestSK Ltd)

73. Comments from Members of the Public

No members of the public expressed a wish to speak.

74. Register of attendance, membership and apologies for absence

Following a register of attendance all Members were confirmed as present.

Apologies were received from the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Barry Dobson.

Councillor Steptoe also submitted his apologies as one of the signatories of the Call-in, agenda item 6.

75. Disclosure of Interests

In response to questions raised by a Councillor, it was confirmed that all Members had declared membership of their political affiliation and that no Party Whip was in place.

No interests were disclosed.

76. Action Notes from the meeting held on 17 November 2020

The Action Notes from the meeting held on 17 November 2020, were agreed as a correct record. The Chairman noted that the Key Performance Indicators was now scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee, to be held on 9 March 2021.

77. Updates from the previous meeting

Updates from the previous meeting were noted.

78. Cabinet Member Decision 1 December 2020 - Public Realm Improvements, St Peter's Hill, Grantham

The Chairman invited the Monitoring Officer to present the report and provide an overview of the role of Scrutiny and the Committee in considering the Call-in of the Cabinet decision, made on 1 December 2020.

In presenting the report the Monitoring Officer drew the Committees attention to paragraph 2.2 of the report, which set out the recommendations the Committee could make. It was also confirmed that the Request for Call-in had met the requirements, as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Members were reminded of Cabinet's decision as set out below:

1. *Cabinet approves the installation of the statue on St Peter's Hill Green, in accordance with the agreed planning permission.*
2. *Cabinet approves a budget allocation from the Local Priorities Reserve and authorise expenditure of up to £100k to underwrite the statue-unveiling event and any consequential works. Any fundraising from the public, businesses and others will go towards funding this budget allocation.*
3. *Cabinet approves the engagement of an external organisation, as part of the above allocation, to coordinate the unveiling, including event management, communications and fundraising campaign.*
4. *Cabinet delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Monitoring Officer, the authority to enter into a deed of gift agreement with The Public Memorials Appeal to transfer the ownership of the statue to the Council from the point of installation.*

The Chairman invited the Members who had submitted the Call-in, to provide further details on their reasons for doing so. Councillors Wheeler, Clack, Dilks and Baxter were permitted, by the Chairman, to speak for up to five minutes each. The following points were raised:

- The late publication of the Cabinet report
- Ambiguity of the report title
- A lack of consultation with Scrutiny
- A lack of consultation with members of the public
- Concerns regarding the use of £100,000 to underwrite the event

Other Councillors in attendance who expressed a wish to speak, were also permitted by the Chairman to speak for five minutes each, Councillors Ray Wooten, Smith, Selby, Morgan and Kelly thanked the Chairman for the opportunity. The following points were raised:

- The historic value to Grantham
- Concern over the proposed timing of the unveiling, being in the midst of a pandemic
- A lack of consultation with residents
- The Council being liable for ongoing maintenance costs

The Chairman opened the debate to Members of the Committee and the following points were raised:

- A business plan not being in place
- It was acknowledged Margaret Thatcher was a divisive character, however, is part of the history of Grantham and as such should be recognised
- Inadequate public consultation had been undertaken

- The planning application for the statue, which was approved, had not received substantial representations from the public
- The risk to the Council in committing to underwrite £100,000 for the unveiling ceremony, be further explored

The Leader of the Council advised the Committee that positive feedback had been received regarding the statue and confirmed that a fundraising campaign would be put in place, with donations already being offered.

Upon the conclusion of the debate, the following motion was proposed and seconded:

- a) That Cabinet gives further consideration to item two of their decision; with specific regard to the financial breakdown of the up to £100k, in relation to fundraising and details of the anticipated on-going costs.
- b) Request that the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee be updated on the progress of the organisation of the event and fundraising.

A recorded vote was taken.

For: Councillors Fellows, Sandall, Smith, Stevens, Thomas, Westropp (6)

Against: Councillor Virginia Moran (1)

Abstain: None (0)

The motion was carried.

Councillor Virginia Moran left the meeting at 11:52

79. Update to Visitor Economy and Tourism Action Plan

An update to the draft Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland Tourism Action Plan 2021-2025 was provided by the Visitor Economy Lead, InvestSK Ltd. It was noted that the impact of Covid-19 had resulted in the document remaining a working document, to reflect frequently changing circumstances.

