

Minutes

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 15 July 2025, 10.00 am

Council Chamber – South
Kesteven House, St Peter's Hill,
Grantham, NG31 6PZ

Committee Members present

Councillor Murray Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Barry Dobson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Tim Harrison

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Paul Stokes (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Philip Knowles (Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance & Licensing)

Other Members present

Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Nikki Manterfield

Officers

Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Place)
Kay Boasman (Head of Waste and Markets)
Michael Chester (Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces)
Charles James (Policy Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

David Scott (Director of LeisureSK Ltd)

1. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chirs Noon, Emma Baker and Philip Knowles.

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor Emma Baker.

3. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

4. Minutes from the meeting held on 15 May 2025

Minutes from the meeting held on 15 May 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record

5. Updates from the previous meeting

There were no actions from the previous meeting.

6. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure welcomed Members to the meeting.

7. Corporate Plan 2024-27: Key Performance Indicators Report - End-Year (Q4) 2024/25

The Corporate Policy Officer presented the report that outlined South Kesteven District Council's performance against the Corporate Plan 2024-27 KPI's for Q4 2024/25.

The performance against eight actions was presented for Q4 2024/25. Seven actions were rated green overall meaning they were on or above target as planned.

One action was rated red, meaning it was significantly below the planned target. The action related to the adoption of a tourism strategic framework.

A query was raised on an action relating to the 'on target' attendance at leisure centres.

It was requested that attendance data be provided in a graphical format in the future to scrutinise trends over a period of time.

It was clarified the action itself was on target around reducing the annual subsidy year on year. Attendance was a sub-section of the target. The data could be provided in a graphical format in the future.

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure clarified there were specific KPI's under the leisure contract. Officers would bring forward a client report in the future to scrutinise the contractual KPIs.

A query was raised whether the actions rated red purely related to the lack of staffing and would instantly be rated amber/green following the recruitment process.

Within the Economic Growth team, there were 2 vacancies: an Officer on maternity leave and a vacancy for the Head of Economic Development. The Head of Economic Development vacancy was due to be filled by September 2025 and the Officer on maternity leave had returned to work.

It was clarified there was a typographical error in attendance figures within the reports and all attendance figures were for Q3 and not Q1.

It was queried whether the action on UKSPF funding being obtained for table tennis tables and bike marking kits would be delivered across the district.

ACTION: For the Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure to provide further information on bike marking kits and the locations in which these would be promoted.

A query was raised on why the action relating to cleanliness was quantified on rectification rather than total number of issues reported. A suggestion was made that issues reported and issues resolved be compared and provided in the future.

It was clarified the term 'rectification' was from client visits and related to issues raised and not just those which had been resolved.

Members praised Officers for their work.

That the Committee:

1. Notes and scrutinises the performance against the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators in relation to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-27.

8. Report on provisional outturn and first quarter performance - LeisureSK Ltd

The Director of LeisureSK Ltd presented the report.

A new 10-year contract had been agreed and in place which was operating under the agency model from the 1st April 2025.

Overall fitness memberships remained stable with a minor 0.6% reduction over the comparative 12-month period to the end of May.

Across the individual sites, Bourne increased its membership by 19 (1.4%), Grantham increased by 84 (6.1%), while Stamford decreased by 125 (15.6%), this is due to increased competition following a new gym opening nearby earlier this year.

There had been a reduction in numbers overall of 4.8% but the budget price increase in September 2024 had helped mitigate most of the financial impact.

Events had continued to be held regularly at Grantham Meres and generate income supporting the cashflow of the Company.

At a previous Committee meeting it was raised that the Company would be approaching the Council for a loan so that the gym can be refurbished at Grantham Meres, a business case was in the process of being drafted.

(It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** to go into private session, to discuss the exempt appendices)

(The Committee returned into public session)

(Councillor Philip Knowles declared an interest in his capacity as a LeisureSK Ltd Board Member)

It was highlighted that Pure Gym provided some competition with Stamford Leisure Centre. It was queried whether any grounds of partnership agreement could be requested, for example Pure Gym does not have a swimming pool, whereas Stamford Leisure Centre does.

It was hoped that LeisureSK Ltd could explore why Bourne was having a lower uptake in memberships.

One Member questioned whether market research would take place when developing the business case for the gym equipment at Grantham Meres.

The Director of LeisureSK Ltd clarified a review was taking place for options around Stamford and what mitigations could be implemented in terms of competitors.

Following the recent investment in gym equipment at Bourne Leisure Centre, the membership figures had increased but were now levelling out. The Board were exploring options on how the membership rates could be further increased.

The business case for gym equipment at Grantham Meres would be brought back to the Committee to include details on the investment and expectations around modelling of membership price increase.

One Member noted that feedback from residents stated that facilities at Stamford Leisure Centre were not clean. Members felt the facilities in Stamford needed to be of a high standard if partnerships with competitors was to take place.

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure confirmed issues around cleanliness at Stamford Leisure Centre had been reported. The team had undertaken more spot checks on the facility and there had been improvements in levels of cleanliness. The changing rooms were outdated and required investment in the future.

Condition surveys were being completed on all Leisure Centres, with a focus on Category D items (end of life and health and safety).

It was outlined that competitors, such as Pure Gym offer a full package of cleanliness of facilities and changing rooms, high standard equipment and a well-maintained car park.

Members discussed gym equipment reaching the end of its life. It was queried whether spending money on refurbishing gym equipment would be the reason residents obtain a membership. It was further outlined that the cleanliness of centres could have a big impact on people obtaining a membership.

It was requested that a breakdown of what facilities members use when visiting the leisure centres be brought to the Committee in future.

One Member queried whether the Committee could review the KPI's for LeisureSK Ltd.

