

Meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**Tuesday, 3 September 2024, 2.00
pm**

Committee Members present

Councillor Murray Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Barry Dobson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Robert Leadenhams
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Chris Noon

Other Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Paul Stokes

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Paul Stokes

Officers

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer
Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place
Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management and Market Services
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Michael Chester, Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader

25. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

26. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Emma Baker.

Councillor Emma Baker was substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

27. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

28. Minutes from the meeting held on 18 June 2024

Minutes from the meeting held on 18 June 2024 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record.

29. Updates from the previous meeting

The updates from the previous meeting were noted.

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

There were no announcements or updates from those Cabinet Members present.

31. Market Update - High Street Retail Market Review

The Market Update for the High Street Retail Market Review was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Deputy Leader clarified that the review was the result of a culmination of independent research, and he highlighted the following three phases which should maximise the success of a market:

- 1) Current trading footprint – this phase reviewed the current trader landscape, access points, retail mix, price range, external presentation and layout ideas, and barriers to trade.
- 2) Identity – this phase reviewed market equipment and assets, branding, marketing, wayfinding/signage, local heritage, quality of traders and collaboration with high street retailers.
- 3) Operations and opportunities – this phase reviewed market finances, visitor economy opportunities, training needs, Wi-Fi access, promotion, sustainability and the overall market offer.

During debate, one Member expressed frustration that there had been previous reviews brought before the Committee and they felt that more direct action was needed given that the earliest start date for any action suggested by the review was for January 2025. They suggested calling upon the insight of another Member who had personal experience of working at markets. However, the Member in question clarified that their experience had been solely at Grantham Market.

In light of one Member's frustration about the review, it was noted that this had been funded by the government at no cost to SKDC. The review had also been orchestrated by an individual with experience of successfully running Bingham market.

It was confirmed that this would be the final review.

Whilst noting the fact that she was new to the organisation, the Head of Waste Management and Market Services confirmed a move away from the previous action plan which was more operational in nature. The review had been more strategically focused, identifying national trends and situating these in the context of the local markets. The Head of Waste Management and Market Services hoped that they could create a more robust action plan to grow the markets within SKDC.

One Member requested welfare facilities for traders at Stamford Market. The Head of Waste Management and Market Services confirmed that they would include this within the action plan.

Another Member commented that they would have liked the report to have given more of a financial insight into each market. The Member referenced a tool available to the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, used for recording visitor patterns on market days, and queried whether this could be incorporated. The Member also referenced that prior to the meeting they had found an action plan for the market dating from 2012. The Member commented on the similarity between the areas of weakness identified then and those identified within the review being presented.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer clarified that a further review had been suggested by the action plan because there had not been a budgetary allocation to address the issues identified.

A Member recognised the progress made with the support from the Head of Waste Management and Market Services, and the Markets Manager. With their support, the Member expressed that they felt this to be a more robust team for progressing Grantham market particularly. The Member also claimed that the Markets had not previously been prioritised enough by fellow Members and following the last significant road works in the area in 2011, 20 market stalls did not return.

The Deputy Leader of the Council suggested that the review needed to be followed by the budget. Despite this, the Deputy Leader indicated that Stamford Market was continuing to perform strongly with new stalls and traders.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that the review would be re-evaluated at the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 8 January 2024.

32. Market Trader Code of Conduct

The Market Trader Code of Conduct was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council, outlining the operational requirements of traders at council-led markets within SKDC.

Significant areas covered within the Code of Conduct were:

- Market Charges – this outlined the possible trading options (pitch size, regular/casual traders etc.) and associated costs,
- Trader Definition – this outlined the difference between a regular and a casual trader,
- Trading Hours and Cancellations – this section outlined expected trading hours,
- Conduct of Traders – this section outlined the expected behaviours of traders, and was followed by a summary of the disciplinary procedure which would have been invoked should a trader breach the Code of Practice.

The Chairman requested that an amendment be made to section 9a of the Code of Conduct, to replace the word ‘town’ with a more inclusive term for individuals in rural areas, such as ‘area’ or ‘location’.

With this amendment incorporated, it was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** to:

Support the implementation of the revised Market Trader Code of Practice for execution from 1 October 2024.

