

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 29 November 2011 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Richard Doran
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Irmgard Parrott
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Geoff Wiseman

In Attendance: Director of Neighbourhoods and Health
Development Management Service Manager
Revenues Benefits and Customer Services Manager
Human Resources Manager
Housing, Renewal & Community Safety Manager
Business Improvement Manager
Business Development Officer
Housing Renewal Team Leader
Democratic Services Team Leader

Also in Attendance: Meryl Ward of Uncle Henry's Farm Shop

Also Present: Councillor William Parry
Councillor Chris Darcel

36 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor David Dobbie, Councillor Mick Tinker and the Chief Executive.

37 MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Judy Rainsforth substituting for Councillor David Dobbie

38 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT – INTENTION TO VARY ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman announced his intention to vary the order of business. It was proposed that Paper D be taken prior to Paper C, and Paper I be taken before Paper E, and having been seconded it was:

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

39 MINUTES

Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 25 October 2011.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 25 October 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.18 11/12)

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the Matters Arising Schedule and updated Members on recent changes. The Business Improvement Manager informed Members that progress would be made on the Sharepoint update as further progress was made with paperless working.

Mention was again made of the Financial Support to Organisations, this was still scheduled for the meeting in February, but as Members had requested further information prior to that the current status was appended to the Matters Arising Schedule. Discussion ensued on Members' input into the process, and the Business Development Officer informed the meeting that a review was currently underway with Member involvement.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule be noted.

42 PRESENTATION BY MERYL WARD OF UNCLE HENRY'S FARM SHOP

Meryl Ward had been asked by the Council's Chairman to attend the meeting to give a presentation on Uncle Henry's farm shop as an example of farm diversification and sustainable business practice.

Mrs Ward presented statistics about farming in Lincolnshire, showing that for some crops Lincolnshire was the UK's biggest producer, and had recently been named the country's favourite food county.

Times were hard in the current economic climate and businesses had to co-operate, collaborate and be innovative if they were to survive. Uncle

Henry's had opened a café, butchery, walled garden and farm shop five years ago and Mrs Ward expressed her thanks to the many officers of West Lindsey District Council who had been helpful in establishing this business.

The ethos of the business was to encourage buying food locally and many different strategies were used to promote the business, such as taking part in National Farm Sunday in June every year which attracted around 2,000 visitors and also by encouraging school trips, which required FACE accreditation and attracted around 30 visits per annum. Visitors were encouraged to sign a wheel to support the Red Tractor assured food standards.

The business was also exploring all the available options for renewable energy and Mrs Ward asked for the Council's help in supporting businesses in establishing such schemes. She also expressed concern that other local businesses which Uncle Henry's had previously worked with had now either relocated or closed, necessitating more travelling for crops and livestock, so support for local businesses was also sought.

Note Councillor Wiseman declared a personal interest at this point as working in the energy supply industry.

Councillors expressed their appreciation for a very interesting presentation and although some admitted they had not been to the farm shop the intention was to visit in the future. The success of the venture was a success of West Lindsey. It was suggested that a working group be established to consider how the Council could support small businesses, but it was noted that consideration was already being given to an Economic Development Strategy as part of the Corporate Plan Development.

43 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.19 11/12)

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the Forward Plan which listed all those items pending for other Committees of the Council.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

44 BROADBAND COVERAGE AND COUNTY BDUK FUND (CAI.21 11/12)

The Business Improvement Manager gave a presentation which showed the historic context of the current situation, in that ever increasing demands for faster technology were having to use original copper wiring which was intended for telephony. The old system could not cope with digital signals and the high demand for content. The best medium to use was fibre optic cable.

The Business Improvement Manager then explained the concept of ASDL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) and its limitations. There was a national agenda for Superfast Broadband and the aim was to have the best

Broadband in Europe by 2015. A map was shown setting out those areas that were at a high risk of digital exclusion, which was likely to be around 2 in 3 households in the district, but it was impossible to forecast the future picture.

The BDUK bid had allocated £14.3 million for rural Broadband access in Lincolnshire which required match funding from the public sector, and there was a Rural Community Fund to secure £20m nationally white areas which would be highly unlikely to benefit from upgrade investment, and it was acknowledged that some areas of West Lindsey will be in the last 10%. It is unknown at this stage how many, and the location of, these properties.

It was clarified and noted that although there were some areas that had difficulties with speed of download, there were no areas which did not have some sort of web access through a dial up system. However, this slow speed of access does not present a workable solution for high bandwidth applications and large emails.

Note Councillor Wiseman declared a personal interest at this point as having been involved in the East Stockwith project.

