

PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 1 February 2012
Subject to Call-in (excluding Minutes 62, 67 and 68)
Call-in will expire on Thursday 16 February 2012 at 5.00 pm

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Wednesday 1 February 2012 at 7.00 pm.

Present : Councillor Malcolm Parish (Chairman – In the Chair)
Councillor Gillian Bardsley (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Jeff Summers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Nigel Bowler
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Jessie Milne
Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance :

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| Rachel North | Director of Communities and Localism |
| Chris Allen | Public Protection Services Manager |
| Suzanne Fysh | Regeneration Services Manager |
| Oliver Fytche-Taylor | Business Support and Improvement Team Leader |
| Steve Leary | Recycling Team Leader |
| Ralph Gould | Group Accountant |
| Katie Coughlan | Senior Democratic Officer |

Apologies : Councillor Jackie Brockway
Councillor Ray Sellars

Membership : Councillor Jessie Milne substituting for Councillor
Geoff Wiseman
Councillor Judy Rainsforth for Councillor Ray Sellars

57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

58 MINUTES

Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 4 January 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 4 January 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

59 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT THE CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 25 JANUARY 2012. (PRCC.25 11/12)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 25 January 2012. It was noted that all actions had been completed on target.

RESOLVED that progress on the matters arising schedule, as set out in report PRCC.25 11/12 be noted.

60 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this point in the meeting.

61 NOTICE OF MOTION PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10

At the Meeting of Council on 16 January 2012, the following motion, submitted by Councillor Jeff Summers, was proposed and seconded and in accordance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule No.10 was referred to the Prosperous Communities Committee for consideration:

“Mr. Chairman.

During the eight and a half years I have been a West Lindsey Councillor there have been many changes. As a Council we have evolved into a caring and creative Council. Significant work has been done by Officers and Members, past and present.

As indicated in our corporate plan, our aspirations are still high.

We revel in what we do. We volunteer as Councillors and take responsibility for which we are rewarded through Members' allowance. Outside of this Council but within West Lindsey there are lots of people who give their time free in many instances, helping communities and individuals. They either stand alone or work in groups: Parish Councillors, clerks, carers for the young, elderly and disabled, to name a few.

Mr. Chairman, As part of our Localism Agenda, I believe it is time we recognised these outstanding contributors to our communities and I propose a paper is taken to the Prosperous Communities Committee for members to discuss what criteria and format should be applied to a "West Lindsey Award for outstanding community work", presented at annual council annually.

I so move."

At the invite of the Chairman, Councillor Summers addressed the Committee outlining the intentions of his Motion.

Members indicated their unanimous support thereof and were whole heartedly in agreement that successes and achievements needed to be more widely recognised and celebrated.

Debate ensued during which Members gave consideration to the varying possible formats and criteria which may apply to the award scheme, arising from which, a number of suggestions were forthcoming, including:

- Persons remunerated at a reasonable level should be excluded from entry.
- Presentation at Annual Council, an Awards Evening, or a combination of the two?
- A single award or multiple awards covering a variety of categories?
- Nominations to be judged by a Member / Officer Panel.

Officers undertook to give consideration to all of those suggestions made in preparing a report, setting out recommendations for the format and any relevant criteria for a Volunteering / Community Work Award Scheme, for consideration by the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that a further report setting out recommendations for the format and any relevant criteria for a Volunteer Award Scheme be submitted to the Committee, for consideration at a future meeting.

62 CELEBRATING LOCALISM IN WEST LINDSEY (PRCC.26 11/12)

Members gave consideration to a report detailing the creation of a Celebration Fund to support community events in marking the Diamond Jubilee or Olympics during 2012. It was intended that the funding would be available across West

Lindsey for local groups, parish councils and other bodies to support the holding of local festivities that promote community spirit.

Furthermore, Members were advised of an Official Jubilee Beacon Project which was being co-ordinated by The Palace Pageant Master, with assistance from Lord Lieutenants across the country to ensure that beacons were identified across each area.

Officers advised of a recent meeting held in connection with the Project, in particular regarding the siting of six official beacon sites across the District. Members were provided with a brief summary of the discussions had and the outcome thereof. As a result, a further recommendation was tabled by Officers, namely, that authority be delegated to the Director of Communities and Localism, following consultation with Vice-Chairman, Councillor Gillian Bardsley to approve the six official beacon sites, to which Members indicated their agreement.

Debate ensued and in responding to Members' questions in respect of the proposed Fund to be established, Officers advised that the requirements upon Applicants, as set out at Section 6.2.3 of the report, were required for Audit purposes. However, assurances were offered that the desired outcome was to assist and support communities in holding such events and therefore a flexible, reasonable and proportionate approach would be taken wherever possible, with each application and situation being judged on an individual basis.