33. Sport and Physical Activity Update Report

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021-2026 - September 2024 Update. The report not only outlined the Sporting Events that have occurred since March 2024, but also detailed the following:

- A. An overview of the work undertaken to support the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

- Physical Activity Initiatives for Council Employees
- Partnership and Collaborative working
- Leisure Facilities
- Active Lincolnshire
- Amendments to the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021-2026

B. The Active Lives Survey

The Chairman disclosed that he had a meeting arranged with the Chief Executive to co-ordinate a dialogue between SKDC and private sports providers.

It was suggested by a Member to liaise with schools in an attempt to try and encourage family bike rides. Another Member commented that such bike rides were regularly facilitated across the districts many cycle routes. However, there was a particular issue with a route raised by the Member who pledged to email specific details of the issue to the Chairman outside of the meeting.

A Member praised the hard work of the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead.

The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead was asked by a Member whether there were any plans for the 'National Fitness Day' on 18 September 2024. The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead confirmed the plan to roll out a '10 at 10' Programme – encouraging staff members to undertake 10 minutes of exercise at 10am. This rollout was to be accompanied with a blog by the Communications Team.

The Vice-Chairman commented that LeisureSK had organised for a group of individuals to visit the markets via cycling. It had seemed fairly popular, but the Vice-Chairman was unsure of its future.

A Member suggested facilitating an activity weekend between different sports clubs, particularly in Grantham where there were many sports clubs. This could have been trialled, allowing individuals to try new sports. The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead confirmed that a Health and Wellbeing weekend had previously been held in both Bourne and Stamford, and they were looking at holding one in The Deepings.

Another Member supported the idea of co-ordinating designated weekends and praised the materials published within the appendix of the report.

A comment was made that the Chairman of the Lincolnshire Archery Association had publicly called on social media for a Sports Forum across the district involving all able-bodied and disability sports clubs. It was suggested that SKDC could be involved in facilitating this. The Chairman recognised this and requested that the Member sends further information which the Chairman could include in his discussions with the Chief Executive.

Another Member reminded the Committee about the Dysart Family Fun Day which was a similar event with several sports clubs involved. The Member advocated raising awareness of the event and trying to get more sports clubs involved. It was suggested that this should be workshopped prior to being presented at a subsequent Committee meeting.

The Vice-Chairman commented that communication around sports associations should be improved and suggested using the Council produced SK Today magazine as a mechanism for this.

The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead confirmed that activity providers are encouraged to upload their activities to the 'Let's Move Activity Finder.'

It was proposed, seconded, and following a vote it was **AGREED**:

- 1. That the results of the future Active Lives survey data will form part of regular six-monthly updates and were noted.**
- 2. That the refreshed Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, which included the amendments previously agreed upon at the meeting of Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny held on 26 March 2024 be recommended for approval.**

34. Leisure Options Appraisal

Note: Councillor Philip Knowles left the Council Chamber for the duration of this item as he was a board member at LeisureSK Limited.

The Deputy Leader of the Council built on the report presented to the Committee on 18 June 2024. The report sought to explore the options for future management of SKDC's leisure service. Whilst there were four possible options, the Deputy Leader identified that the preferred option would be to enter a ten-year contract with LeisureSK Ltd. incorporating agency principles, an option which SKDC had explored the validity of with expert tax advice from HMRC confirming the arrangement would be compliant.

One Member requested an amendment be made to refer the decision to Full Council with LeisureSK Ltd. acting as an agent for SKDC for leisure services only. The Member also asked if the agency model could be switched to sooner than the proposed timeframe of April 2025. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer confirmed that the current contract required a six-month notice period.

A comparison was made with Hounslow Council who let such a contract in a two-month timeframe. A Member noted that if this could be done then there would be financial gain for SKDC. The Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure clarified that Hounslow Council had a significant period left on their contract whereas SKDC only had until December 2025. The tax advice

received had confirmed that the Council could amend the current contract to incorporate agency principles but a new contract could be required from January 2026 in any event.

In this respect, the Member asked where the Committee stood regarding the tax motion previously heard at Full Council on 23 November 2023. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer confirmed that the tax motion did not impact this item. The proposal to adopt an agency agreement was not tax avoidance but an efficient tax arrangement.

The officer confirmed that in order to avoid disrupting the operating model of LeisureSK Ltd., and employee status, the recommendation suggested keeping the existing operating model but changing the arrangement to an agency model. Therefore, LeisureSK would collect gross income on behalf of SKDC.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, in line with the Constitution, the Committee needed to make a recommendation to Cabinet and could not delegate to Full Council. This was because for these matters Cabinet was the decision-making body.

