

Minutes

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Thursday, 15 May 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 Tim Harrison
Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Cabinet Members present

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

Other Members present

Councillor Elvis Stooke

Officers

Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place)
Michael Chester (Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces)
Jade Porter (Arts and Cultural Services Manager)
Beth Goodman (Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

62. Public Speaking

There were none.

63. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Noon and James Denniston.

Councillors Tim Harrison and Charmaine Morgan acted as substitutes for this meeting.

64. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

65. Minutes from the meeting held on 4 February 2025

Minutes from the meeting held on 5 February 2025 (Partly Restricted) were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record.

The Chairman informed the Committee that a report from the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 May 2025 would be brought to this meeting, for noting.

66. Updates from the previous meeting

All actions were completed.

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

The Leader of the Council provided an update to the Committee around the events being arranged around the centenary of Margaret Thatcher's birth.

The events due to take place at the Guildhall, Grantham which was managed by the Council, would form part of the Council's arts programme.

The Kesteven Girls Grammar School in Grantham, which was attended by Margaret Thatcher had agreed to host a cinema-style screening of The Iron Lady. This event would be ticketed by SKDC and revenue would be shared between the School and the Council.

Walking tours would also take place around Grantham highlighting points of interest that related to Margaret Thatcher's life in Grantham, which would be run by an organisation externally.

Grantham Museum had indicated they would organise and hold an event, which the Council would not directly be involved with, however, would assist in promotion and the selling of tickets if required.

The Council were also keen to work with artists from Union Street Gallery and other organisations.

It was hoped that BBC News and Radio Lincolnshire would bring a dialogue show to Grantham at the time of the centenary, the Council was liaising with them.

The Council were approaching local breweries and pubs in hopes they could create bespoke beers or pump clips to reflect Margaret Thatcher's 100th birthday.

The Leader of the Council encouraged all present to attend the events and support the events, where possible.

One Member questioned whether an approved budget had been set for these events.

The Assistant Director of Culture and Leisure clarified the events at the Guildhall, Grantham were part of the programming budget and the Council were expecting an income to offset the costs.

What degree of control the Council has over the events outlined. The Leader understood that the topic of Margaret Thatcher was divisive but wanted her birth and connection to Grantham to be reflected fairly whether you were a fan or not. A question was raised on how the less popular side of the story would be reflected and when Grantham Town Council would be consulted on this matter.

It was confirmed that Grantham Town Council were part of a stakeholder group which had been formed and it would be up to community organisations or individuals to arrange other events which the Council could help to publicise.

68. Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021 - 2026

The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2021 - 2026) – May 2025 Update was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The report gave an overview of the work undertaken to support the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Physical activity initiatives for Council employees were facilitated throughout the year with opportunities such as an indoor cycling session in September 2024, an annual five-a-side tournament in December 2024, and a 'Step into 2025' steps challenge held in January 2025.

Since the previous update, partnership and collaborative working had increased with the report outlining several instances such as attendance at the Why Sports – Get Active for a Healthier Britain Conference, and attendance at workshops and roundtable seminars hosted by the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA).

A full and detailed breakdown was also given of the work undertaken with the Council's leisure provider LeisureSK Limited to deliver the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Such instances included wellbeing walks, half-term swim crash courses, Fighting Fit Cancer Rehabilitation classes, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) swimming lessons.

Attention was also drawn to the Active Lives survey, outlining that 1.8% and 2.8% increases had been seen respectively on the level of 'active' and 'fairly active'

physical activity levels. The Children and Young People Survey data also outlined a 4.1% increase in the level of 'active' children and young people.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- Concern was noted that 30% of the SKDC staff members had reported physical or mental health struggles of some form but praised the work of the Wellbeing Team in tackling this.
- It was queried how the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2021 - 2026) differed from previous years. It was confirmed by the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead that there were no significant changes from the previous strategy but this was in line with the government guidance. Building on this the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead outlined that the result of the consultation outlined had identified a need for more initiatives for beginners. Discussions would be held with providers such as LeisureSK Ltd in response to this.
- Attention was drawn to outdoor facilities that were rendered unsafe to use during winter conditions such as skate parks. A suggestion was made for the erection of canopies to be considered.
- It was queried whether the GP Referral Scheme could be explored elsewhere in the district after success in Bourne. It was noted that the scheme had been tried elsewhere in the district but there had not been a significant uptake.
- The Deputy Leader praised the strategy as key in SKDC winning a National Wellbeing Award.

