

Minutes

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 October 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 Emma Baker
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Chris Noon
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Tim Harrison

Cabinet Members present

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

Officers

David Scott (Assistant Director of Finance, Deputy S151 Officer)
Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place)
James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)
Michael Chester (Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces)
Beth Goodman (Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead)
Luke Ingham (Senior Parks and Cemetery Officer)
Amy Pryde (Democratic Services Officer)

17. Public Speaking

Sam Roddan, Founder & CEO of Art Pop-Up statement in relation to Cultural Strategy (6 monthly update)

'Chair, councillors, officers, and members of the public, thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm Sam Roddan, representing Art Pop-Up, a South Kesteven-based non-profit community arts organisation

that has been delivering high-quality, inclusive cultural programmes across the district for more than 14 years.

With regard to the update on the cultural strategy delivery submitted for today's meeting, we strongly welcome the Council's ambition to strengthen arts and culture through increased community engagement.

The objectives outlined - expanding access, supporting underserved communities and building partnerships - align closely with the work Art Pop-Up has been leading since 2011.

Before and through the pandemic we enjoyed a really positive working relationship with the SKDC arts team, collaborating on several projects. We would very much like to rebuild that partnership. There is clear potential for shared learning, joint delivery and strategic collaboration so that resources can reach further, particularly in communities experiencing barriers or with limited access to cultural activity.

Art Pop-Up is the only publicly funded non-profit community arts organisation in the district. Our work is multi-award-winning, including amongst others two SKDC awards, and despite our micro size we have been selected by the renowned international Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation as one of the UK's top ten arts organisations for civic impact.

Since 2011, we have delivered over 50 major community engagement projects, valued at nearly £1m in total, involving over 150,000 local participants, commissioning more than 200 freelance creative practitioners, and collaborating with 40+ local partners and organisations. Each year we deliver over 230 sessions and 5 major events, all free to access. Our work has spanned festivals, outdoor arts, exhibitions, community and public art, families, children and youth engagement, radically inclusive outreach and wellbeing programmes.

Our reach is strongest in Stamford and surrounding villages, but also extends to Bourne and the Deepings with some previous projects in Grantham, always shaped by local needs. For example, we lead the NHS ICB-funded Creativity for Wellbeing programme and the Cheer Club outreach programme, improving mental health, reducing isolation and building community connections in partnership with MindSpace, health colleagues, local care homes, schools, churches foodbanks and other VCFSE partners. These relationships ensure our work is inclusive, strategically co-created and reaches those who are least represented in cultural life.

This winter, Art Pop-Up is transitioning to charity status, a key step in our long-term sustainability plan to grow, expand delivery and deepen partnerships. However, this is happening in a tightening funding landscape alongside local government reorganisation, which makes collaboration and shared planning all the more important.

The Council's own Corporate Plan highlights the value of partnership working. We met previously with Paul Stokes and Jade Porter in June 2024 as an introduction and whilst we appreciate capacity is limited, that's exactly where collaboration can help. Art Pop-Up has the expertise, local trust, and framework to complement SKDC's focus on venues. In fact, the goals of the proposed Events Officer role closely mirror the work we already deliver in the district—inclusive, community-focused, partnership-based cultural engagement. By working together, we could achieve these outcomes more effectively and sustainably, directing budget to delivery on the ground and making best use of existing expertise. In the past we even co-hosted the cultural working group with SKDC and the Town Council, we would welcome the opportunity to re-establish an embedded partnership that supports shared cultural aims.

In short, Art Pop-Up already delivers many of the outcomes the Council seeks—high-quality, inclusive, community-focused engagement in line with the Cultural Strategy and Corporate Plan. We would welcome the chance to collaborate with the Council in shaping and strengthening cultural delivery across the district, drawing on our proven expertise, networks and trusted relationships within local communities.

Thank you.'

18. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phillip Knowles and James Denniston.

Councillor Tim Harrison substituted for Councillor James Denniston.

19. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

20. Minutes from the meeting held on 15 July 2025

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

21. Minutes from the Extraordinary meeting held on 28 August 2025

Minutes from the Extraordinary meeting held on 28 August 2025 were proposed, seconded and **AGREED** as an accurate record.

22. Updates from the previous meeting

All actions were completed.

23. 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 on 'Thatcher Fest', which included news coverage, school engagement, theatre productions, music events and art exhibitions.