Members were supportive of the intention to try and ensure a fair and equal spread of events across the District but were of the view that a first come first served allocation process would not facilitate such. Whilst acknowledging the time frame available was extremely limited, Members suggested that applicants be afforded until 31 March 2012 to submit their proposals. Furthermore, it was considered such an approach would allow for adequate promotion of the Fund to be undertaken by Ward Members and for Parish Councils to consider the matter at their next meetings should they wish to.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the creation of a Celebrating West Lindsey Fund to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee and / or Olympics be supported and the criteria as detailed in report PRCC.26 11/12 be agreed;
- (b) a Standing Grant Panel comprising the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Prosperous Communities, to approve grant allocations as detailed in section 7.2 of the report, be formed; and
- (c) authority be delegated to the Director of Communities and Localism, following Consultation with Vice-Chairman, Councillor Gillian Bardsley to designate the six official beacon sites.

Note: Councillor David Dobbie declared a personal interest in the above item of business as a former Chairman of the Gainsborough Riverside Festival Committee.

63 VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR STRATEGY (PRCC.27 11/12)

Consideration was given to a report which summarised the work carried out to date to improve the Council's understanding of its relationship with the voluntary and community sector. The report provided further details of the Strategic Review of all voluntary organisations operating within West Lindsey which would be undertaken over the next 12 – 24 months to ensure that any future financial or other commitments made by the Council were clearly aligned to the Corporate Objectives.

In respect of the latter, it had been suggested that the Review be undertaken by a Member Panel, and the Committee were therefore asked, if agreeable to the suggested approach, to nominate two of its Members to serve thereon.

Having been proposed and seconded it was:

RESOLVED that a Member Panel be established, to oversee and direct the Strategic Review and that Councillors Paul Howitt-Cowan and Jeff Summers be appointed to serve thereon.

64 ANALYSIS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STREAMS IN THE BUILDING CONTROL, PLANNING AND LAND CHARGES FUNCTIONS (PRCC.28 11/12)

Members gave consideration report which provided an analysis of income and expenditure streams in respect of the Planning and Local Land Charges functions, as requested by the Committee at its meeting of 2 November 2011.

Lengthy discussion ensued and a Member re-iterated those points previously expressed at the Committee's meeting on 2 November 2011 namely of concerns that the decision to introduce a fee for pre-application planning advice from April 2011 had not had the desired effect and could be a contributing factor to the current budget position.

Previously, Members had expressed a view that the need to ensure the Council's services were competitively priced was vital, if income levels in these areas was to improve in the future and Councillor Kinch indicated comparative research of those charges levied by a number of neighbouring authorities had been undertaken by officers of his company. With the permission of the Chairman the findings arising therefrom were introduced to the Committee.

In light of the information, Members cited a number of possible avenues, with the income generation potential, that they considered would be worthy of further exploration and / or making representations to Central Government on, including:

- developers paying to renew their existing planning permissions when they expire thus preventing developers digging foundations for the first property in order to retain the planning permission permanently; and
- Roof Top Taxing.

The Committee made reference to the Authority's commitment of being an "Entrepreneurial Council", and there was general consensus that those suggestions made would assist and support the Council in achieving such. Furthermore Members were of the view that fees and charges across the Authority needed to be set accordingly to support this ethos and spirit.

Taking into consideration all of those points and suggestions raised during the debate, Officers suggested, this matter may be something Members wished to consider requesting the Challenge and Improvement Committee to further investigate and make recommendations back to this Committee in due course based on their findings. The headline title of "How open are we for business " was further suggested and considered broad enough to encompass not only those points raised but other wider factors also.

Members unanimously supported and welcomed the proposed way forward and on that basis it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the contents of report PRCC.28 11/12 be noted; and
- (b) in the light of comments and suggestion made throughout the course of the debate the Challenge and Improvement Committee be requested to undertake a review of the Council's activities in order to determine "How open are we for business" and report their findings and any recommendations arising there from back to a future meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee for further consideration, in accordance with the adopted Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules.

Note: Councillor Stuart Kinch declared a personal interest in the above item of business as the owner / manager of a local development company.

65 MONITORING OF REVENUE BUDGET PERFORMANCE FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2011 – 30 NOVEMBER 2011 (PRCC.29 11/12)

Consideration was given to a report which outlined spend against budgets for the period 1 April to 30 November 2011, and which focused on areas that were material to the Council's budgets.

RESOLVED that the contents of report PRCC.29 11/12 and the forecast annual budget position for 2011/12 based on income and expenditure to 30 November 2011 be noted.

66 TO RESOLVE THAT THE ORDER OF BUSINESS BE VARIED

In response to a request from Officers, it was proposed and seconded that Paper G (PRCC.31 11/12 – Proposed Fees and Charges 2012/13) be considered prior to Paper F (PRCC.30 11/12 - Draft Revenue Estimates 2012/13 – 2015/16).