The Committee noted the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Report 2021 – 2026.

69. Support for Sports Clubs across South Kesteven

The Support for Sports Clubs across South Kesteven report was presented by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

The report outlined that the Council had provided financial support to the following sports clubs through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve their club facilities:

- Barkston and Syston Cricket Club - £4,000
- Barkston and Syston Playing Field - £6,000
- Fulbeck Sport and Social Club - £4,910
- Grantham Squash and Fitness Club - £35,000
- Uffington Cricket Club - £8,000
- Harrowby United FC - £65,000
- The Rippingale Jubilee Playing Field Trust - £20,000

Through the Council's leisure provider, LeisureSK Limited, there were 50 affiliated clubs which have regular bookings at the centres across the district, covering Netball to Marshall Arts.

Furthermore, the Council worked closely with organisations such as Positive Futures, Inspire+, and Active Lincolnshire to promote initiatives with the aim of increasing the physical activity of levels of younger people through sport and

activity opportunities. Such initiatives were regularly promoted by the Council's website and social media platforms.

In addition to these organisations, the Council had been engaging with the following national governing bodies:

- Swim England
- England Athletics
- England Netball
- Lawn Tennis Association
- Football Association (Lincolnshire's Regional Body)
- Sport England

Confirmation was given that planning was underway to deliver a range of health and wellbeing events across Bourne, Stamford, Grantham and The Deepings in the following 12 months to promote and signpost services which could improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

During discussions, Members commented on the following:

- The impact of 'peppercorn rents' as an indirect form of support. The Assistant Director (Leisure, Culture and Place) confirmed that these arrangements would not be classed as a direct subsidy as the organisations were responsible for maintenance and costs.
- Whether there was scope to increase the amount of sports clubs regularly making bookings with the Council facilities. The Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team Leader noted that 50 clubs was a positive amount and some facilities, such as Bourne, were regularly at full capacity of bookings.
- It was queried whether there was a directory of all sports clubs across the district. It was confirmed that no such directory was published but attention was drawn to the activity finder on the Council's website which was managed by Active Lincolnshire.
- The suggestion was made to invite Chairman and volunteers of all sports clubs across the district to an open forum to workshop how SKDC could best offer support.
- Clarification was sought whether central government could be urged to make sport and leisure statutory services considering the positive physical and mental health benefits. It was confirmed that such representations were being made to central government.
- Attention was drawn to the work of the Dysart Park Family Day.

The Support for Sports Clubs across South Kesteven report was noted by the Committee.

70. Arts and Culture - Venue Updates

The Arts and Culture - Venue Updates report was presented by the Deputy Leader.

The report gave an overview of venue performance outlining comparative performance figures for financial years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, with overall ticket profits for 2024-25 peaking at £68,318 in the Stamford Cinema and Event Cinema Programme.

In addition to the regular joint programming opportunities facilitated between the Guildhall and Stamford, trial opportunities had also been facilitated for performances such as 'Nature Elly' by Barmpt Theatre or the 'Museum of Marvellous Things'.

With this in mind, the report outlined the key role of marketing. Regarding social media posts, a key change being the recent focus on interaction related posts rather than direct ticket sales posts as this had been found to gain higher levels of engagement.

An update was given on the Bourne Corn Exchange noting that the main hall was particularly popular with numerous bookings coming off the back of other events with many acts returning on an annual basis.

As a result of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), accessibility improvements had been made to the cinema at the Stamford Arts Centre, including the installation of Audio Description Equipment and 'Watch Word' Systems. Stamford Arts Centre was only the 10th venue worldwide to have installed Watchword, improving accessibility for audience members that were deaf or hard of hearing.

