

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough, on Monday, 22 October 2012, at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**

Councillor Jessie Milne (In the Chair)  
Councillor Malcolm Parish (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Irmgard Parrott
Councillor Nigel Bowler	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Ken Bridger	Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor David Cotton	Councillor Sue Rawlins
Councillor Stuart Curtis	Councillor Di Rodgers
Councillor Chris Darcel	Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Richy Doran	Councillor Mel Starkey
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Burt Keimach	Councillor Mick Tinker
Councillor Stuart Kinch	Councillor Anne Welburn
Councillor Angela Lawrence	Councillor Geoff Wiseman
Councillor Malcolm Leaning	Councillor Trevor Young

**Apologies:**

Councillor Jackie Brockway  
Councillor Alan Caine  
Councillor William Parry  
Councillor Tom Regis  
Councillor Chris Underwood-Frost

Councillor Trevor Young had also apologised in advance to say that he may be late arriving.

**In Attendance:**

Manjeet Gill	Chief Executive
Mark Sturgess	Director of Regeneration and Planning
Rachel North	Director of Communities and Localism
Russell Stone	Chief Finance Officer
Phil Hinch	Licensing and Support Team Manager
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer

**Also in Attendance:** The Reverend Phillip Wain  
Anne Rossington Member & Support Services Team Manager

**Also Present:** Two members of the public

## **50 PRAYERS**

The meeting commenced with prayers by the Reverend Phillip Wain.

Following the prayers, the Council's Chairman announced that one minute's silence would be held as a mark of respect for the late Councillor Ray Sellars.

## **51 COUNCIL MINUTES (Paper A)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 3 September 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **52 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor McNeill declared a pecuniary interest in Paper F The Review of the Gambling Policy due to his employment by GCCA and being the promoter of the Association's small society lotteries.

Councillor Curtis declared a personal interest in Paper F The Review of the Gambling Policy as being the licensee to Sudbrooke Village Hall.

## **53 MATTERS ARISING (Paper B)**

The Governance and Civic Officer informed Members that there were four items showing as having been completed, and no outstanding matters.

It was questioned why the report on West Lindsey Honours had not be resubmitted to Council for approval, and it was explained that further amendments were required so it was felt that all details needed to be finalised prior to it being put before Council again.

## **54 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Chairman of the Council**

The Chairman highlighted some of the engagements she had undertaken in recent weeks, including visits to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment (The Poachers), and also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Leukaemia and Lymphoma Charity in Market Rasen. The Chairman also highlighted the West Lindsey Run Series and the splendid efforts of those taking part.

### **Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council echoed the sentiments of the Chairman's comments and also noted the achievements being made through the

Community Asset Fund and stressed that it was important to publicise that these funds were available for community use.

### **Head of Paid Service**

The Chief Executive informed Members of the recent awards achieved by West Lindsey District Council. Having been finalists in four categories of the APSE awards the Council was announced as the winner for Workforce Transformation. Local Government Young Thinker of the Year had been awarded to Stacey Wrath in HR, and a further Silver Finalists award was given for Street Care.

The Chief Executive also made mention of the Community Covenant Scheme which had seen an award of £70,000 for Brookenby, and there were four others in the pipeline.

## **55 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the public.

## **56 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9**

### **Question from Cllr. David Cotton to Cllr. B Keimach Leader of the Council.**

Councillor Keimach, as a council we have made much about being entrepreneurial and encouraging business and investment in the District of West Lindsey. This is of course something which the whole chamber is behind and rightly so in these difficult economic times.

We have encouraged local business to set up and operate within the boundary of the District and as has been said on numerous occasions West Lindsey is Open for Business. A sentiment and idea we can all aspire to and support.

Very recently it was brought to my attention by a small business owner and operator that small business in West Lincolnshire is operating at a disadvantage in comparison with some of the other Districts in the County.

The business operator had received information from On Lincolnshire about support that can be made available to small business and hosting of websites and other benefits that On Lincolnshire can provide.