The Deputy Leader of the Council acknowledged a Diwali event that had taken place in Grantham marketplace and was very successful. Alongside 47 stalls from the ordinary market with the inclusion of craft stalls. Staff, groups involved, and Ward Members were thanked for their efforts and hard work for the event.

24. Play Area Strategy Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report on the play area strategy action plan, which had previously been endorsed by the Committee in September 2024.

The provision of high quality play areas supports the Council's corporate ambitions and provides opportunities for improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities, particularly in relation to children and young people.

Over the past year, significant work had been undertaken by Officers to ensure that the actions within the plan have been completed through available budgets and additional grant funding.

A total of 15 actions were completed in full, with 3 actions in progress or ongoing. Some of the completed improvements were presented within appendix 2 of the report.

Further work had since been undertaken to review the findings of the play equipment inspections and these had aided a revised action plan in appendix 3 of the report.

One Member commended the work completed on a play area in Bourne and thanked all Officers involved.

It was queried whether accessible equipment and paths would be explored for particular play areas.

The Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces confirmed accessibility and inclusive equipment was explored prior to play area refurbishments

In relation to Bourne play area, the Council had a lease for the play area part, however, the surrounding grassed area was the responsibility of Bourne United Charities. The accessibility of the path would be discussed with them.

One Member highlighted that Denton play area was due to open on 8 December 2025 and was fully funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Committee:

1. Noted the significant work undertaken over the past 12 months in delivering the Action Plan and the improvements made to the Council's play areas.

2. Agreed to receive a further update detailing the progress made against the actions identified in 12 months' time.

25. Grantham Parks Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report that provided members with information relating to each of the three main parks, Wyndham, Queen Elizabeth and Dysart.

Each park offered something different to communities and visitors to the town whilst championing the District in being clean, green and a healthy environment for future generations, as well as providing multiple benefits for residents' health and wellbeing.

In July 2025, the Council was notified that each of the three parks successfully retained their accredited Green Flag Awards, which recognised well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world.

There had been a variety of events held across each of the parks during the current calendar year by the Council, charities and voluntary groups.

In addition, there are a range of regular activities taking place, free of charge at the Wyndham Park Visitor Centre, overseen by the Council's own group of volunteers.

Following consultation with local residents and stakeholders for each of the parks, there had been several improvements made to both Wyndham and Dysart parks, which could be seen in part D of the report.

Since the opening of the dog exercise paddock and wildflower meadow in July 2025, an application had been made to the 'Green Flag Best of the Best' award 2025 in recognition of the project.

The Council recognised the outstanding work of volunteers that provide their time and expertise within the parks. On 19 August 2025, the Council hosted a celebratory afternoon tea in Wyndham Park which recognised all the hard work and efforts of volunteers and Officers involved in maintaining the parks.

It was noted that the report stated Dysart Park being the 'forgotten' park out of the three. It was argued that Queen Elizabeth Park was forgotten and over the last five years had received very little funding and events. It was requested whether enhancements and funding opportunities could be explored for Queen Elizabeth Park.

The Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces confirmed the team would explore event options for Queen Elizabeth Park.

One Member noted that Dysart Park had lost a lot of amenities over the years (swimming pool, cricket fields and bowling greens).

Members recognised the hard work and efforts ongoing in the parks, particularly in keeping them well maintained and more welcoming for the community.

A query was raised on whether a long term strategy vision for the parks had been produced.

Officers had produced a park management and maintenance plan that covered a five-year period and was updated and reviewed on an annual basis.

ACTION: For the park management and maintenance plan to be shared with the Committee.

The Committee noted the contents of the report

26. Cultural Strategy 6 monthly Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report that provided a six-monthly update on the implementation of South Kesteven's Cultural Strategy 2023-25.

Since its adoption in July 2023, the strategy continued to guide the Council's work in delivering high quality cultural opportunities and strengthening community engagement across the District.

The update highlighted progress which included the continued success of the 'Pay it Forward' scheme, which had raised over £13,000 to expand access to arts and cultural experiences for those who may otherwise face barriers.

It also reflected the breadth of outreach activity delivered during 2025 from rural touring, free family fun days and music in quiet places.

The report further outlined developments in marketing, the growing reach of the venues and innovative partnership approaches, such as the collaborative approach towards 'Thatcher Fest'.