Stamford Arts Centre cinema sales had improved due to improved programming and marketing. Working with the Independent Cinema Office (ICO) had enabled films to be shown in week 3 of release rather than weeks 5 or 6 as in previous years.

The Guildhall Arts Centre Pantomime had several shows for individuals with access needs. The relaxed performance was specifically sensitive to audience members who may benefit from a more relaxed environment, including (but not limited to) those with autistic spectrum conditions, people living with dementia, parents with very young children on their first trip to the theatre, anyone with sensory and communication disorders, or people with learning disabilities. As part of the extensive run of shows, there was also a British Sign Language interpreted performance scheduled yearly.

During discussions, members commented on the following:

Councillor Morgan declared an interest that her daughter had been involved in the Grantham Dramatic Society.

- Praise was given for the improvements made across the service, particularly regarding the significant increases in ticket sales.
- With this in mind, clarification was sought to the next goals pursued by officers.

- The suggestion was made that the existence of the theatre in Grantham needed to be further publicised.
- A further request was made to engage with arts and drama classes through schooling and facilitate and signpost extra art and drama opportunities. It was noted that the 'Evolve Project' had previously been held between Stamford and Grantham in collaboration with Lincolnshire One Venues but the funding had expired. The Arts and Culture Services Manager agreed to look at similar initiatives.

The Arts and Culture – Venue Updates report was noted by the Committee.

71. Discussion on report from the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 May 2025

The Leader of the Council provided sight of the Grantham Town Centre Events report that had previously been presented to the Finance Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to it being funded by the Future High Street Fund.

The report outlined different events scheduled for the Town throughout the year, up until November 2025.

The events programme was endorsed by the Finance Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and approved by Cabinet in January 2025.

Concern was raised over the Friday 'Whale event' where school visits would take place and it was noted that school children would not bring economy to the local businesses. It was suggested that the location of the Whale would have been preferred in a park for the Friday.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place clarified the Council were following the successful pattern at the Whale events in Bourne, Stamford and Deepings in having Friday for school visits. The Whale itself does attract visitors, and this was seen in the other three Towns.

The £10,500 of UKSPF money was originally for two events in Grantham and Deepings. However, following discussion at the UKSPF Board, they requested Officer's explore delivery of the event in the other two Towns.

The Future High Street Board requested the event be held in Marketplace and therefore the event was removed from the UKSPF funding and was being funded by The Future High Street Fund instead.

The final cost for the Whale event was approximately £5,700 and the cost for the event in Grantham would be similar, however, the uplift would occur due to road closures, staff and security.

A query was raised on whether the £10,500 of UKSPF money was increased to ensure the Whale event could take place in Bourne, Deepings and Stamford.

It was confirmed the £10,500 of UKSPF money was increased in order for the third performance to take place and was captured in a further Officer Delegated Decision.

One Member provided feedback received from location businesses, they were pleased not all events were due to take place on a Saturday.

It was queried what the current plans for Lincolnshire Day celebrations were, as unfortunately, Lincolnshire Day celebrations in 2024 were impacted by adverse weather conditions.

The Lincolnshire Day celebration in 2025 would coincide with the Saturday market with food and drink available. It was hoped the celebrations would be more successful this year.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure shared that Lincolnshire Day events held in St Wulfram's Church, Grantham last year had a higher uptake, due to adverse weather conditions.

It was questioned whether other Towns would be celebrating Lincolnshire Day.

The Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Place noted that these types of events should be organised at a Town or Parish Council level.

Concern was raised of the Council's small budget for Lincolnshire Day celebrations and whether the farming community could become involved in the future.

One Member suggested an event be held in the marketplace for Diwali and requested whether a small event could be organised by the Council to celebrate the cultural side of Grantham.

The Leader of the Council had already offered a modest budget for an event for Diwali. However, if any further funding was required, the community would have to raise funds.

One Member noted that many other faiths, religions and communities resided in the District and the Council should be wary of holding events for one type of community.

It was noted that the Earlesfield Community Centre was previously offered to the Nepalese and Indian communities for celebrations, however, the two communities could not agree to work together.

