

Minutes

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 4 February 2025, 10.00am

**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 Emma Baker
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Paul Martin
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Tim Harrison

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Paul Stokes (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Officers

Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure)
James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Kay Boasman (Head of Waste and Markets)
Michael Chester (Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Space)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

Debbie Roberts, Chairman of LeisureSK Ltd
Paul Sutton, Director of LeisureSK Ltd
Matt Chamberlain, Contract Manager LeisureSK Ltd
Philip Knowles, Director of LeisureSK Ltd

50. Public Speaking

The Chairman received the following question submitted by a member of the public:

'Dear Mr Turner. I am not sure if you are the correct person to contact but have been directed your way. I swim regularly at the meres and find at times difficult to book for the middle of the day sessions as they are full, I've asked at reception and

was told that would like to add more lane swims but are unable due to schools having swimming lessons. But when I asked why there can't be lane swims after 15.00 when the schools no longer require the pool, they couldn't give a reason. It seems a waste when people like me are of certain age would like to swim at this time. I hope you can help with this matter.

Yours sincerely, Alan Clifford'

The Contract Manager for LeisureSK Ltd confirmed that the Meres had received an increase in numbers for general swimming at lunchtime. The General Manager was reviewing the timetable to increase the number of slots available.

It was noted that swimming lessons started at 3:45pm. Senior swims had been added for 3:00pm, which had been popular. Within the following weeks, additional sessions and increased numbers in existing sessions would be put into place.

51. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor James Denniston.

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor James Denniston.

The Leader of the Council declared he would leave the meeting at 11:30am, due to an obligation at Lincolnshire County Council.

52. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

53. Minutes from the meeting held on 28 November 2024

Minutes from the meeting held on 28 November 2024 (Partly Restricted) were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record.

54. Updates from the previous meeting

All actions were complete.

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

The Deputy Leader of the Council congratulated Bourne Town Football Club on reaching the semi-final.

Compliments to LeisureSK Ltd on the Lincolnshire Gala at Grantham Meres, which was incredibly well run by interaction with officials of Grantham and Deepings Swimming Club.

The Grantham Rotary Club were holding a Swim Marathon on 8-9th February 2025. They had praised the conversations had with LeisureSK Ltd on the organisation, pricing structure and coordination with the club.

It was highlighted that Grantham Guildhall had 11,000 people over 61 pantomime performances. Stamford had 1900 people attend over 12 performances, which was 93% attendance. Bourne Corn Exchange was hired out to a local group for a pantomime, which was very successful.

56. Review of South Kesteven's Council-led Markets - Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which provided an update on the markets action plan, which was presented to the Committee in September 2024.

The action plan was designed to facilitate the delivery of the recommendations from the High Street Experts Review of Bourne, Grantham and Stamford Markets.

The action plan had been updated to include timelines and financial information as requested at the last meeting of the Committee.

To aid the implementation of the actions identified in the consultant-led review, the team also bid for funding from UKSPF, and the bid was successful.

The action plan (appendix 1) outlined which actions were funding by the UKSPF bid and which actions required additional funding.

A total grant of £58,200 has been awarded to improve the markets through the UKSPF. This funding is split across the three markets and does not focus on one market specifically. The key areas covered by the bid were:

- Lamp banners, fin banners and railing banners, • Branded canvas bags,
- Stall covers, • Road closure barriers and signage,
- String lights and powerpacks, • Wheeled cages, • Heavy duty cable ramping, • A stage, • Enhanced marketing, • Gazebos, covers and weights,
- Business support for traders, and • Street performance budget.

Following completion of the action plan, an additional £30,000 worth of funding would be required. To facilitate this, budget proposals for 2025/26 include the formation of a new Revenue Reserve, which could be used to fund the agreed actions as set out in the action plan. If approved, the Action Plan could be delivered in its entirety in the 2025/25 financial year.

- It was queried whether the proposed £4,000 stage was for one stage, or one for each market.

It was clarified the proposed stage was one mobile stage, which could travel around the District.

One Member queried dimensions and sizes of the proposed stage.

The Deputy Leader of the Council clarified the stage would be large enough to hold a band and instruments. It was noted that additions could be added onto the stage if required.

£10,000 had been allocated for stall covers, it was queried whether they would just be for Grantham market stalls. The maximum capacity for stall holders at Grantham market was questioned.

The Head of Waste and Markets confirmed that Grantham market was in a set geographical location and could be bigger or smaller. The market could grow significantly depending on how many road closures would want to be put into place. It was noted that Stamford market was at full capacity for stall holders, however, Grantham and Bourne market had scope for growth.

ACTION: For the Head of Waste and Markets to provide a maximum capacity number for stall holders in Grantham Market.

One Member highlighted that historically a promotion vehicle had been purchased by the Council, it was queried what lessons were learnt.

The Deputy Leader of the Council confirmed the previous promotion vehicle bought by the Council was not fit for purpose or viable for travelling around the District and was only used a number of times. The Committee were assured that lessons were learnt from the promotion vehicle.

It was noted that around 40 stalls were not being utilised for Grantham market at present.

The stage would mainly be used at the marketplace and used to enhance Grantham market. For events of a larger scale, a bigger stage would need to be hired in.

Clarification was sought on the introduction of a market/high street loyalty card.

The Head of Waste and Markets confirmed the loyalty card had been included within the action plan at £3,000 per market town as part of a consultant-led review.