It was proposed that support could be given to the campaign for rural Broadband in Lincolnshire by encouraging as many people as possible to sign up to register their demand at [onlincolnshire](http://onlincolnshire.org). A report would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 12 January 2012.

Thanks were given to the Business Improvement Manager and his team for the work undertaken to date, and appreciation was expressed that efforts were being made to assist those areas experiencing difficulties.

RESOLVED that

- a) That the content of the report be noted; and
- b) Members agree to actively encourage their citizens, businesses, and communities to register their demand for faster broadband at www.onlincolnshire.org
- c) a further update be brought to the next available meeting.

45 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE (CAI.20 11/12)

The Housing Renewal Team Leader presented the report which had been discussed at the previous meeting and brought back for more detailed examination. The status at October was that there were 101 cases open, which was a significant decrease from the previous year's statistics. New priorities meant there was better management of the caseload, and 145 cases had been closed since July.

Members expressed congratulations to the enforcement team, and noted that there was to be better press coverage of successful cases. Questions were asked on how to get a problem site added to the list for investigation. The

Development Management Service Manager assured Members that if they report an incidence to the enforcement team, every case would be investigated. Members highlighted the need for themselves to be kept informed of progress, particularly when there was a significant impact on neighbours.

Questions were asked about the reasons for some cases having been open for four years or more, and it was requested that this information be a regular part of future reports. It was explained that the intervention of the Ombudsman could extend the length of time a case could take, and it was vital that proper procedures were followed as it would be easy to lose a case on a technicality.

It was also clarified that cases were only removed from the list after legal advice having been sought.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

46 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE (CAI.26 11/12)

The Housing, Renewal and Community Safety Manager spoke to the report which had been submitted to the previous meeting but which had been brought back for further discussion.

It was clarified that the statistics only covered crime that was reported and classified as such. Incidents of anti-social behaviour or other issues not classed as crimes were not included in the figures. The information had been asked for to be included in future statistics, as the fear of crime and people's perceptions were important. Ongoing structural changes within the police had delayed receipt of this information.

The figures as shown reported a 22.5% reduction in domestic burglaries, this could be partly due to a joint exercise using 'Smart Water' in properties in the South West ward, which helped to identify items belonging to specific properties.

Further detailed information would be available from the new Sentinel ASB case reporting system at the end of quarter 2.

Note Councillor Wiseman declared a personal interest at this point as being a member of the Community Safety Partnership.

Changes to the structure of the Community Safety Board were out for consultation and discussions were ongoing about the different options. It was suggested further details could be brought to the next meeting.

Members expressed concerns about the reaction from the police when they, or residents, called to report minor incidents, i.e. the response was often to be told to contact ward Members. It was agreed that this was frustrating and the

Housing, Renewal and Community Safety Manager would investigate the issue.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

47 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT (CAI.22 11/12)

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager and the Human Resources Manager had been working together to produce the Member Development Plan and trying to mainstream this with Organisational Development. The Member Forum had given consideration and input to the Plan which would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval, and subsequent regular monitoring by the Governance and Audit Committee.

The intention was that every Councillor would have an individual Continuous Professional Development Plan, and their development would have an individual focus on their specific needs. There were different ways to facilitate training, such as face to face, online, role play etc. Some external programmes would be used but it was hoped to host some events at West Lindsey. Mentoring and/or shadowing was also to be encouraged.

It was hoped to achieve accreditation for the Member Development Charter.

Members were sceptical about whether the proposals would increase attendance at training events and asked what strategies would be used to encourage greater numbers. It was acknowledged that there were problems and that was why a different approach was being taken.

It was pointed out that it was every Member's prerogative to not take up training opportunities if that was their choice, apart from the mandatory legislative requirements, but those that did take advantage of the training offered had the potential to become better Councillors.

Some Members felt that attendance records should be published or that there be some form of remunerative penalty for non-attendance. It was moved that the requirement to sign up to a commitment not be included, as it was felt some Members would sign but then not be committed. This motion was not seconded.

RESOLVED that

- a) the draft Member Development Plan be noted, and
- b) a further update be submitted to the next available meeting .

48 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK (CAI.23 11/12)

The Business Development Officer gave a presentation to Members to outline the elements of the governance framework, progress made over the last 12 months to improve the framework and next steps planned.

Comments were being sought prior to the report being presented to Governance and Audit Committee. The progress to date was set out in a chart appended to the report showing each part of the project, the reasoning behind it and how it was to be achieved. Further reports would be submitted in due course.

