

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough, on Monday, 28 January 2013, at 7.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Jessie Milne (In the Chair)
Councillor Irmgard Parrott (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Nigel Bowler	Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Ken Bridger	Councillor William Parry
Councillor Jackie Brockway	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Alan Caine	Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Stuart Curtis	Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Chris Darcel	Councillor Di Rodgers
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Richy Doran	Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Burt Keimach	Councillor Anne Welburn
Councillor Stuart Kinch	Councillor Geoff Wiseman
Councillor Angela Lawrence	Councillor Trevor Young

Apologies:

Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Sue Rawlins
Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Mick Tinker
Councillor Chris Underwood-Frost

Councillor Nigel Bowler had apologised in advance to say he may be late.

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
Alan Robinson	Head of Central Services
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer

Also in Attendance: Lay Minister David Farrow
David Lomas, Chairman of Remuneration Panel

Also Present: 4 members of the public
Councillor Hazel Brand - Bassetlaw District Council
Councillor Joan Sanger - Bassetlaw District Council
Councillor Hugh Barton - Bassetlaw District Council

76 PRAYERS

The meeting commenced with prayers by Lay Minister David Farrow.

77 COUNCIL MINUTES (Paper A)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 December 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

78 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

79 MATTERS ARISING (Paper B)

The Governance and Civic Officer introduced the Matters Arising Schedule and noted that the one item shown as still pending was the West Lindsey Honours report which was now on the agenda for this meeting.

80 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman of the Council

The Council Chairman informed the meeting that during her civic engagements she had visited many elderly schemes which had been very enjoyable and she had also met three generations of one family. The Chairman had also visited the Fire Station which had recently been equipped with two rescue boats, although the launching facility was yet to be established. There had also been a degree ceremony at Lincoln Cathedral which the Chairman had attended.

The Chairman later made reference to the progress made on improvements to the Trinity Arts Centre and commended officers for their work.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council announced that the first of the reports on the agenda, the abolition of Council Tax Benefit, gave a flavour of the financial difficulties that lay ahead. There was a government requirement to save even more money.

On a more positive note the Leader announced that the Old Guildhall was to be demolished in the following week or so and that the area should be clear by June to give a clean site to enable consideration of other options.

Head of Paid Service

The Chief Executive informed Members of the financial challenges that lay ahead, with £3m needing to be saved over three years. The Council was working to instigate behavioural changes amongst its officers with the 'Working Where the Work Is' initiative in order to improve efficiency. It was noted that the formula grant calculation took no account of rural sparsity and the SPARSE group was working to lobby MPs to address this.

The Chief Executive noted that Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England, had recently visited West Lindsey and had been heartened by the work done to combat obesity.

Note Councillor Nigel Bowler arrived at this point in the meeting.

The Chief Executive then noted the outcome of the recent litigation in which the High Court of Justice had refused permission for a Judicial Review as the claim by the litigant had been made out of time, and also stated that the claim would fail on merit based on the case submitted. The Chief Executive read out part of the statement received. Some Members requested that the entire statement be read, however it was stated that this was not possible at the meeting as other parties were named in the statement. Certain Members were not taking notice of the Chairman on Points of Order, and the Chairman stood to indicate that the discussion should cease.

Note Councillor Shore left the meeting at this point.

Members then requested that they be provided with a copy of the statement following the meeting. The Chief Executive stated that she would take legal advice to ensure that this would be possible.

The Chief Executive then went on to note that some Councillors had been questioning the Council's Constitution and the role of the Chief Executive and that it had not been possible to accept some of the motions and questions which had been submitted to the meeting. Neither had it been possible to agree to the recent request for an extraordinary meeting when it had been requested during the litigation process. The Chief Executive's role included a responsibility for the effective stewardship of the Council as a corporate body and it was important that the legal and reputation of the organisation was safeguarded. If Members wished a review of the Constitution this could be considered, and it was suggested that a workshop take place with the Monitoring Officer on understanding the protocols within the Constitution. This could be given consideration by the Member Forum, and there had been offers of assistance from Members with legal expertise. The Chief Executive also noted that regular meetings took place with Auditors to assess how investment decisions were made.

Note Councillor Shore returned to the meeting.

81 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the public.

82 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9

Councillor Young queried why his question to the meeting had not been circulated, and stated that he had not received the email which explained the reasons for its rejection, and would have preferred a verbal response.

Some Members asserted that the rejection of questions was a serious matter and that Constitutional rights were being blocked. The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Protocol on Operational Conventions in the Council's Constitution could be discussed in the aforementioned workshop.

Question submitted by Councillor Malcolm Leaning.

In September 2011 many Councillors, by request, stopped having committee papers posted to them and instead had them sent by e-mail.

They then used their laptop computers or similar to read the papers at home and at committee.

This was to be as part of a general move towards a paperless and postage less District Council.

In January 2012 most Councillors and officers made the move towards postage and paperless meetings which has continued throughout the year.

It was initially envisaged that Councillors using e-mail and laptops would save the Council, and more particularly Council Tax Payers, about £70,000 each year.