It was highlighted that each market differed in size, however, one amount of £3,000 applied to all, It was queried why one amount applied to all 3 markets.

It was further queried how money would be returned to retailers for the discount offered by the scheme and how this would be dealt with.

ACTION: For the Economic Development team to provide information on how money would be returned to retailers for the discount offered by the loyalty scheme.

It was clarified that traders were against the Council providing the loyalty card and would prefer the funding being provided to them directly.

As part of the action plan, it was suggested that smart targets or KPI's be included to cover markets.

One Member discussed the financial position of the markets. It was stated that in 12 months the deficit of running markets had doubled.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing confirmed that particular KPI's could be added by the Committee. A review of the KPI's would take place in Autumn 2025 Q2, where the Committee can consider changes to their specific KPI's.

That the Committee:

1. Review the amended Action Plan and provide feedback on its contents and the resource implications required to deliver the Action Plan.

57. Grantham Town Football Club

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing lease negotiations between the Council and Grantham Town Football Club.

Discussions had been ongoing since the expiry of the previous lease on 31 December 2021.

Under the terms of the previous lease, Grantham Town Football Club paid rent to the Council and they were required to pay pitch hire fees and a contribution to utilities to LeisureSK Ltd, who managed the stadium on the Council's behalf.

As part of the ongoing negotiations, a new fit-for-purpose lease was being explored to reflect requirements of the stakeholders.

A formal evaluation of the stadium had been undertaken to assess an appropriate market-lease payment to the Council. This payment was unaffordable to Grantham Town Football Club and a proposal had been put forward for a staged payment approach, which details ways in which the club could grow its income to a sufficient level to cover the lease payments.

Exempt Appendix 6 provided details of the current state of negotiations, including requests made by the club.

Under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public may be excluded from the meeting during any listed items of business, on the grounds that if they were to be present, exempt information could be disclosed to them as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** to go into private session)

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

That the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee support a lease arrangement to be entered into with Grantham Town Football Club. However, the lease to be predicated on understanding their future ambitions in terms of community activity and resulting benefits to the Council and the wider town.

58. Financial and Operational Performance of LeisureSK Ltd

The Chairman of LeisureSK Ltd declared an interest on behalf of herself, Paul Sutton (Director of LeisureSK Ltd), Councillor Philip Knowles (Director of LeisureSK Ltd) and Matt Chamberlain (LeisureSK Ltd Board Member).

The Chairman of LeisureSK Ltd presented the report provided an update on the finance and operational performance of the company. LeisureSK Ltd was in the last few months of the existing contract and were due to enter into a new 10-year contract under the agency model principles on the 1 April 2025.

Overfall fitness memberships had increased from December 2023 to December 2024. Stamford had seen the largest increase in memberships, followed by Bourne and Grantham.

Direct Debit income had increased in fitness memberships by 11.7% due to the increase of membership numbers and prices in January 2024.

The swim school continued to perform well, with an increase of 4.2% due to 6% increase in price.

Grantham Meres had been holding successful events and the number of events had increase which received a position increase of income for LeisureSK Ltd.

LeisureSK Ltd had requested a loan from the Council for the refurbishment of the gym at Grantham Meres.

The current cashflow of the company had increased from the previous Board meeting and had shown a small deficit position before the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

A request of £150,000 was included as part of the Council's budget setting process which would assist with cashflow for the new agency model.

It was queried whether the request for a large loan to refurbish gym equipment was appropriate when entering a new model of operation.

The different model of operation would not impact finances majorly, the budget, costs and income would remain the same. The only financial change would be around irrecoverable VAT.

One Member queried the period of time it would take LeisureSK Ltd to receive income to pay for the investment themselves.

It was noted that the business plan had been included within an exempt appendix for a Cabinet report on consideration of monies for the loan.

Members thanked and praised the work undertaken by LeisureSK Ltd in the past 12 months and the confidence in figures being presented.

It was queried as to why the Committee had not had the opportunity to explore the loan proposal or make a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure clarified that an approach from LeisureSK Ltd which needed to be included within the Council's budget setting process which was time restricted. Members were advised they could make representations at the Cabinet meeting, where the business plan would be discussed.

The Chairman of LeisureSK Ltd assured Members that the 1 year business plan was presented in November 2024 to the Committee. A longer term business plan with investment opportunities would be brought back to the Committee in the future.

That the Committee:

1. Notes the update regarding the performance of LeisureSK Ltd.

59. Work Programme 2024 - 25

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2024-25.

It was requested whether Grantham Town Football Club could attend the Committee meeting on 15 May 2025.

For the following item to be added to the Work Programme for 15 May 2025:

- Update on the implementation of the agency model for LeisureSK Ltd.
- Arts and Culture update

It was requested whether a market fee review could be brought to the Committee in the future.

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure requested a written proposal for the market fee review on a report brief and what key information should be covered within the report. It was clarified that the operation of the markets was covered by the Head of Waste and Markets, however, the strategic view was covered by Economic Development.

One Member was in the process of formally requesting that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a 12-month review on all market fees.

Concern was raised on the fees relating to Bourne market.

The Deputy Leader of the Council clarified that Bourne Town Hall had received a lottery fund grant which would impact the current location of the market. There would be an opportunity for alterations at Bourne market and locations in the coming months.

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

There were none.

61. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12:25pm.