

Minutes

**Culture and Leisure Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**
Tuesday, 12 May 2026



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Committee members present

Councillor Murray Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Barry Dobson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Bailey
Councillor James Denniston
Councillor Gareth Knight
Councillor Rhea Rayside
Councillor Tim Harrison

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Paul Stokes (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Richard Cleaver (Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement)

Officers

Karen Whitfield (Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure and Place)
Jade Porter (Arts and Cultural Services Manager)
Michael Chester (Team Leader – Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces)
Beth Goodman (Health and Wellbeing Lead)
Lucy Bonshor (Democratic Officer)

LeisureSK Ltd Directors

David Scott
Councillor Philip Knowles

59. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

60. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Emma Baker and Chris Noon who was substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

61. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Denniston indicated that depending upon discussions, he may have to declare an interest if gym refurbishment was discussed in respect of Bourne and Stamford.

The Chairman of the Committee proposed to change the Order of the agenda with the Committee's permission, he proposed that agenda items 9, 10, 11, 12 be dealt with in the following order: 11, 12, 9 and 10.

No objections were received to the proposed change of order.

62. Minutes from the meeting held on 3 February 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 were proposed, seconded and agreed.

63. Updates from the previous meeting

There were currently no updates to be given.

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

The Deputy Leader made two announcements. On behalf of those present in the room and himself, the Deputy Leader thanked the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the work done by the Committee particularly in the last 12 months. The Deputy Leader stated that the Committee had been very constructive and had taken a progressive approach to the issues that the Committee had looked at and he felt that this was in part due to how the Committees had been chaired.

The Deputy Leader stated that at this time the previous year the Committee had congratulated Bourne Town Football Club on their achievements, the Deputy Leader felt that this year Grantham Town Football Club should be congratulated after being promoted after winning in the playoffs and he hoped that representatives from the club would be attending the July meeting of the Committee to give an update.

65. Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

The Deputy Leader presented the report which gave a final update on the delivery of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021-26 and a summary of the achievements up to March 2026.

The Council's Leisure Team had been responsible for implementing the actions identified in the Strategy which targeted key areas, working with partners to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to live healthy, active lifestyles.

The report covered activities that had taken place since September 2025 when the Committee were last updated in respect of actions taken. Activities included physical activity initiatives for council employees, partnership and collaborative working, activities delivered at the leisure facilities and an update on the Active Life Survey data from Sport England which were shown in an infographic.

Appended to the report was a refreshed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2026-31 with work underway to deliver the refreshed strategy which would include a refreshed Action Plan that would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee were asked to note the delivery and achievements of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2021-26 and to note the refreshed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2026-31 which had been adopted. Work was ongoing to develop the Action Plan which accompanied the refreshed document.

One Member asked if there were any measures in place that assessed the actual health improvements of the Strategy. The Health and Wellbeing Lead indicated that data was being measured from Fingertips, public health data sets. Previously only Active Lives data had been taken, with the Fingertips data, this could be broken down and a more in depth look at the data could be reported to the Committee going forward.

Congratulations were given to the Deputy Leader and Councillor Tim Harrison for their work in getting the Grantham Skatepark up and running in Wyndham Park, Grantham. It was noted that the Skatepark was well used and the Member felt that this was a sign to residents about work that was being undertaken to help improve physical activity and health.

Members noted the report.

66. Cultural Strategy Six Monthly Update

Before presenting the Cultural Strategy six monthly update to the Committee, the Deputy Leader drew Members attention to paragraph 2.22 of the report which highlighted the four concerts in respect of the Music in Quiet Places programme. The report should also have included the concert by Simon Thacker, a composer and classical guitarist which was taking place on 9 July 2026 at St Stephen's Church, Careby.

The Council's Cultural Strategy 2023-26 was the guiding document for the Council's Arts and Culture Team and underpinned the cultural activity within the Council's three artistic venues, outreach activity across the district and how the team engaged with the wider cultural sector.

The report provided a six monthly update on the delivery of the Council's Cultural Strategy and the progress made against the agreed action plan and key performance indicators. The report outlined the programmed activity undertaken within venues and included outreach activity during the period which was wide ranging.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the newly established Events Programme which had been approved at the last Committee meeting and the strong participation in both the Live and Local scheme and the Music in Quiet Places programme. The programme demonstrated the Council's commitment to increasing access to arts and culture across the district. The report also outlined positive trends in audience engagement, marketing reach and partnership working which included the Newton 300 Programme and stakeholder meetings. The next steps in refreshing the Cultural Strategy were outlined in the report ensuring that it remained responsive to the needs and ambitions of the communities in South Kesteven. The recommendation contained in the report was for the Committee to note the report and provide any feedback to inform future updates and the development of the Cultural Strategy.

One Member made reference to the Skatepark Skills event in February half-term which, unfortunately, due to the weather had been cut short and asked if there was scope for future sessions to which the Arts and Cultural Services Manager stated that further skills days had been undertaken in April and extra activities organised with a BMX session planned for September 2026.