Could the CEO or one of her officers please advise the DC

- What actual saving in paper and postage was made by most Councillors using e-mail and Laptops etc. over the past year?
- What reduction in cost have we seen in the overall D.C. postage and paper usage?

Thank You,
Councillor Malcolm Leaning.

The Chief Finance Officer responded, stating that there had been significant savings in printing, paper, postage and officer time which amounted to around £60,000. The Working Where the Work Is initiative, including new technology was anticipated to achieve further savings.

Councillor Leaning then asked a supplemental question as to future savings, noting that some departments were still spending significant amounts on postage. The Chief Finance Officer noted that not all new IT systems were yet fully installed, but once ready the shift to paperless working would be further enabled.

Question from Councillor Judy Rainsforth

Councillor Keimach, while it is always pleasing to win awards, it is my understanding that recent awards have been given because WLDC entered into award schemes and competitions and these were not awards which were just given in recognition of outstanding service as a council.

Could you please give the council a few details relating to the recent awards the authority has won?

Firstly, In order that we can gauge what the size of the competition was how many councils' actually entered each award. I would suggest the fewer the number of councils' that entered the less prestige the award ought to attract.

Secondly, what the entrance fee was for each competition and what the total cost of getting the award was to the council, including travel, subsistence and accommodation costs for staff and councillors in order to collect those awards.

The Leader of the Council gave the following response.
Thank you Cllr Rainsforth.

I am pleased that West Lindsey District Council has been recognised in a number of awards in recent months because it demonstrates the quality of the services we provide. Awards are based on factual evidence, with independent quotes and performance measures. I just wanted to demonstrate some of the benefits of submitting awards.

Benefits of awards:

- Help motivate members and staff – international and national research has shown across the private and public sector shows one of the motivators is positive recognition such as awards, thank you and compliments. Staff productivity is also improved by positive motivation.
- By winning awards we demonstrate to our residents that based on independent assessments we are delivering a robust service based on our merits.
- We also improve our national profile, which is important as we increasingly have to bid for government funds and other types of funds as the council's share of government grants are diminishing.
- In addition to awards we also encourage national figures to visit West Lindsey and they also confirm the performance which wins us awards.

High profile visits include:

- Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles

He was briefed on the situation with our former MoD communities. Mr Pickles said it was 'very depressing' to see a picture of a dilapidated building in Brookenby and opening a community room at Hemswell Cliff School. He said: "I will rattle the MoD's cage on this as this is a place we should celebrate."

- Chief Executive of the Local Government association Carolyn Downs

She said: "These are very difficult times for councils across the country and councils are dealing with it differently. Some are much more resilient than others and West Lindsey seems to be more resilient."

- Chief Executive Designate of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie

He said "I commend West Lindsey District Council for what it has been doing with health and wellbeing. They have tremendous partnerships which is something to be proud of."

Raising our national profile through awards, visits and developing good partnerships is helping to attract funding to the area such as:

- The Universal Credit Pilot and funding of £80,000
- Lloyds TSB funding £75,000 awarded to Community Lincs to employ someone to carry out work in the former MoD sites in West Lindsey.

Here is a list of some of the awards:

APSE Awards 2012 - we won the Best Employment and Equality Initiative, (Association of Public service Excellence), which was free to enter. We were invited to an awards ceremony in Glasgow and felt it was appropriate for staff to collect the award with myself. Costs were kept to a minimum, it cost £1421.25. A total of 380 councils nationally entered the 2012 APSE Awards.

Social Enterprise Award - The council won the National Social Enterprise Award - when it was named as the Social Enterprise Partner of The Year for helping to create jobs for 130 young people – some at risk and some excluded from school. We were the only local authority shortlisted.

Clean Britain Awards 2012– WLDC entered the awards for the first time. We are always looking for ways to save money and this was a great opportunity for us to benchmark our service. For £675, we received a detailed report on our environment and performance from judges who are leading experts in this area. They visited the area unannounced to carry out their assessment. As an added bonus – the council was awarded second place (silver) in the small population category at the Awards, which are run by the Chartered Institute of Wastes Management in conjunction with The British Cleansing Council. We

were also awarded a five star rating. This year about 26 authorities entered in the award.

It is important to motivate and celebrate our successes and seek assurance from independent people and bodies that we are delivering quality and best value services for our residents. Equally it is important that we develop talent within our own organisation for the future.

Councillor Rainsforth then requested a supplemental question and began to ask about a petition. The Monitoring Officer indicated that this question was not supplemental to the original.

83 PRESENTATION ON AVIATION HERITAGE LINCOLNSHIRE BY PHIL BONNER

Phil Bonner gave the meeting a presentation on Aviation Heritage within Lincolnshire, setting out the background and the achievements made. Key sites were listed within the whole of Lincolnshire, and note was made of supported received, including Heritage Lottery funding and support from the Arts Council England as well as many volunteers. Statistics were shown on visitor numbers and the economic benefits to the wider area.

Future plans for the organisation were set out, working with many other organisations, local authorities and museums, and also other countries with local connections. Events currently being planned included the centenary anniversary of WWI, the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters and the anniversary of Operation MANNA.

