

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on 27 November 2012 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Roger Patterson

In Attendance:

Mark Sturgess
Dinah Lilley

Director of Regeneration and Planning
Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Alan Caine
Councillor Richy Doran
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Irmgard Parrott
Councillor William Parry
Councillor Mick Tinker

Councillor Angela Lawrence had apologised in advance to say that she may be late arriving.

Membership:

Councillor David Cotton substituted for Councillor Leaning
Councillor Stuart Curtis substituted for Councillor Parry

29 MINUTES

Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 11 September 2012.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 11 September 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

30 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.18 12/13)

Updates were given on those items set out in the Matters Arising Schedule.

Councillor Cotton gave further details on progress with establishing wifi in village halls in the District.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be noted.

32 PRESENTATIONS

i) Progress Report and Action Plan from the Open For Business Working Group

The Director of Regeneration and Planning informed Members that the working group had been established in the Spring of 2012 and the set programme for the group was to establish effective ways of supporting businesses in the area. Sessions had taken place with service managers and the opinions of the business community had been sought, and some good ideas had been put forward.

The next step was to be a comparison with best practice in other local authorities and it was anticipated that the work would be complete by Christmas and a report submitted to the January Challenge and Improvement meeting.

Councillor Bierley, as a member of the working group, noted that although the timescale had been tight a lot of useful information had been gained so far. There was a determination to conclude the project within the timescale and to influence the Council's budget setting process.

Councillor Cotton raised the question that he had put to the last Council meeting regarding onlincolnshire and its barriers to businesses within West Lindsey. The Director of Regeneration and Planning would investigate.

Note Councillor Lawrence arrived at this point in the meeting.

ii) Progress Report and Action Plan from the Broadband Working Group

The Director of Regeneration and Planning updated the meeting on progress from the Mobile and Broadband working group established following the January Policy and Resources Committee. The lack of Broadband provision in some areas of the District acted as an impediment to businesses locating in the area and was problematic for those already established.

The group had considered the likely impact of the BDUK initiative, through which £14.3m had been allocated to Lincolnshire. However it was likely that rural areas in West Lindsey would still not have access to superfast Broadband. The group was considering how to address these deficiencies and had spoken to various providers, and also looked at other authorities' best practice, particularly Eastbourne.

The conclusions of the group were multi faceted, in that access to BDUK was needed plus investment in a wireless provider. More work needed to be done to ensure that rural communities were able to access superfast broadband.

Members expressed concerns at the speed of changes in technology and hoped that the work of the group would not be overtaken by the pace of development.

It would be important for any scheme to be affordable and on a par with the major providers and it was suggested that the Council look into buying provision on behalf of residents to get the best price.

Other Working groups

Councillor Howitt-Cowan gave Members a brief résumé on other working groups established from the Committee.

The Heritage and Tourism Group was arranging a meeting in Spring 2013 possibly at RAF Scampton to which at least 40 groups were to be invited. Councillors were encouraged to identify any other community groups which may be interested.

Note Councillor David Dobbie arrived at this point in the meeting.

The Customer Services Working group had looked at a number of aspects of the service provision. It was felt that IT systems could be used to support service delivery better than they are at the moment.. It was also considered feasible that the Planning Service could be supported through the use of an apprentice. This could assist the service as well as providing the apprentice with an insight into what a career in planning or local government could entail.

33 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT QUARTER 2 (CAI.19 12/13)

The Director of Regeneration and Planning presented the Progress and Delivery Report for the second quarter of 2012-13. The report included measures for all departments and were categorised by directorate.

The report was a snapshot of the Council's performance and a "living document", the measures it contained would be developed over time. Three in depth service reviews were ongoing. Members' suggestions about the measures they would like to see in the report were welcomed. The intention was that the Corporate Plan be Member driven so members needed to have the information on how we were progressing to achieve the Corporate Plan's objectives.

Members agreed that the report was an improvement on the previous system of national indicators, and this showed good alignment with the Corporate Plan. Answers to questions were provided within the report and this would prove increasingly useful.

The matter of Member training was raised and the fact that only 35% of Members had undergone development appraisals. It was not felt that there was an effective training and development programme for members. Councillor Cotton noted that work was underway to facilitate online training via the Extranet, as was described at a recent training session, which may go some way to addressing the perennial problem of attendance at Member training sessions.

It was also suggested that a programme of information be developed for future candidates prior to election, although this was something the respective political groups should have an involvement in.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted

34 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.20 12/13)

The Governance and Civic Officer updated the Committee on the Forward Plan which set out forthcoming items for consideration by all Committees of the Council.

Members suggested that they would like to look more closely at Planning Enforcement and also Neighbourhood Plans. It was also proposed that the Community Awards be examined after the awards ceremony at full Council to analyse the process and establish what worked well and what did not.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

35 WORK PLAN (CAI.21 12/13)

Members discussed the Work Plan which set out the programme of work for the Challenge and Improvement Committee in the coming months.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.15 pm

Chairman