ACTION: For the Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces to provide the Committee with KPI's for LeisureSK Ltd.

The Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces confirmed that a structural refurbishment of changing rooms would sit with the responsibility of the Council rather than LeisureSK Ltd.

To provide an update regarding the performance and budget position of LeisureSK Ltd covering the provisional outturn for 2024/25 and the year-to-date position for 2025/26.

9. Markets Action Plan Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report.

The report provided an update on the markets action plan, which was agreed in February 2025.

The action plan was developed to facilitate the delivery of recommendations from the High Street Experts review of Bourne, Grantham and Stamford markets.

The updated action plan was within the report at appendix 1 and had been updated to include progress against the agreed actions and deadlines.

The report outlined four outstanding actions and these were due to be completed once the new Economic Development Manager was in post by the end of the year.

Overall, good progress had been made on the agreed actions and the action plan would be completed before the end of the financial year, as agreed.

It was highlighted that Bourne market was the weakest of the markets, it was queried what the action plan would bring to increase the popularity of Bourne market.

The Head of Waste and Markets clarified Bourne Town Hall was due to undergo major renovation.

Based on consultations with the current stall holders of Bourne market, the plan was to leave the market within the Corn Exchange car park which would limit any improvement works taking place during the major renovations.

The action plan included a full rebranding exercise for Bourne market. A full marketing package had been created for improvements, following the renovations. The works were hoped to be commenced in October/November 2025.

One Member felt that in terms of marketing and rebranding, Bourne market should be a priority. Concern was raised that if serious attention was not given to Bourne market, it would be abolished in the coming months. It was felt that Bourne market was only given a small amount of UKSPF funding.

ACTION: For the Head of Waste and Markets to forward the bespoke communications marketing plan and events calendar to the Committee.

It was noted the market had a small proportion of the car park and the current traders were adamant they wanted to remain where they were, due to regular customers. It was not possible to advertise for any more traders at present, due to the restriction of space.

Members queried the following, in relation to Bourne market:

- Whether any feedback or discussions had taken place with market traders on preferred days of the market taking place.
- Other barriers identified as a risk to the progress of the market and how it would be addressed.
- Whether the traders would be charged full price for their pitches when the building work commences.

It was clarified an alternative location had been offered to the traders, however, they were satisfied to stay within the car park, during the works.

The Head of Waste and Markets confirmed current feedback from traders was positive in terms of location and number of customers. The Council would continue to work with the traders throughout the building work.

It was felt that Bourne market taking place on a Thursday could be a barrier to the success. The High Street Experts had advised changing the day/time of the market, holding a themed or event-led markets may increase footfall and interest.

A query was raised whether a discount scheme for traders at Bourne could be implemented within the budget, due to being weaker in comparison to other markets.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure confirmed the team had tried incentive schemes in order to bring the traders in. It was suggested that Bourne market needed champions for the market.

One Member highlighted a Farmers Market that operated successfully once a month on a Sunday in the leisure centre car park.

It was noted that traders wanted to trade where the highest footfall was. Councillors could champion and advertise the market to drive footfall.

A query was raised whether the Council considered reaching out and working in collaboration with the Sunday Bourne market.

It was noted that Bourne Councillors had requested to open the Corn Exchange and library on a Thursday to increase footfall on market day, however, the library was the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council.

Within the report, phase 3 stated that £60,000 Future High Street Funding would be spent on a stage and bistro chairs. One Member felt that was high amount of money and requested further information on the usage plans of the equipment.

A question was put forward to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure if there would be a sizeable events budget for all market towns within the next financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure hoped that events could be developed over the financial year. Some events may need to be self funded which would be reviewed alongside discussion on the usage plans for the stage, which could be used by all towns within South Kesteven.

It was queried whether the estimated £10,000 on improving accessibility would apply to all 3 markets.

The Head of Waste and Markets highlighted the monies to improve accessibility would apply to all markets, following a consultant-led review by the High Street Experts. Stamford market was highlighted in particular for poor accessibility. This

accessibility consultation had taken place in summer of 2024, however, the new audit would fall under the responsibility of the Economic Development Manager once they were in post.

A suggestion of a projector screen was made to increase the footfall, where major sporting events could be shown.

Another Member noted that the Council can hire a screen for a smaller price, rather than buying a screen.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place clarified the feasibility and options on the idea would be explored.

The Committee were reminded that events taking place in Grantham marketplace were currently funded by Future High Street Fund, which was due to end in March 2026. There was currently no provision within the budget for continuation of events.

The Committee to:

1. Review the Action Plan and note the progress to date and amended deadlines for actions.

10. Work Programme 2025/26

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2025/26.

For the following items to be added to the meeting on 14 October 2025:

- LeisureSK Ltd – KPI Report (Q1)
- (Provisionally) Grantham Town Football Club

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure provided a brief update on Grantham Town Football Club. They had recently appointed a new Chairman, negotiations had taken place, and the Council had received a proposal from them. The Council was currently assessing the proposal and asking for more information. It was hoped that Grantham Town Football Club could come to the October meeting, however, a thorough report would need to be considered when the information was available. The Council had received more engagement from the club than previously.

One Member requested whether a public speaker could be invited to the next Committee to provide information on 'Margaret Thatcher Festival week'.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place confirmed that speakers within the Festival were committed to a programme of talks. It was confirmed that a report would be brought back to the Committee in the future to provide an overview on the effectiveness and expenditure of the Margaret Thatcher Festival.

Councillor Tim Harrison noted he was available to substitute for the next meeting on 14 October 2025.

Councillor James Denniston noted he was not able to attend the next meeting on 14 October 2025.

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

There were none.

12. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:50.