Councillors were appreciative of the very interesting presentation and asked pertinent questions. Information would be forwarded to the Council's Tourism Working group, and there was to be a meeting in March at RAF Scampton.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bonner for his presentation and stated that she hoped Councillors would take the opportunity to visit some of the venues and events mentioned.

84 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (Paper C)

The Head of Central Services presented the report the purpose of which was to remind members of the background to the national abolition of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and proposed introduction of Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) from April 2013; to confirm the guiding principles agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee on 27 September 2013; and to ask Council to agree the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey DC after taking into account the consultation responses received between 12 October and 12 December 2012. Changes of financial arrangements announced by central Government during the consultation were noted.

The abolition of the current scheme meant a funding gap of 14%, although pensioners were protected from the effects of any changes. The report was then again considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 17 January 2013 to formulate a recommendation to Council.

Note Councillor Darcel left the meeting at this point.

Note Councillor Wiseman left the meeting at this point.

Note Councillor Shore left the meeting at this point.

Councillors commended the Head of Central Services on his report and the response to further government cuts in the current economic situation, and asked questions as to the potential for flexibility in exceptional hardship cases.

Note Councillor Darcel returned to the meeting.

Note Councillor Parry declared a personal interest in the item as being a landlord.

Note Councillor Bardsley declared a personal interest in the item as being a landlord.

Note Councillor Lawrence declared a personal interest in the item as being a landlord.

Note Councillors Wiseman and Shore returned to the meeting.

It was noted that the Council's support for the Citizens' Advice Bureau must be maintained to assist residents through such difficulties.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report be noted; and
- b) the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey DC for 2013/14, as detailed in the appendix to the report, be agreed.

85 COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS AND COUNCIL TAX BASE (Paper D)

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report which set out the declaration of the estimated surplus on the Council's Collection Fund at the end of March 2013 and how it was shared amongst the constituent precepting bodies. It also set out the tax base calculation for 2013/14. The tax base was a key component in calculating both the budget requirement and the council tax charge.

The report had been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 17 January 2013. The Chief Finance Officer reminded Members that the surplus Council Tax Collection was a one off revenue which could not be used to support ongoing spending, but which was taken into account when calculating the Council Tax Base for the following year.

RESOLVED that

- a) the estimated surplus of £539,000 be declared as accruing in the Council's Collection Fund at 31 March 2013 relating to Council Tax transactions,
- b) the Council uses its element of the Council Tax surplus in calculating the level of Council Tax in 2013/14, and
- c) the calculations of the Council's tax base for 2013/2014 as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved, and that in accordance with the Local Authorities' (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1993 (as amended), the tax base for each part of the Authority's area shall be as set out in Appendix B of the report.

86 REMUNERATION PANEL RECOMMENDATION (Paper E)

The Chairman of the Remuneration Panel, David Lomas, introduced the report to inform Members of recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) with regard to the Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2013/14. Three of the Group Leaders had met with the Remuneration Panel, and it had been agreed that there was no enthusiasm for any increase in basic or special responsibility allowances in the current economic situation.

Travel allowances were determined by the HMRC, but if Members felt inclined to make representations for the actual costs of running vehicles, they could lobby their Member of Parliament. An electronic survey was being formulated to gauge a wider opinion on the matter of allowances.

Members acknowledged that increases in allowances were not appropriate, however if encouragement was to be given to persuade younger people to stand as Councillors then an increase in the Basic Allowance would help.

All Members agreed that they were not comfortable in making decisions on their own allowances and would appreciate the matter being decided by an independent body.

It was suggested that when the economic situation improved there needed to be a re-assessment, and in the meantime it would be useful if the Remuneration Panel could give an indication of what Councillors would be paid, had there been regular awards in recent years, and also consider what would attract new people to stand for office.

RESOLVED that the Council accepts the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

87 WEST LINDSEY HONOURS (Paper F)

Councillor Alan Caine, Chairman of the Challenge and Improvement Committee, introduced the report, giving a résumé of the report's journey. Further to the discussions and amendments that had taken place at various meetings of Council and Challenge and Improvement Committee, the roles, limitations, criteria and processes for the titles of Honorary Alderman, Honorary Freeman, and Honorary Freedom of Entry were now presented for agreement.

Note Councillor Fleetwood left the meeting at this point.

The proposals stemmed from a government initiative which required a framework to be put in place, but which set no obligations to make awards. If the recommendations were rejected there could be a risk if a nomination for an award was submitted and there was no process established to assess the nomination.

Councillor Caine noted that there were three categories of honour – for Councillors, citizens and the military and these were complementary to the Awards made at the December Council meeting.

RESOLVED that

- a) the roles, limitations, criteria and processes for conferring Honorary titles be agreed; and
- b) the composition of an Honours Panel be agreed.

88 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING ON 10 DECEMBER 2012.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Committee meetings published since the last Council meeting on 10 December 2012 be received.

The meeting concluded at 9.15 pm.

Chairman