Duly he visited On Lincolnshire's website and the broadband news pages at

<http://onlincolnshire.org/news/broadband-news/236>

There in is detailed a range of support that can be accessed by small business to assist them with their IT provision, the opening of the website begins by saying.

*“Lincolnshire County Council’s Onlincolnshire project is offering a free website and social media review to companies in the county, so they can boost their online presence.”*

This is apparently supplied for On Lincolnshire by Kind of Digital and one of their operatives is quoted as saying;

*“This is a completely free service and a great opportunity for firms to make sure their website and social media profiles are fit for purpose. Our reports will highlight any existing issues and provide tips on how to make your digital presence even better. In the majority of cases there are simple things businesses can do which don’t cost a lot of money but just take time and effort. These include rewriting the website content, starting a blog or spending more time engaging with existing and potential customers on Facebook and Twitter.”*

However, further on the list of areas where this is available is set out as being;

*“This service is part of a package of free business support which is available to small and medium enterprises in East Lindsey, Boston and Lincoln.”*

Having made enquiries the business owner who contacted me discovered that not only is West Lindsey not mentioned on the website the service is not available at this time to business within our district, largely putting them at a disadvantage with their competitors in other parts of the county.

Would the Leader of the Council, in conjunction with Cllr Parish as Chairman of Prosperous Communities and Councillor Caine, who has been leading on the Broadband and telecommunications initiative, use any influence that he might have to get this service available to the businesses in West Lindsey as soon as is practically possible and thus re-instate something of a “level playing field” for our businesses with their competitors?

Would he also seek to discover why it was that West Lindsey was left out of this project in the first place, which is bemusing, since one of our former officers has in the recent past moved to On Lincolnshire and one would have hoped that West Lindsey might have been at the forefront of this and not lagging behind?

Councillor Keimach responded by stating that he had not been aware of the exclusion of West Lindsey, and that he would take steps to investigate and rectify the matter.

## **57 NOTICE OF MOTION PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10**

Councillor Reg Shore submitted two motions to the Chairman.

1. Madame Chair,

Twelve years ago we were asked to create a vision for West Lindsey and within that lay a vision for Gainsborough town.

At that time we created a long term plan, which then seemed ambitious but has now been substantially realised and indeed surpassed. We now have a much improved riverside, a somewhat refurbished town square and Marshall's Yard.

The Marshall's Yard shopping complex has gone a long way to increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Gainsborough and has elevated West Lindsey.

However, the job is not yet finished and there remains work to do. In order to maximise visitor numbers there has to be a considerably more substantial reason for people to want to come here.

There are plans to regenerate the area on and around the old Guildhall but developers don't yet recognise that the town has moved on far enough to guarantee their returns and therefore progress has stalled and we are already seeing a fudging and a compromising of their plans and I believe that WLDC is being held in a ransomed grip.

We require more substance. The town centre needs to be diverse enough to attract a wider-ranging investment in its own right. Our town needs to be as attractive as it may be. We have several great assets including the riverside and the old hall together with the feature of Marshall's Yard and a number of interesting buildings. A small town can exploit such features and this can be seen in a number of towns, for example, Shrewsbury.

Unfortunately, the old town has suffered through the success of other developments but this does not need to be a problem if we can upgrade the old centre in order to help realise its own enormous potential.

Presently auditors are criticising WLDC for hoarding tax-payers money when this cash should be used to build a future for everyone. We have over 12 million pounds sitting in reserves and up to 19 million altogether. This money belongs to our residents and we have no right to sit on this cash; we have a duty to make the most of it.

I propose that a percentage of our assets are used to build a permanent water feature within the centre of the old town square. This would have the immediate effect of revitalising the old town and adding immense value to the businesses that are struggling there and would be a

permanent legacy to this present council. It would have a knock on effect of increasing confidence in the struggling to develop Elswitha Quarter.

To sum up I am asking Council to support this major project in the Gainsborough Old Town Square which we can all be proud of, that will impress all – residents across the district, local businesses, visitors, shoppers and potential investors. Together, we can genuinely help to make Gainsborough a place that people will increasingly choose to come to for their visitor and shopping experience.