Concern was raised that there were no events scheduled relating Isaac Newton and science.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place clarified that the programme of events in the marketplace was for events funded by the Future High Streets Fund

and did not cover the wider events discussed e.g. Margaret Thatcher and Isaac Newton. A similar approach would be taken on the Newton anniversary, where stakeholders would be sought to form a joint approach to promoting events and celebrations in 2027 relating to Newton.

It was queried whether there was any scope to restore Grantham Carnival.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that events such as the Grantham Carnival were organised and ran by volunteers and community groups. It was suggested that the Town or Parish Council collate a cost proposal for a Carnival, the Council would see if they could assist with funding in any way.

One Member stated that Grantham Carnival abolished due to the cost of insurance which was around £7,500-£13,000.

72. Work Programme 2024-25

The Committee noted the Work Programme 2024-25.

Concern was raised that an Extraordinary meeting to discuss a gym refurbishment had previously been cancelled, the status of that discussion was requested.

A query was raised on when the Committee would agree the KPI's for Leisure SK Ltd new model agency.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place confirmed a changeover of Directors on the LeisureSK Ltd Board. A report was due to be heard by Governance and Audit in June 2025, to appoint another Director. LeisureSK Ltd had requested a period of time to reevaluate the gym refurbishment proposal once a new Director had been appointed.

A stringent contract between the Council and LeisureSK Ltd had been put into place which outlined contract requirements and a leisure specification to detail the level of service expected of them. This included a suite of KPI's.

It was queried whether the Committee had the ability to review the structure of management for LeisureSK Ltd.

It was confirmed that Grantham Town Football Club had a new Chairman. The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place had met with the new Chairman, and he discussed ideas on ways to develop the club. It was felt that July 2025 seemed too early to request the new Chairman of GTFC to attend the Committee for questions. The new Chairman had promised to submit a full business plan prior to lease negotiations taking place.

One Member suggested whether an item could be brought to the July meeting where arts and sports coaching professionals be invited to the Committee to

understand how the Council can help encourage and support more children to be more actively involved in art.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that it was not the role of the Committee to comment on the management and structures of LeisureSK Ltd as a business. This was a role of the Board Directors.

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

Councillor Bailey raised two health and safety concerns which had been raised in Wyndham Park:

1. A large tree had fallen unexpectedly on a warm, calm day across a path. This incident could have caused serious injury.

The Tree Officer had investigated the cause which related to potentially poor root stock. It was queried whether any visual deterioration would have been noticed on the tree.

The Council's Tree Policy stated that 'a tree inspection routine of every 3 years'. The tree in question was scheduled to be inspected in October 2025. A concern was raised on whether a 3-year period was too long and whether any deterioration would have been spotted.

A proposal was put forward to reduce the tree inspection period to every 18 months in the Council's parks.

The Chairman clarified this matter would fall under the remit of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Assistant Director of Leisure, Culture and Place confirmed Officers had been in correspondence with Cllr Bailey on this matter.

2. Concern was raised around a volunteer breaking their arm at the May Day event in Wyndham Park.

It was believed that a RIDDOR should be submitted, confirmation was sought on whether this had been done. Councillor Bailey stated the area was an unsafe trip hazard. It was requested that immediate action takes place to ensure safety of visitors.

A proposal was put forward that a full report on this incident be brought to the Committee at the next meeting, and include lessons learnt and plans for future incidents.

Councillor Bailey thanked works that the park volunteers undertaken and wished this particular volunteer a speedy recovery.

The Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Place confirmed there was an ongoing investigation of this incident. All accidents and incidents were considered by the Health and Safety Lead, where an assessment had been applied on whether a RIDDOR be submitted and in this case it wasn't.

Once the investigation was concluded on the matter, information would be shared.

It was queried whether the Council had plans or ways to promote children's summer holiday activities.

At present, the Council only promoted their own activities and could only signpost for other organisations.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Place suggested the project of promoting children's summer holiday activities could be overseen by Parish/Town Councils.

One Member highlighted that the promotion of 'Activity Finder' could be an option.

74. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:58.