The Corporate Priorities were to focus on the purpose of the authority and outcomes for the community, and creating and implementing a vision for the local area. It was demonstrated on the chart how this would be achieved through Democratic Governance, Organisational Development, delivery of value for money decisions, performance measures and monitoring, and evaluation.

Some Members expressed concerns about the decision making process and questioned the remit of the Leader's Panel, but it was clarified that the Leader's Panel merely gave a steer to decision making and an opportunity to share the work of each committee for awareness.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Corporate Governance framework be noted and be recommended for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee;
- b) the progress made to date in improving corporate governance and the next steps identified be noted; and
- c) consideration be given by Members to the role they would play in Corporate Governance.

49 MONITORING OF REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PERFORMANCE (CAI.24 11/12)

The Business Development Officer presented the report which outlined spend against revenue and capital budgets for the period 1 April to 31 August, and focussed on areas that were material to the Council's finances.

Work was ongoing on the report format to improve its clarity.

It was raised that income across the Council was under pressure. A New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant of £462,000 had been received and investment interest was expected to generate an additional £20,000. £100,000 of the NHB had been invested in the disabled facility grant scheme. The forecast year end predicted position on the General Fund was £468,000 under budget.

RESOLVED that the content of the report and the forecast annual budget position for 2011/12 based on income and expenditure to 31 August 2011, be noted.

50 REGULATOR/INDEPENDENT REVIEWS: PEER REVIEW AND IIP (CAI.25 11/12)

The Business Development Officer presented the report to advise Members of recent reviews and assessments.

During September 2011 the Council was subject to a Peer Challenge by the Local Government Group. The findings of the review were summarised in the report and set out in full in the appendix. While some key points for development were listed the feedback had been generally positive.

The Council had also been re-assessed by Investors in People through the process of 46 interviews with officers on the basis of 39 evidence requirements. The outcome of the assessment was that West Lindsey District Council had been awarded Investors in People status for a further three years.

A further assessment which was the quality standard of employers' commitment to young people had been carried out. The Council had been successful in achieving the Positive About Young People Award and would be re-assessed in three years.

Publicity for the awards would be circulated in January 2012. Members acknowledged that there was a lot to be proud of and celebrate.

RESOLVED that

- a) the feedback from the Peer Review Team be noted;
- b) the reassessment of the Investors in People award 2011 be noted;
- c) the Award of Positive About Young People be noted.

51 DRAFT RENEWABLE ENERGY STATEMENT (CAI.27 11/12)

The Vice Chairman introduced the report, as being the Chairman of the Renewable Energy Task and Finish group, and expressed his thanks to the other Members on the group and in particular thanked the Director of Neighbourhoods and Health for his hard work and enthusiasm and noted that the Council was losing a valued officer.

It was emphasised to Members that the Statement was not a policy for planning, there was no recommendation for any particular form of renewable energy, and it was acknowledged that in a few years there may even be further alternatives not yet available.

The working group had been on several field trips to look at different forms of energy production, and the statement showed a positive commitment to prioritise renewable energy production in light of fossils fuels declining.

Other Members of the working group were present at the meeting and also commented on the work done on the statement. It had been a team effort and collaboration was also ongoing with other organisations. The presentation given earlier in the meeting on Uncle Henry's demonstrated opportunities to get involved in supporting local businesses.

Note Councillor Wiseman declared a personal interest in this item as being employed in the energy supply industry.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health informed Members that the report was to be submitted to both the Policy and Resources Committee and Prosperous Communities Committee prior to Council for adoption, and an Action Plan was to be produced. Members felt they would like further discussion around the statement so it was suggested that the two policy committees report back further to the Challenge and Improvement Committee. In the meantime if Members had further questions or comments they should be directed to either the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, or the Director of Neighbourhoods and Health.

RESOLVED that

- a) the draft Renewable Energy Statement produced by the Renewable Energy Task and Finish Group be noted;
- b) the agreed statement be referred to the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee for onward referral for Council adoption in 2012;
- c) the Prosperous Communities and Policy and Resources Committees be recommended to consider the proposed future actions referred to in the report and be asked to report back to the Challenge and Improvement Committee in April 2012 on their proposals.

52 WORK PLAN (CAI.28 11/12)

The Democratic Services Team Leader introduced the Workplan which set out those items scheduled for consideration by the Committee at future meetings.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Health suggested that the Council's Waste Strategy was listed in the Forward Plan and that this was perhaps something to which the Committee may like to give further consideration.

RESOLVED that

- a) the workplan be noted
- b) the Waste Strategy be added to the workplan.

The meeting concluded at 9.35 pm

Chairman