



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 14th December 2023

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL 23rd November 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Brookes (in the Chair)
Councillors Cairns, Henderson, Hudson, Mickleburgh, Morland, Parkinson and Westcott

Officers in attendance:

- Nick Browning (Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director – Regeneration)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Joanne Robinson (Assistant Director – Policy, Strategy and Resources)
- Guy Lonsdale (Assistant Director - Finance)
- Helen Thompson (Strategic Lead for Tourism)
- James Trowsdale (Strategic Lead for Culture)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Dawkins (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy)

There was one member of the public in attendance.

SPTVE.29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology of absence was received from Councillor Cairns for this meeting.

SPTVE.30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

SPTVE.31 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 5th October 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

SPTVE.32 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPTVE.33 FORWARD PLAN

The panel considered the current Forward Plan and were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure. Mrs O'Brien noted that a cabinet report on the Cleethorpes Levelling Up Fund, Sea Road, Strategic Lease agreement was due to be considered by Cabinet in January 2024. Mr Jaines-White explained that he believed that would be slipped to March Cabinet meeting to allow for it to find its natural course to Scrutiny first.

RESOLVED - That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPTVE.34 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive tracking the recommendations of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel. The panel deliberated the options for SPTVE.8 on Elected Members visiting Lincs Inspire. Members wanted the opportunity to visit the setting unannounced so they could witness the service that takes place day to day. Members asked Officers to inform Lincs Inspire of their views.

RESOLVED – That items SPTVE.21 be removed from the tracking report and all other items be noted.

SPTVE.35 QUARTER 2 – COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE REPORT

The panel received a report from the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the Council's position at the end of quarter two.

One Member asked if Officers knew when the Council would be getting settlement figures from the government. Mr Lonsdale stated that the Autumn statement that was just announced was a pre cursor to what to expect, but from that he couldn't see any surprises.

Another Member asked what progress had been made in programming events for the calendar year 2024 and how much revenue did Officers expect that to generate to offset against investments. Mrs Thompson

explained that we proactively market future events within the borough and specifically at the Meridian Showground, to help extend the tourism season, improve dwell time and increase spend in North East Lincolnshire. By encouraging local people and visitors to attend events and stay over, the visitor economy and tourism businesses will benefit from increased spend. Provisional event bookings at the Meridian Showground are looking very positive with 13 events booked to date and we hope to exceed income achieved during 2023. In 2024, with the support of UKSPF, ACE and Heritage Fund Our Future Starts Here will return in May & Edible Grimsby in October. We'll be providing grants for smaller scale creative activities too. We ask event organisers to undertake evaluation of events and their impact including economic impacts. A paper will be brought to TVE Scrutiny in January to present the Annual Events calendar, including all events currently known to taking place in NEL.

One Councillor asked whether Grim Falfest was now an annual event. Mr Trowsdale confirmed that it was not. It was funded through a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to VESR CIC. The Councillor thought it would be a shame to see it just disappear. Mr Jaines-White added that they want to keep engaging with partners to support the consideration of options. Another Member asked that if Grim Falfest was so successful why wouldn't we want to do it. It was highlighted that the event was not delivered by the Council and any investment into projects must be considered within the budgets the Council has. The cost of Grim Falfest each year is greater than the Council tourism, culture and heritage budgets in total, therefore the Council's role has been to support and enable other organisations deliver events.

One Councillor asked if the money for Cleethorpes public arts 23/24 had all gone and what had it been spent on. Mrs Thompson explained that £25k is allocated to be spent this year and £40k had been slipped to the next financial year. It had predominantly been used on the Cleethorpes 'Paint your town' project. It was confirmed that they were lined up to deliver more murals this year and next.

One Councillor stated that Freshney Place had received a lot of investment. They wondered at what point it would become a net benefit to North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC). Mr Lonsdale stated that they were always monitoring the financial position. As it stood it was generating a net income for NELC of £1.3 million. Some of these finances had been used on the redevelopment of Freshney place, but they were receiving a positive net income on an annual basis.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.36 REVIEW OF LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES SERVICE

The panel received a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure on the plan for the review of the Library and Archives Service.

One Member asked what was going to happen with the Grimsby Central Library service when the setting closes for maintenance. Mr Jaines-White stated that the value of the library service was fully understood by Officers and the potential benefits to see continuous service was very much understood. He added that there is a finite amount of money and naturally, any money spent on temporary provision was money that could not be spent on the facility. Ultimately it was an administration decision, but Officers would put choices forward.

A panel member asked the Portfolio Holder if he would like to see some continuous services whilst the Central Library shuts to do improvements to the current building. Councillor Dawkins stated that they were willing to take on board the panels views.

A Councillor explained how the service was there for all and not just the disadvantaged. However, they had concerns that there would be any loss to the library service. He could see an increase in the use of the library service and that meant they needed people to have access. The Elected Member asked if as part of the consultation could areas be extracted and highlighted for certain user groups. They had concerns that it was hard for members of the public to give their own opinions. Mr Browning stated that in terms of the consultation process they would give as much profile and communication as possible.

One Councillor asked if there was any scope to move to a different part of the Central Library building or use an empty unit in Freshney Place. Councillor Dawkins stated that they had looked at the Central Library building and the condition it was currently in, and it was not a fit place to have the service as when works were taken place certain areas would have to be restricted. He confirmed that they would look at several alternative provisions.

A panel member commented on getting feedback from residents that believe we have a narrow frame on the consultation. He hoped Officers would consider what the library services needs to be in the 21st century. They believed the building still needed to be protected as one of our assets, but it was also important to be clear with the public on what was up for grabs. He wondered whether that could be built into the consultation and whether they could test out the scope of consultation with councillors before putting it out there to the community.

One Member commented on how there was less use of the library service after lockdown. If it was to close again, the use would be even less. They believed it was essential to keep open. Mr Jaines-White stated that the

review would engage with residents and the community about what they want a Library Service in the 21st century to look like. The consultation was about bringing it up to date.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.37 HERITAGE PLACE

The panel received a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure on the infrastructure on the Councils status as a Heritage Place and how this has supported several projects across North East Lincolnshire.

One Councillor commented on how this was a brilliant achievement. Looking at the creative strategy and reviewing the update against the councils' objectives, could they propose that the document be amended to include a note of the lasting legacy created by the high level of external investment that the team have successfully brought to the town against the criteria in Heritage Fund's Heritage 2033 Strategy. Mr Trowsdale explained how conversations were commencing on long term ambitions for the area aligned with the strategy which build upon recent successes.

One Councillor asked if Officers thought the Council was adequately protected regarding our heritage assets and satisfied that we would not lose anymore. Mr Jaines-White explained that over the past few years there had been a sharper focus on heritage. The Council had invested directly in its own assets and were now having more engagement with private sector owners.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.38 TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL – WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The panel received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) providing panel members with the opportunity to reflect on the progress of the panel's work programme at the half year stage and provide a formal opportunity for the panel to update its work programme.

Members showed concerns over the Docks Regeneration Strategy, Humberston Fitties and Pleasure Island. Members encouraged Officers to bring more information on these items to a future panel meeting. Mr Jaines-White explained that they were only a third-party organisation when it came to these areas of work. The main updates would have to come from external organisations. He stated that Officers would clarify what obligations the Council has when it comes to these parts of the town to allow Members to understand what the Council can and cannot do.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.39 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions submitted for the portfolio holder at the meeting.

SPTVE.40 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call-in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11.45am.