I so move.

Councillor Shore had also requested that a sentence be added to undertake a consultation exercise with residents.

The Leader of the Council responded, by stating that although the idea of a fountain was not being rejected, there was not in fact the amount of money available referred to by Councillor Shore. Whilst there was an amount of money in the Council's reserves, much of this was already allocated to particular projects, and that Capital Reserves must be allocated to projects in the Capital Programme. Consultation should be undertaken with the people of Gainsborough and the wider district to ask what they would like to see, but the motion could not be supported at this time.

Councillor Shore then presented his second motion.

2. Madame Chair,

We are all aware how hard Councillors work. We are contacted at all hours, day and night and our residents expect action and we councillors do our very best to resolve any issues that the public may have and as quickly as possible.

However, I believe that Councillors could and should be much better served by WLDC in their challenging role.

How often do we call the Council to be greeted by an answerphone or news that the officer concerned is on leave, sick or 'not at the desk right now'. This leaves us frustrated and unable to respond in turn to our particular residents and a recall has to be booked with no guarantee that the officer will be there at a later time. Leaving messages adds to the delays and unfortunately does not always lead to a call back. I know some Councillors have all but given up on trying to contact certain officers or dread the thought of having to do so.

To enable Councillors to best support the public it is essential that responses are as immediate as possible and to aid us in this challenge I feel that would benefit from the services of one dedicated and specialist officer. This role was somewhat unofficially fulfilled by Sue Harrison, but with her retirement that support disappeared.

Therefore, Madame Chairman, I propose that we put in place a purposely placed officer/clerk, who can work 100% of the time with and for Councillors, ensuring that messages are acted upon and feedback is as good as it can be. There are a number of such officer roles at the County Council but I am just asking for one to serve every councillor. There are a number of other Councillor services, which could be wrapped within this role, enabling an efficient interface between officers and members and ensuring cost effectiveness.

The cost of this role would be relatively modest and certainly well within our budgets but the added value to the public would be immense.

I so move.

The Leader of the Council responded to this motion by stating that officers always responded when they could and that he had no problem in leaving messages or calling mobile numbers. The matter had to be handled responsibly, and a potential cost of £18-25,000 could not be justified. It was not felt to be necessary to employ an additional officer, and the matter of officer availability was being considered by a Challenge and Improvement Working Group.

Some Members voiced concerns with the lack of availability of officers in particular departments, whilst others stated that they had not encountered any difficulties.

**Note** Councillor Young arrived at the meeting.

Returning to the first of Councillor Shore's motions, this was seconded, and discussion ensued. Members generally felt that there was a lack of attraction in Gainsborough Market Place, and that people tended to be drawn to water features, which would then increase footfall in the shops, and it would be good to replicate the café culture in Marshall's Yard.

There was a consensus that a consultation exercise needed to be undertaken, however many Councillors felt that the rest of the District may not necessarily support further financial investment in Gainsborough. It was suggested however that what benefitted Gainsborough would also benefit the rest of the District. The Director of Regeneration and Planning suggested that the matter could be considered further during the work on the Gainsborough Master Plan, which would be looking at better utilisation of the space in the Market area.

A recorded vote was moved, seconded and subsequently withdrawn.

Further discussion took place on how to give consideration to other market towns in the district, the financial implications, and what attractions (water features, outlet stores, entertainment) would improve the Market square in Gainsborough. It was then proposed and seconded that the matter be further considered by the Prosperous Communities Committee.

**RESOLVED** – that the motion be referred to the Prosperous Communities Committee for further discussion.

Councillors then resumed discussion on the second of Councillor Shore's motions. There were differing views of Councillors' experiences of officers' availability, some stated that they had had few problems.

The Chief Executive pointed out that there had been a 28% reduction in funding in the last 18 months and with uncertainty on future government funding cuts it would not be prudent to create an extra post at this time.