Key elements of the Plan were highlighted which included: improvement of the visitor experience, on-line booking facilities and the importance of partnership working.

The strategy for South Kesteven to improve marketing was to be presented to the Committee's on 9 March 2021. Members were requested to provide details of the area's priorities, to be included within the South Kesteven Tourism and Visitor Strategy and the Tourism Action Plan.

Following discussion, it was noted that there was a need to increase the number of venues offering online booking facilities and if there a 'hopper bus service' was feasible, for use between areas of interest within the District.

ACTION 1

A verbal presentation on the Tourism and Visitor Strategy and Tourism Action Plan be provided to the 9 March 2021 meeting of the Committee

80. Leisure SK Ltd

The Committee were provided with an update by the Head of Leisure over the transfer from the private contractor 1Life to LeisureSK Ltd. With prior agreement, the contract with 1Life was finalised early on 31 December 2020, to enable LeisureSK Ltd to commence on 1 January 2021 with plans to open on 4 January 2021. The centres were unable to open due to the lockdown measure which were in place. Training and inductions had commenced with external support for HR, communications and marketing. Finance, IT and Property support was to be supplied by the Council and recharged to LeisureSK Ltd through a Service Level Agreement.

Covid-19 had seen a significant impact, with costs being reviewed by the LeisureSK Ltd Board of Directors, who were also assessing appropriate Furlough arrangements for some members of staff. A five-year business plan had been previously endorsed by Companies Committee and the Business plan for 2021/22 was being presented to the Companies Committee in February 2021. Company Directors were now in place and a Non-Executive Director had been recruited, whose resume would be circulated to Members following the ratification of the appointment at a Board meeting.

Members requested User Forums be re-instated. The Head of Leisure confirmed that these would be put in place, alongside with a robust contract monitoring process.

The Committee expressed their thanks to Head of Leisure and her Team, for their hard work.

81. Impact Covid-19 to the Culture and Arts Community

An update was provided by the Head of Arts and Culture who reported that the Deepings Literary Festival had had to be postponed until 2022 because of the pandemic.

Deepings Literary Festival

Work had continued to maintain the profile of the festival and to encourage reading that included a number of digital events planned for Easter and the possibility of further engagement over the summer. A creative writing

competition available to local schools was being undertaken with free workshops online. The recent, highly successful, November Nights series would also return as part of the autumn 2021 schedule.

Councillor Susan Sandall left the meeting at 12:27.

Update to Digital Arts

The Head of Arts and Culture emphasised the importance to continue engagement with the creative community following a national survey that had shown an increased interest in returning to venues. There remained a high level of contact and interest in the digital programme with paying for content currently under review.

A bid was being investigated following further funding being available from the Culture Recovery Fund. Family Days planned for February and March had been postponed with the intention to consider offering these programmes during the Easter period.

Members recognised the impact emanating from the uncertainty around the pandemic. An expansion of creative writing workshops to provide these for adults too was requested by Members with consideration by the Volunteer Committee of the Deepings Literary Festival.

Members had received an invitation to attending Creative Artist Networking meeting on 14 January 2021.

ACTION 2

The Head of Arts to consult with the Project Team to develop creative writing workshops for online adult provision in collaboration with the Deepings Literary Festival Committee.

82. Mental Health Workshop

Cllr Paul Fellows reported back to Members from the Mental Health Workshop held on 10 December 2020 which he had attended on behalf of the committee. He had found it fascinating and interesting and recognised the positivity of the workshop and commitment from a broad range of members to promoting positive mental health. A Member/Officer working party would look at all aspects of mental health.

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that it had been a very positive session with a strong commitment by the Members present to support mental health. The first cross-party working group meeting was scheduled for 22 January 2021 which would report back to the scrutiny committees.

Appreciation was extended to those councillors who had attended the Mental Health Workshop and for their positive input.

83. Work Programme 2021

To add to the work programme of the Committee the following:

1. A verbal presentation by Councillor Charmaine Morgan to greater promotion of the historical value of South Kesteven, including the Spitalgate Heath archaeological finds.
2. A verbal presentation by the Visitor Economy Lead on a future tourism and visitor strategy for South Kesteven to improve marketing.
3. To receive a regular update on the impact of Covid-19 to the leisure, culture and arts services.

84. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances decides is urgent

Meeting ended at 12:47.