

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 25 October 2011 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul-Howitt-Cowan (In the Chair)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor Richard Doran
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Irmgard Parrott
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Geoff Wiseman

In Attendance: Director of Neighbourhoods and Health
Business Improvement Manager
Democratic Services Team Leader

25 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Alan Caine, Councillor David Dobbie and Councillor Angela Lawrence

26 MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Chris Darcel substituting for Councillor Alan Caine

27 MINUTES

Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 1 September 2011.

Councillor Bierley noted that minute 19 should specifically refer to the OnLincolnshire tranche of the Race to Infinity Campaign.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendment above the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 1 September 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.12 11/12)

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the Matters Arising Schedule and updated Members on recent changes.

Those items listed as 'Black' had been completed and were to be closed. However concern was expressed that the funding to voluntary organisations, including GAPA, was not scheduled to be presented to the Committee until February. Members initially asked for the report to come to the next meeting as there were still issues regarding GAPA funding even following the £15,000 grant that had been awarded. The Business Plan was not felt to be a long term viable solution.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health assured Members that work was being done on the funding to the voluntary sector and that GAPA was a priority consideration for review in the new year, and it would be best for the Committee to be presented with a completed report. It was also noted that the February date would be late within the budget setting process, and that better forward planning and a more reasoned approach would prevent reactive emergency action. It was felt that the report should be presented to the Committee by January at the latest.

Councillors then asked about the item designated as 'Amber' on the Matters Arising Schedule – Access to West Lindsey District Council services. Cllr Leaning reiterated that consideration of the matter was long overdue, as there were many villages in the district that had large populations but limited access to Council services. Progress on this matter would be followed up.

RESOLVED that

- a) progress on the Matters Arising Schedule be noted
- b) officers look into progress on the items discussed.

29 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30 VERBAL UPDATES

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health gave verbal updates on the following items.

Paperless Working

All Councillors were to be requested to bring their IT kit (laptops) to the November meeting of full Council as a trial run for being paperless. Paper copies of the agenda would still be available to those that requested them, but by January no further hard copies would be provided. The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager was in the process of ringing round all Members to check on their progress with obtaining and using the technology, and asking if support was required.

Some Members expressed concerns about the amount of support that has been made available, and felt that a more concerted roll out of basic training

should be instigated. If Members were not confident on using the technology the project would fail. The initiative was to be constantly monitored.

Winter Preparation

Following the frustration experienced in 2010 with the severe weather and the way it was dealt with, a workshop was held early in 2011 with Councillors, Parishes, officers from LCC and WLDC. Issues were identified and a small working group formed to produce an Action Plan in the event of a recurrence of such weather. One crucial element was to be community resilience and self help, with council support. Work was underway to also address flood relief and a small financial contribution would be available.

Better equipment was now available and there were good arrangements in place with the County. It was felt that the Councils were in a better state of preparedness, and it was necessary to establish whether local communities were also ready, should action be needed.

31 WORKPLAN (CAI.13 11/12)

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the Challenge and Improvement Committee workplan which showed those items scheduled for future meetings.

Further discussion then took place on the voluntary funding report scheduled for February's Committee meeting. It was noted that this report was to consider all voluntary organisations, not just GAPA. Members stated that they had very limited knowledge of what other organisations received financial assistance from the Council and it would be useful to see a detailed breakdown of this information. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health informed Members that there were 17 organisations which in total received around £240,000, and it would be possible to bring details of this to the next meeting.

Questions were asked about the supply of Planning applications to those Parishes in areas with limited Broadband accessibility. The report on Broadband coverage scheduled for November's meeting should address this issue.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) the Workplan be noted, and
- b) a detailed breakdown of funding to voluntary organisations be submitted to the next Committee meeting.

32 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.14 11/12)

The Business Improvement Manager presented the Forward Plan which listed all those items pending for other Committees of the Council.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health advised the Committee that it needed to look at the Forward Plan for other Committees and scan the horizon for issues to which they might wish to give further consideration. The Prosperous Communities Committee or Policy and Resources Committee could commission the Challenge and Improvement Committee to undertake pieces of work on particular matters, or Challenge and Improvement Committee Members could attend the other meetings in the context of 'critical friend'. Meetings were taking place with the Chairmen of the three committees on Joint Committee working to discuss cross-cutting issues.

Issues to which Members felt they would like to give further consideration were discussed.

Member Development was raised as an ongoing issue, particularly training on Committee procedures. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health informed the Committee that the Member Forum was working with the HR Manager on a Member Development Plan, which was to be submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee in December. The Committee agreed they would like to discuss this matter in terms of the way forward and support required. The Democratic Services Team Leader informed the Committee that the next Member Forum was to take place on 15 November and all Members were invited to attend.

Councillors were beginning to receive several complaints from residents regarding the cessation of the winter green waste collection. As well as general objections it was felt that the notice given was too short and the wrong months were to be excluded. It was noted that some neighbouring authorities were planning to implement a charge for the service. It was agreed that the Challenge and Improvement Committee should examine the issue in the Spring to see how the new system had worked.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Forward Plan be noted;
- b) Member Development be added to the Work Plan; and
- c) Green waste winter collection be added to the Work Plan.

33 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE (CAI.15 11/12)

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health introduced the report to provide an update on Community Safety activity, noting that statistics were contained within the appendix.

Councillor Wiseman, as the authority's representative on the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Group outlined some of the changes on the horizon in terms of management, process and funding.

The report stated that more detailed information would be available from the new sentinel ASB case management system at the end of quarter 2.

Members of the Committee were disappointed that no officer from Community Safety was there to present the report and answer specific questions.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

34 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE (CAI.16 11/12)

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health introduced the report to provide an update on Planning Enforcement. The report showed the current caseload in accordance with the authority's adopted priorities, formal action that had been taken and reported the numbers of new and closed cases since the last report. Five appeals were currently pending.

Discussion ensued on the scheme of delegation and whether the priorities were right in terms of cases being closed, and it was felt that closure should not take place without consultation with relevant Ward Councillors.

It was pointed out that a year ago there were very few cases taken to court, and this report showed that there were currently 37 instances of formal action, so there had been improvement in recent months.

Members were again disappointed that no officer was present to answer specific questions, and it was agreed that the report should be re-presented to the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report be noted, and
- b) the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee with an officer present.

Note Councillor Tinker left the meeting at this point.

35 UPDATE FROM RENEWABLE ENERGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP (CAI.17 11/12)

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health updated the Committee on the work the Renewable Energy Task and Finish Group had been doing, and it was proposed that a draft renewable energy statement be brought to the next Committee meeting prior to consideration by Council.

The Group had met on several occasions since its inception in June and had also visited various renewable energy schemes including Hockerton, Branston and Mablethorpe. Views were being sought from the community and it was proposed that on 11 November 'Young Persons Takeover Day' an opportunity would be taken to consult with local young people.

A workshop had also taken place on 7 October to consider the results of the Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study for Central Lincolnshire.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health commended the enthusiasm of the Task and Finish Group, and expressed his thanks to Sue Norman for organising all the trips that the group had undertaken.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report be noted
- b) the Task and Finish Group report back to the meeting on 29 November with a draft renewable energy statement for West Lindsey.

The meeting concluded at 8.03 pm

Chairman