Another Member referenced Newton 300 which was a huge opportunity to promote Grantham and the surrounding area. The Assistant Director Culture, Leisure and Place stated that work was ongoing to organise a large stakeholder group to work together to collaborate and make the most of the opportunities presented by Newton 300. A further piece of work was being done much like with the Thatcherfest events, with cross marketing to make sure clashes didn't occur and that events complimented each other.

The Arts and Cultural Manager then spoke to the Committee in relation to the Architects of Air event, which was planned as part of the Newton 300 commemorations. The Luminarium was made in Nottingham and linked really well with Newton. The Installation had travelled all over the world and was a very sensory event with natural light. The Luminarium would be in Wyndham Park for nine days and would be open for nine hours a day and she urged Members to go on line and watch videos so that they could get a sense of what it was about. The event was confirmed as taking place in the Easter Half-Term in 2027.

Members noted the report.

67. Council Investment Plan Update

The Deputy Leader presented the report which was the same report that had been presented to the recent Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 May 2026.

The report updated the Committee on Phase 1 of the Leisure Improvements Programme and followed on from the report presented to the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 November 2025 when the funding allocation criteria had been agreed.

The scope of works had been put together by Officers, consultants and with the help of Welland Procurement to procure the works through an open tender process. Nine formal submissions were received and following evaluation Northdown Property Services were identified as the preferred contractor. At the meeting on 5 May 2026 the Cabinet approved the award of the contract to Northdown Property Services.

Northdown Property Servicers were a leading property refurbishment and property maintenance company based in Peterborough and had experience of delivering similar projects with members of the team having differing trades. The total contract value (£321,222) had come in significantly under that budgeted (£500,000) and due diligence checks had been undertaken by Officers in respect of the costs contained in the tender with most savings being seen at Grantham Meres Leisure Centre. The pricing difference (£162,778) would be carried over to Phase 2 of the programme to allow for a greater scope of works to be carried out.

It was noted that there was the opportunity to vary works slightly if the chance arose whilst works were being carried out and a delegation had been put in place for the Section 151 Officer to utilise some of the savings if necessary. Work was on going with the consultants to identify the scope of the works for Phase 2 of the programme which would be procured with the Welland Procurement Team.

The Deputy Leader reminded the Committee that refurbishment works had been discussed for two years by the Committee. It was noted that during the refurbishment works there would be “a little pain” and that meant that the Grantham Meres Leisure Pool would have to be closed for a period of time. Work at Bourne and Stamford Leisure Pools could be completed without the need for pool closures, however this was unavoidable at Grantham.

Opportunities had been looked at to overcome this but unfortunately this had not been possible. Close working was being carried out with LeisureSK Ltd to keep the closure to an absolute minimum, but a closure of the pool would have to take place at the most convenient time to LeisureSK Ltd which was likely to be after the swim school programme had closed for the summer.

The Team Leader Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces informed the Committee that meetings had recently taken place with the contractor to finalise options and to see about keeping the Meres Leisure Pool open, but it was looking increasingly likely that the pool would have to close for a period of time due to health and safety issues whilst the refurbishment work was being undertaken.

One Member made reference to the previous meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee where keeping the pools open had been discussed and he thanked the Deputy Leader for looking at whether this could be done and that they had looked to minimise closure where possible.

A further Member asked for more clarity around the health and safety issues and why the pool could not be kept open during the refurbishment works with various options being put forward, to which the Team Leader Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces responded.

A question in respect of the proposed refurbishment works at the Grantham Stadium was requested to which the Team Leader Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces responded. The works included improvements to the home and away changing areas, the main stand, ceiling replacements, new grids, improvement to shower areas, internal decorations, lighting replacements, ironmongery, new furniture and deep cleaning to the changing rooms. In Annex B the outside toilets would be refurbished in both the north and south stands and the main flooring in the corridor.

A further question was asked in respect of investment and challenges at the Stadium and the Chairman stated that lease discussions were still on going. A further comment was made in respect of the proposed pool closures making sure those with memberships are aware of this and it was stated that officers were liaising with LeisureSK Ltd and financial implications had been taken into account.

The Committee noted the report.

68. Work Programme 2025/26

One Member asked if the Grantham Canal Partnership could be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to give a short presentation. It was stated that Members needed to be clear with regard to the remit of the Committee. The Physical Activity and Wellbeing Lead informed the Committee that work was being carried out with the Canal Society and the Grantham Canal Partnership in respect of an event taking place on 6 June 2026.

One Member asked if it would be possible to have an update in respect of what was happening with regard to the Deepings Leisure Centre to which the Deputy Leader indicated that he would speak to the Leader to see when a proper update could come before the Committee.