RESOLVED that the order of business be varied as detailed above.

67 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2012/13 (PRCC.31 11/12)

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the proposed revised Fees and Charges to effect from 1 April 2012. The report further detailed a revised wheeled bin replacement policy and Member approval therefore was sought.

Members were provided with revised copies of page 1 of the report and page 10 of Appendix A (Car Parks Fees and Charges), the former of which had been amended to reflect the fact that the proposed changes to policies would need ratification from the Policy and Resources Committee as these matters fell within the Committee's remit to determine.

Discussion on the proposed Fees and Charges ensued and a number of Members expressed concern at the percentage increases being proposed for all aspects of Gainsborough Car Parking Fees and Charges. Members were of the opinion that local businesses were struggling in the current economic climate and that such increases could have a crippling effect in some circumstances. Reference was made to the views and comments which had been expressed during consideration of the former item of business and there was a strong view that one of the Committee's key objectives should be that of supporting and encouraging Economic Regeneration and that such proposals did not support this objective. Members therefore indicated that they could not support the revised charges and made reference to the reported increase in trade in a number of neighbouring towns which had been attributed to the introduction of free car parking and suggested that the Authority should consider following suit.

In response, Officers stressed that Members did not have enough information regarding the financial implications of moving to free car parking available to them at present to make such a recommendation. It was therefore suggested that car parking charges be incorporated into that work which the Committee had earlier resolved to request the Challenge and Improvement Committee to further investigate (minute 64 above relates). Members indicated their support to the suggestion but also proposed that pending the outcome of such work that no

increase be applied to any of those fees or charges relating to Gainsborough Car Parks for 2012/13 and thus these remain at the current 11/12 level.

In the absence of information, Officers undertook to respond to the question which had been posed regarding new coinage and any implications on parking meters, to all Members outside of the meeting.

With regard to the proposal for increasing the charge for bulky waste collections by 50% (to £20 for each collection) Members' were of the view that such an increase was disproportionate and concerns were raised as to the potential environmental impact such an increase may pose.

In responding, Officers confirmed that Members had raised similar concerns during 10/11 when the charge had first been introduced. However there was no evidence that these concerns had materialised over the past 12 months. There was, however, evidence to suggest that since its introduction the landfill tonnage had decreased. Officers outlined the work that had been undertaken to mitigate against any potential negative impacts over the last 12 months including, offering advice and guidance to residents regarding alternative disposal methods including signposting customer enquiries to a number of voluntary organisations /charities who offered free collections for certain household items. Officers emphasised and stressed to Members that a number of those charges applied to the waste collection service were not motivated by the need to generate income, rather that of reducing waste to landfill, increasing recycling, and reducing unnecessary demand for replacement wheeled bins, the cost for which had risen significantly over recent years.

In light of the views expressed and following lengthy consideration it was

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the revised process to licence hackney / private hire drivers on an annual basis with effect from 1 April 2012 be noted;
- (b) the wheeled bin replacement policy as at Appendix B of report PRCC.31 11/12 be approved;
- (c) the introduction of new charges as detailed at (i) and (ii) below be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval and implementation with effect from 1 April 2012 : -
 - (i) the statutory maximum fees in connection with private water supplies, with any actual charges based on cost recovery (section 2.11.2 of report PRCC.31 11/12 relates);
 - (ii) the fee to be charged for the annual self declaration process for hackney / private hire drivers in relation to the policy change, detailed at (a) above, be set at 50% of

the full fee payable at Year 1 (section 2.11.1 of report PRCC.31 11/12 relates);

- (d) the proposed Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix A to report PRCC.31 11/12, be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval subject to the following amendment:
 - (i) that no increase be applied to any of those fees or charges relating to Gainsborough Car Parks (page 10 of Appendix A of the report relates), thus these remain at the current 2011/12 level; and
- (e) In the light of the comments expressed during the debate in relation to car parking charges and the need to support business / growth in general, as detailed above, car parking fees and charges be investigated and incorporated into the work tasked to the Challenge and Improvement Committee (as detailed at minute 64 above).

Note: Councillor Trevor Young declared a personal interest in the above item of business as his wife was the proprietor of a local town centre business.

Councillor Lesley Rollings declared a personal interest in the above item of business as a serving Member of Gainsborough Town Council.

68 DRAFT REVENUE ESTIMATES 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 (PRCC.30 11/12)

Members considered a report setting out the details of the Committee's draft revenue estimates for the period 2012/13 – 2015/16.

RESOLVED that the 2012/13 to 2015/16 base budgets as set out in Appendix A to report PRCC.30 11/12, be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval subject to those amendments required to reflect the impact of the recommended revision to all Fees and Charges relating to Gainsborough Car Parks (min 67 resolution (d) (i) above refers) being incorporated.

The meeting concluded at 9.28 pm.

Chairman