

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 28 January 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Alan Caine (Chairman)
Councillor Paul-Howitt-Cowan (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Bowler (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Mick Tinker

In Attendance:

Russell Stone	Chief Finance Officer
Alex Reeks	Assistant Chief Executive
Joanna Riddell	Head of Localism
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present: Inspector Simon Outen

Apologies: Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Sue Rawlins

Membership: No substitutes were appointed for the meeting.

53 CHAIR'S INTENTION TO VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chairman announced his intention to change the order of the agenda with the Committee's agreement.

RESOLVED that the order of the agenda be changed to allow for the Update on ASB and Crime in West Lindsey prior to Paper B.

54 MINUTES (CAI.33 13/14)

Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 3 December 2013.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 3 December 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

55 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

56 UPDATE ON ASB AND CRIME IN WEST LINDSEY

Inspector Simon Outen attended the meeting to give Members an Update on Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime in West Lindsey. There had been a slight increase since last year, however the general trend over the last five years was still downwards. The current economy was thought to be a factor in that the increase comprised more low level crimes such as shoplifting and shed burglaries.

Anti-social behaviour figures were still down, as were criminal damage and violent crime. The force had recently had an inspection of its recording practices and the audit had determined methods to be robust. The process was open and transparent and there was no pressure to manipulate figures.

There had been some successful sentencing on severe crimes particularly with vulnerable victims.

Committee Members congratulated the police on their work, particularly given stretched resources, and also the good work done by PCSOs. In the current target driven culture Lincolnshire Police had recently been cited as an example of good practice.

Questions were asked regarding the reasons for the decrease in some types of crime. Some progress had been made in working with communities and residents, such as trackers being fitted to farm machinery to enable recovery, or encouragement of reporting of incidents to prevent escalation.

Discussion ensued on the new Scrap Metal Licensing legislation, however it was early days yet to identify its impact.

The Head of Localism listed some recent successes, including prosecutions for flytipping, partly enabled by enforcement work.

The conclusion was that West Lindsey was a safe place to live.

57 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.34 13/14)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule.

Councillor Strange expressed concerns about the lack of a Wind Turbines Policy however it was pointed out that this had to be done through the Local Plan process. Any suggestions from Members should be fed back through the JPU representatives.

The Assistant Chief Executive updated the meeting that the relaunch of the Members' Portal had suffered some slippage. A further update would be given in due course.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be received and noted.

58 MEMBERS' VERBAL UPDATE REPORTS

(a) Members' Portal

Already addressed through the Matters Arising Schedule

(b) Wi-fi (Councillor Alan Caine)

The Chairman noted that a current list of Village Hall provision had been circulated, it was hoped that these would total 52 by the next month. Those villages not yet provided were being delayed due to factors such as Listed Buildings and lines of sight. Members agreed that more publicity was required to raise residents' awareness. The use of redundant IT equipment was being considered to provide kit for communities.

Progress was also underway to enable mobile phone signals in 'not-spot' areas. A Mobile Infrastructure Project roundtable had met before Christmas and Government providers were considering the problems.

(c) Elswitha Working Group feedback (Councillor Nigel Bowler)

Vice Chairman Councillor Nigel Bowler noted that there were two working groups with 'Elswitha' in the title, so there was to be some clarification by one being renamed appropriately to address town centre and riverside issues. The working group considering the audit report on the Elswitha project was due to have its second meeting the following week. A lot of progress had been made to address governance issues and lessons had been learned from the audit. A report would be submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee, and subsequently back to the Challenge and Improvement Committee.

59 BUDGET SETTING PRE-SCRUTINY (CAI.34 13/14)

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report stating that the scale of the challenges facing the council could not be underestimated, however there existed a strong base to work from. Savings were being delivered early and surplus was being generated so progress was in the right direction.

Three million pounds had to be found in three years. The first million had been identified for 2014/15; however a more commercial approach was required to deliver the further two million. Seven in depth business reviews had taken place within the council, and there was a shift in focus from efficiency to productivity.

A commercial strategy was being progressed and a new Commercial Director was being recruited. Much activity was ongoing, with research into a range of opportunities being undertaken and initiatives being developed. An overview of the recent resident engagement activity was also provided.

Discussion took place on waste services, including composting, and levels of Council Tax. Any significant rise in Council Tax would necessitate a referendum, and members noted that 2015 was an election year. The Chief Finance Officer stated that work was already underway on budgets for future years, however unknown plans from the Government made financial planning difficult.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the council was robust against service cuts, and alternatives such as customer demand management were being considered. There was confidence in the In Depth Business Reviews and benchmarking was being undertaken to identify efficiencies.

RESOLVED that having reviewed the progress towards delivering a sustainable financial position, a further report be brought back in six months setting out progress towards closing the financial gap for 2015/16 onwards.

60 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY WORKING GROUP (CAI.35 13/14)

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the first feedback report from the working group, which had had its Terms of Reference agreed. Several meetings had taken place and a number of recommendations were emerging. The Corporate Plan had a stronger focus in delivery tables. The Progress and Delivery document was to be split in two with one part focussing on the Corporate Plan and the other on transactional services. The revised format was to be presented to the next meeting to include progress tracking and outcome monitoring.

Vice Chairman Councillor Bowler emphasised that there had been a lot of work and the Corporate Plan Review was a big job. Existing projects required the right level of scrutiny, however reports needed to be succinct, colour coded and not too lengthy.

The Chairman felt that there was the right level of skills across officers and Members involved, and the report was encouraging.

RESOLVED that having provided feedback on the recommendations made to date, it was agreed that the report provided assurance that sufficient progress had been made by the working group and that clear next steps to deliver its objectives were in place.

61 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.36 13/14)

The Governance and Civic Officer presented a report setting out the items of business due to be considered through the committee system and asked Members to identify any reports that they wished to be brought before the Challenge and Improvement Committee for scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

62 WORK PLAN (CAI.37 13/14)

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was discussed.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bowler noted that the Tourism Working Group had no formal Terms of Reference and it would be helpful to re-establish the group on a more formal basis. The matter be added into the Forward Plan for a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.58 pm

Chairman