Having been proposed and seconded, and following a vote, it was **AGREED** to:

- 1. Recommend to Cabinet that the Council entered into a new leisure delivery contract with LeisureSK Ltd for a maximum of ten years from 1 April 2025.**
- 2. Recommend to Cabinet that the current contract with LeisureSK Ltd was to be terminated giving the required six months' notice effective from 30 September 2024.**
- 3. Recommended to Cabinet that the new operating model for the delivery of the leisure services was to be based on an agency model with LeisureSK Ltd acting as an agent for the Council in respect of leisure services only.**
- 4. This committee recommended that if it was possible to shorten the notice period and expedite the process to save money then this option should be explored.**

Note: Councillor Knowles returned to the Chamber.

35. Play Area Strategy Action Plan

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the Play Area Strategy Action Plan.

At a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2024, the Members present considered a draft Play Area Strategy for South Kesteven. The Strategy was subsequently approved by the Cabinet on 9 July 2024.

It was recommended that the Committee endorsed the Plan as the principal document when determining the repair and maintenance of play areas. Furthermore, it recommended that the Committee agreed to receive a further update detailing the progress made against the actions identified in twelve months' time.

One Member suggested renaming the document to identify the contents more specifically.

The matter was raised about installing swings at Queen Elizabeth Park in Grantham. The Member explained that funding was thought to be an issue, following discussions with officers. The Member queried whether the swings could be installed if the money was sourced from external sources, and where this sat within the confines of the Action Plan. The officer recommended prioritising the current play areas before committing to additional responsibilities, however the strategy would develop over time. Another Member noted that there were also nearby parks with swings.

A Member raised the matter of Item 18, Appendix 1 of the report – the Lonsdale Road Stamford site, which was graded as being a high priority. The site contained gym equipment, but no play equipment. However, since this decision in 2021, free-to-use gym equipment has been opened elsewhere in Stamford. Given that a larger play area existed elsewhere within the vicinity, it was not considered necessary to seek funds to add play equipment at this site. Therefore, the Cabinet Member for Planning allocated the monies to be used by Stamford Rugby Club which was more in-keeping with the monies original purpose.

One Member queried whether play areas across SKDC had been categorised and whether Members would be notified of the categories in their ward. The report had categorised the sites into low/medium/high priority.

Recognition was given to the Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader for the support that they gave in securing the funding for the Beeden Park improvements. The Officer confirmed that the works were to start on 26 September 2024 and were estimated to last for 4-5 weeks.

The Ward Member for the item 16 site, Harrowby Lane – Grantham, raised this site as being in particularly bad condition. The request was made to elevate the priority grading to be 'high'. The Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader agreed to review this.

It was identified from Appendix 1 of the report that the lifespan of the equipment in many SKDC parks ran to 2029. A Member identified this as causing a potential issue in the future and asked if there was scope for more community involvement in the management of these play areas.

Following the discussion, it was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** to:

- 1. Endorse the Play Area Strategy Action Plan and for this to become the Council's principal document when determining the repair and maintenance of play areas.**
- 2. To receive a further update detailing the progress made against the actions identified in twelve months' time.**

36. Work Programme 2024-25

The meeting raised that the following items should be added to the Work Programme:

- Market Update (for the January 2025 meeting)
- Six-monthly Sport and Physical Activity Update (for the March 2025 meeting)
- Management Fee and Business Plan for LeisureSK (for the November 2025 meeting).

It was requested for a workshop to take place before the 28 November meeting, detailing the progress made with local sports clubs. Members who attended the previous tour of the district's Leisure Centre's noted the usefulness of this and requested this to be facilitated again for Members. Building on this, one Member requested a visit to Stadium SK to understand how this facility operates.

The Deputy Leader of the Council requested an item relating to the arts. It was noted that the Cultural Strategy Report that was to be presented at the 28 November meeting would be bolstered with a wider overview of the success of the arts within the district.

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

Revisiting item 7, a statement was provided by a Member who suggested supplying two additional free stalls at Stamford market which could be used by charities. A fellow Member backed this and suggested that these should exclusively be used by local charities.

A Member thanked officers for helping to facilitate local artist, Darren Whiting, in his efforts to create a walk-through art display across the town. This had

been completed in collaboration with local businessman by displaying the art in open and closed shop windows.

The Member also requested backing from fellow Members in facilitating a sports event with Sankt Agustin in 2025 that would see the Youth World Cup visit Grantham.

The Chairman concluded the meeting at 16:07.