69. LeisureSK Ltd Performance Report - Quarter's 3 and 4 2025/26

The Deputy Leader presented the report which provided the Committee with an update on the financial performance of LeisureSK Ltd for the period quarter 3 and quarter 4 2025/26. The performance requirements were as set in the Leisure Management contract objectives as per the new agency agreement which commenced in April 2025.

It was noted that some of the KPI's had changed from the previous Leisure Management contract. The data collected during year 1 would be used as baseline data going forward, as shown in Appendix 1 to the report, and would be used to assess the performance of LeisureSK Ltd going forward. Officers continued to undertake regular monitoring visits of each of the leisure centres and the sports stadium raising any issues requiring rectification whether this was the responsibility of LeisureSK Ltd Management Team or for the Council to rectify. The report was for noting.

One Member made reference to the NPS score and what was being done to accurately collect customer experience feedback at the leisure centres regularly rather than once a year.

The Team Leader Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces stated that as part of the wider contract with LeisureSK Ltd they had recently appointed a new Business Development and Customer Experience Manager and part of their role was to look at the customer journey and how they can improve this such as having a Customer Charter in place.

One of the Directors of LeisureSK Ltd confirmed this to the Committee and stated that he would feedback the Members request to the next Board meeting. Data and information was collated from different sources including Councillors, especially if something was not going right and the Board would look at how this could be addressed going forward and get on the "front foot" which the new Manager role would help with.

A further question was asked about the repayment terms of the loans, the length of repayment to which the Director of LeisureSK Ltd responded that the terms were seven years. In respect of Bourne the time was 2027 and Grantham was 2032.

70. LeisureSK Ltd Finance Update

The Chairman reminded the Committee that if there were questions in respect of the exempt papers attached to the report then the meeting would need to go in to private session to discuss them due their commercial sensitivity.

The Director of LeisureSK Ltd gave an overview to the Committee of the provisional financial year end 2025/26 for LeisureSK Ltd, the final Outturn Position report would come before the Committee in July 2026.

Costs projected from February forward showed an operating surplus of £136,000 which was an additional £65,000 over the surplus that had originally been budgeted for. A lot of the surplus was from income generated from events at Grantham. Challenges were around membership numbers at some of the sites and an increase was being felt with numbers slowly increasing. Savings had also been had from utilities; with a warm summer helping keep the pools warm and the Net Zero Pod would help with this going forward.

The LSK Business Plan for 2026/27 had showed at surplus of £184,000 when it was approved in December 2025 for the current financial year, which included the repayments on the loans previously mentioned by a Member of the Committee.

The Capital Programme contained money for improvements at Stamford around the gym area and work was on going looking at options for the best use of this space due to the challenges being encountered at Stamford due to other competition within the town.

The report showed a positive position with LeisureSK Ltd going forward and the Director appreciated the positive comments made by Members in respect of that.

The Chairman commented on the improvement of LeisureSK Ltd under the Directorship of Mr Scott and Councillor Knowles and the Teams guidance.

The other LeisureSK Ltd Director present, Councillor Philip Knowles asked if, rather than have the same reports go to two separate Committees whether a joint meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be arranged. He appreciated that in the past there were concerns with how LeisureSK Ltd was performing but felt that time had now passed. The Chairman of the Committee acknowledged the comments made and indicated that this would be looked at going forward.

A Member asked what the Director of LeisureSK Ltd considered the biggest risks at the moment and whether Bourne was sustainable due to the nature of the building.

The Director of LeisureSK Ltd stated that one of the biggest issues was the up keep of the sites and working closely with Officers from the Council was a key area to ensure the sites remained health and safety compliant. Income stability was another area with reference being made to the investment in gym equipment previously at the Bourne site which unlike Stamford did not have the competition challenges. Having the right staff resources was another important

area within the organisation there were key people and it was important that resilience was there within the staff resource at all the sites. Due to the current climate fuel was also a risk at the present time.

A comment was made in respect of the meetings being held jointly also a question was raised about staffing costs to which the Director of LeisureSK Ltd responded.

A question was asked around membership sales and it was stated that due to the commercial sensitivity of the information this would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.

➤ **Action**

Membership numbers to be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.

Various comments were made in respect of the Stamford site and the size of the gym, the Assistant Director Leisure, Culture and Place stated that extending the site had been looked at as an option, however it was not progressed due to the cost and investment that would be involved.

Members noted the report.

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

The Deputy Leader made reference to the following events congratulating those who were involved in the events not all of which were provided by the Council:

Deepings Literacy Festival
Bourne Outdoor Swimming Pool
Craft market held at Bourne Leisure Centre every third Sunday
Stamford Friday Market
Car Show to be held in Wyndham Park, Grantham 16 May 2026
Music in Quiet Places concerts

The LeisureSK Ltd Director confirmed membership numbers in respect of Grantham Meres Leisure Centre which had seen a steady increase following a request made earlier in the meeting.

72. Close of meeting

The meeting was closed at 3:12pm.