The report provided updates on major cultural programming improvements, facilities and a new event officer role. It demonstrated the Council's ongoing commitment in

supporting inclusive, accessible and sustainable cultural services that enrich local communities.

One Member noted the 'Into Film Festival' was free for schools to access. A query was raised on how this information was being passed onto schools.

ACTION: For the Arts and Cultural Services Manager to provide the Committee with information on how information on the 'Into Film Festival' is passed onto schools.

It was discussed how the Council could promote the strategy within smaller rural areas.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place outlined the rural touring scheme which provided high quality events in rural areas. A budget bid was being put forward for resources to deliver events across the District.

The Committee thanked all Officers involved in improving arts and cultural services.

It was noted that Stamford Arts Centre had an increase of 20% per year on ticket sales. However, the Guildhall Arts Centre had dropped 4% on ticket sales over the year, Members queried the reasoning behind the decrease.

The Council provide an artistic programme for the Guildhall Arts Centre and were also reliant on community hires. The programming officer employed at the Council that focused on Stamford and Grantham arts centres. The decrease in ticket sales was due to the number of events being held having been reduced.

The Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Noted the information provided and offered suggestions on any additional information required for future updates in relation to the implementation of the Council's Cultural Strategy.**
- 2. Agreed to receive a report at the next meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 'Thatcher Fest' including the costs incurred.**

27. Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2021 - 2026) – October 2025 Update

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report that provided an update on the progress of the strategy.

To underpin one of its Corporate priorities, the Council was delivering on the sport and physical activity and the action plan which was adopted in 2021.

The Leisure team was responsible for targeting key areas and working with partners to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to live healthily and have active lifestyles.

The information within the report detailed the activities that had taken place since April 2025, including physical activity initiatives for Council employees.

The current strategy was dated 2021-26 and was therefore due to be reviewed.

The report detailed the steps being taken to refresh the strategy. Additionally, planning, preparations and promotion was well underway for Health and Wellness Day being held on Saturday 1 November 2025 at Grantham Meres leisure centre.

The event would give residents the opportunity to discover local organisations that support health, movement and wellbeing.

The events poster would be circulated to all Members.

Clarification was sought around the graph within the report showing that residents were active for 150 minutes a week, however, this had reduced by 5%. There had been a 5% increase in people that were inactive less than 30 minutes a week.

The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead clarified the 5% decrease in the active levels (150 minutes a week), but an increase in 'fairly active' (hitting 30-49 minutes a week). There was no suggested evidence to support the graph, however, this would be monitored in liaison with Active Lincolnshire.

A query was raised on whether the data included further context, such as disabled residents, rural communities and older demographic.

In 2024, the format of the survey was refreshed to incorporate disabled adults for reporting. Going forward, information on disabled adults could be pulled together from Active Lincolnshire and be included within the graph, alongside information on age friendly communities.

At present, Active Lincolnshire had a universal place offer through Sport England. £500,000 worth of funding would be shared between 4 districts and further information was being sought.

ACTION: For the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead to provide the Committee with information on disabled adults within the strategy.

One Member suggested whether the Council could encourage more volunteers for clubs by incorporating the need for volunteers. The importance of having volunteers was discussed.

Clarification was sought around the definition of activity and how it was measured, alongside how the activity of children and young people was measured.

A query was raised how the Council could engage and interact with the least active groups.

Activity levels were classed as 'vigorous exercise'. 75 minutes of vigorous activity equated to 150 minutes of moderate activity. Moderate meant when heart rate was slightly increased and elevated.

Information provided by Active Lives on children and young people was commissioned from Sport England and was informative and accurate.

It was confirmed that the 'least active' would be targeted through the universal place offer from Active Lincolnshire and Sport England when the funding became available.

The Council also work with Lincolnshire County Council who undertake work around targeting deprived areas through Positive Futures.

It was hoped an event being held on 1 November 2025 would encourage sporting groups and stakeholders to become involved.

The Deputy Leader of the Council commended all the hard work and commitment received from volunteers across the District, who do not get paid for their work.

Members requested letters be sent to all volunteers in order to recognise and thank them for their work.

The Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Noted the progress and delivery of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for South Kesteven.**
- 2. Considered the results of the latest Active Lives data available for South Kesteven.**
- 3. Noted the progress and steps to refresh the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.**
- 4. Suggested enhancements to the extent and clarity of the information produced for the next six-monthly report.**

28. LeisureSK Ltd Performance Report

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which provided an update on the contractual performance of Leisure SK Ltd during Q1 of the current financial year.

The performance requirements against the leisure management contract objectives were set out in the new agency agreement which commenced in April 2025.

In developing the suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Council's leisure contract, Officers undertook research with other local authorities across the Country and through the Association of Public Service Excellence to ensure they reflected current trends in the market as well as being fit for purpose for the Council.

Some of the KPIs had changed from the previous leisure management contract, which ended in March 2025. Therefore the data for Q1 shown in the appendix would form baseline data from which the future performance of the company would be measured against. It was not a measure of how the company was performing against each individual KPI currently.

Officers would continue to undertake regular monitoring visits to each of the centres and the sports stadium, raising any issues requiring rectification with the centre management team.

However, should the Council be responsible for the rectification, as per terms of the contract, this would be reported internally to the appropriate service area.

One Member raised a health and safety concern at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre where fire escape doors had been secured with chairs.

It was confirmed the fire doors were not faulty and the chairs had been placed there to stop a rattling noise from the wind.

It was queried how maintenance and cleanliness problems were logged on an immediate basis. The Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team Leader confirmed that timescales had been agreed with staff for rectification of any maintenance issues and any issues that would exceed these timescale are monitored between the Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team and the LeisureSK Ltd Board. This is done in conjunction with SKDC's internal processes for logging and rectifying maintenance issues.

The request was also made for overshoes to be provided to prevent mud from being paddled into the changing rooms. It was confirmed that a discussion could be had with LeisureSK Ltd on this matter, but the Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team Leader did note the poor quality and detrimental environmental impact of the overshoes. The suggestion was made to remove excess mud from outdoor areas around the building.

It was agreed for a report on the findings of the maintenance surveys which was due to be considered by the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.

Within appendix one of the report, it was noted that throughout the leisure centres, Grantham had the highest figures as this included footfall from events facilitated by the centre, in addition to gym users.

The suggestion was made for health and safety monitoring and maintenance monitoring to be included in subsequent KPI reports. The Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces Team Leader agreed to take this forward and provide context within the report but these would form part of the monitoring KPI's which had been agreed between the Council and LeisureSK Ltd. .

The Committee noted the contents of the report

The Assistant Director of Leisure, Culture & Place commended the Leisure, Parks, and Open Spaces and Arts and Cultural Services Teams for their work and the quality of the reports produced.

29. Grantham Town Football Club Lease (Verbal Update)

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure, and Place provided a verbal update, outlining that there had been an increase in tickets sold for matches and other activities. Also, SKDC were in the final stages of agreeing heads of terms with Grantham Town FC and hoped to shortly instruct solicitors. The Assistant Director also noted their confidence in the financial footing of Grantham Town FC prior to entering a new lease agreement.

It was also noted that Grantham Town FC had been attempting to extend their community reach by engaging with local schools, care homes and the Armed Forces community.

Confirmation was given that work was being done towards the establishment of a women's team for Grantham Town FC.

From an SKDC perspective, it was confirmed that final agreement of the lease was a delegated power to the Section 151 Officer.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure, and Place informed Members that they were working on the basis that there would be an agreement negotiated into the proposed lease for an SKDC representative to sit on the Grantham Town FC board. Whilst the individual may not have any voting rights, it would give SKDC greater oversight.

30. Work Programme 2025/26

It was agreed for a ThatcherFest evaluation report to be added to the Work Programme.

The suggestion was made for a joint site visit between the Culture and Leisure and the Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) to visit the district's leisure centres to scope potential improvements. The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure, and Place agreed to discuss this with colleagues.

The suggestion was made for Grantham Town FC representatives to attend a Culture and Leisure OSC following the signing of the lease agreement.

The Assistant Director of Culture, Leisure and Place agreed to identify whether it was possible for both the Culture and Leisure OSC and the Finance and Economic OSC to review the scope for leisure centre improvements from the Maintenance Reserve Budget.

Members noted the Work Programme.

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

Members were urged to utilise the upcoming community awards to recognise hard working volunteers across the district. It was also noted that an outdoor Volunteer celebration was being planned.

32. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11:40am.