Councillors Howitt-Cowan and Welburn pointed out that work was already underway in looking at the customer experience and response times, and it would be wrong to prejudge the outcome of this piece of work. Any Members who experienced particular problems should feed these back to the working group.

It was therefore moved, seconded, voted upon and subsequently **RESOLVED** that the motion be put on hold pending the outcome of the Customer Experience working group.

## **58 RESULT OF THE NETTLEHAM WARD BY ELECTION – 5 SEPTEMBER 2012 (PAPER C)**

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Giles McNeill on being elected a West Lindsey District Councillor, and also Councillor Jackie Brockway on being elected to Lincolnshire County Council.

Councillor McNeill asked for his thanks to be recorded to all West Lindsey officers on duty on polling day.

## **59 REVIEW OF THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS ON COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES (PAPER D)**

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the details of political groups, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be noted;
- b) the number of members to be appointed to serve on each committee and sub-committee be noted; and
- c) the allocation to different political groups of seats on committees/sub-committees, as set out in Appendix B of the report, be noted.

## **60 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES (PAPER E)**



The Director of Communities and Localism apologised for an error which had been contained in the original report, this had been an administrative mix up and there was no intention to change the committee membership of Councillors Rodgers and Wiseman. The published report had been amended.

**RESOLVED** that, in accordance with the provisions of section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the wishes expressed by political groups, members be appointed to serve on the Council's committees for the remainder of the 2012/13 civic year as follows:

**Planning Committee (12 members)**

Councillor Owen Bierley  
Councillor Alan Caine  
Councillor David Cotton  
Councillor Stuart Curtis  
Councillor Richard Doran  
Councillor Ian Fleetwood  
Councillor Malcolm Leaning  
Councillor Giles McNeill  
Councillor Jessie Milne  
Councillor Roger Patterson  
Councillor Judy Rainsforth  
Councillor Chris Underwood-Frost

**Governance and Audit Committee (10 Members)**

Councillor Kenneth Bridger  
Councillor Jackie Brockway  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor David Dobbie  
Councillor Malcolm Leaning  
Councillor Giles McNeill  
Councillor William Parry  
Councillor Sue Rawlins  
Councillor Di Rodgers  
Councillor Anne Welburn

**Prosperous Communities Committee (11 Members)**

Councillor Gillian Bardsley  
Councillor Nigel Bowler  
Councillor Jackie Brockway  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor Malcolm Parish  
Councillor Judy Rainsforth  
Councillor Lesley Rollings  
Councillor Lewis Strange  
Councillor Jeff Summers

Councillor Trevor Young  
Councillor Geoff Wiseman

**Note** Councillor McNeill left the meeting for consideration of the following item having declared a pecuniary interest.

**61 REVIEW OF GAMBLING POLICY (STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES)  
(PAPER F)**

Councillor Welburn introduced the report stating that a Licensing Authority was legally obliged to publish a Statement of Principles every three years. The report had been considered by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and recommended to Council. There had been no material changes in policy and few responses had been received during the consultation period. Following approval and adoption the policy would be published in January 2013.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation from the Licensing and Regulatory Committee be accepted and that the amended draft policy The Gambling Policy (Statement of Principles) be approved and adopted. The revised document would become effective from January 2013.

**Note** Councillor McNeill returned to the Chamber.

**62 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION (PAPER G)**

The Director of Communities and Localism introduced the report which had been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee. The purpose of the report was merely to tidy the scheme of officer delegations following Organising for Delivery and teams being restructured, with job titles changing.

Councillor Darcel questioned some details within the scheme of delegations, and the Director of Communities and Localism explained that such details, if it was felt to be necessary, should be considered through the Annual Constitution Review at the Annual Meeting of Council, and that this report was simply a housekeeping exercise to bring the scheme of delegations up to date in line with the current organisational structure.

**RESOLVED** that amendments to the Council's Constitution as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved and that these changes come into immediate effect.

**63 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING ON 3 SEPTEMBER  
2012.**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of Committee meetings published since the last Council meeting on 3 September 2012 be received.

The meeting concluded at 9 pm.

Chairman