

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 3 December 2013 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Sue Rawlins
Councillor Lewis Strange

In Attendance:

Alex Reeks Assistant Chief Executive
Andy Gray Team Manager Housing and Communities
Dinah Lilley Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present: Councillor Geoff Wiseman

Apologies: Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mick Tinker

Membership: No substitutes were appointed for the meeting.

44 MINUTES (CAI.26 13/14)

Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 29 October 2013.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 29 October 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

45 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

46 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.27 13/14)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule. Councillor Strange stated that he hoped the Small Agricultural Wind Turbines policy would progress on course.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be received and noted.

47 MEMBERS' VERBAL UPDATE REPORTS

(a) Members' Portal (Councillor Malcolm Leaning)

Councillor Leaning noted that the lead story currently on Minerva was the results from Councillors' survey, which was a very good use of the site. There was due to be a re-launch of the site in January, which it was hoped would be successful as it needed tidying. Concerns were expressed that there were still some members of staff who did not know how to use the site, and it was useful to now have a list of staff contact details included.

(b) Wi-fi (Councillor Alan Caine)

Councillor Caine noted that a progress list of village hall connections had been circulated to Members. Some new connections had been achieved but there had also been some failures, mainly due to the height of the village hall roofs being shielded by trees. Once the problem was solved there would be benefits to both residents and businesses.

A round table discussion was due to be held with Arqiva regarding mobile 'not-spots', so it was questioned as to whether masts could be shared between mobile and wifi signals. It was questioned as to why church towers were not used to give extra height to aerials, however due to their listed building status planning permission would be required. It was noted however, that Lincoln Cathedral had an aerial installed.

48 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2013 (CAI.28 13/14)

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the delivery tables for the current year's refresh of the Corporate Plan, noting that the document was for consideration by the Challenge and Improvement prior to the Policy Committees. The recommendations on the report needed amending to reflect the decision making remit of each committee.

Ten priorities had been approved by full Council, and feedback was now sought as to whether the additional priorities identified by officers/service areas should

be considered for inclusion, or whether there were any further priorities felt to be worthy of being added.

A proposal had been received from the housing team that Homelessness be included as a Council priority, under Theme 4: Active and Healthy Citizens and Communities - Priority 4.3 Address the wider determinants of health. Discussion ensued on West Lindsey's performance on addressing homelessness in comparison with other authorities. The Team Manager Housing and Communities informed the Committee that the Council's focus was on prevention.

Note: Councillor Rawlins arrived at this point of the meeting.

Councillor Strange felt that a further matter for inclusion could be Rural Transport, under the heading of Accessible and Connected District, Theme 2.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Members consider the proposed activity to be sufficient to meet the original revised Corporate Plan priorities;
- b) the additional priorities identified by officers/service areas be agreed as appropriate for inclusion, and approval by the Policy Committees; and
- c) consideration be given to the inclusion of rural transport as a further priority in the revised Corporate Plan.

49 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE (CAI.29 13/14)

The report had been prepared to provide members with headline performance data for planning enforcement, as at 31 August 2013, and an update on service delivery. The overall number of cases had been reduced significantly since the start of 2013. The last report to committee showed that in February 2013 the section were handling 101 open cases. This number now stood at 66, as shown in Table 1.

The Team Manager Housing and Communities circulated additional detailed information on the current status of enforcement cases, stating that the focus was now on getting older cases resolved, and the caseload was now more manageable than it had been in the past. It was hoped that in due course Members would be able to access information through Minerva.

Members discussed the content of the report and argued that they had wanted specific details, however it was pointed out that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on progress with the number of cases in terms of priorities, and that if Members wanted detailed case information they should contact officers direct, as to include this information in a report would mean it being subject to exempt information rules.

The original purpose of the report being presented to the Challenge and Improvement Committee was for scrutiny and monitoring of the caseload due to the previous backlog problems.

The Assistant Chief Executive questioned whether or not the Challenge and Improvement Committee had fulfilled its role and recommended that it was now perhaps prudent for the Committee to no longer require the report, but that monitoring of performance in this area should fall back to Prosperous Communities Committee which is the accountable committee within the constitution.

Members suggested that a quarterly update could be submitted to the Planning Committee for noting. The remit of Committees had recently changed in the Council's Constitution and officers would have to check to see if it was appropriate within the remit of the Planning Committee. Members felt this would be best as many enforcement issues emanated from non-compliance with planning conditions, so the two matters were linked.

Members expressed concern that Ward Councillors were not notified when cases arose in their area. It was felt that their early involvement could be beneficial to officers in resolving problems, and that they needed to be aware of issues right from the start. Members also expressed concerns that they were not notified of cases being closed within their area.

It was moved and seconded that the report be a quarterly update to the Planning Committee, and that officers consider the action necessary to facilitate this, and also consider the amount of information that could be included in a public report without breaching data protection legislation.

On being voted upon it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

- a) that the report be noted; and
- b) that the necessary steps be taken for a quarterly report to be referred to the Planning Committee.

49 ELSWITHA ACTION PLAN (CAI.30 13/14)

A review of the Elswitha project was presented to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee on 22 October 2013. The report made a number of recommendations which would improve the Council's approach to Corporate Governance; in particular, how the Council approached regeneration and investment in the built environment.

The Governance and Audit minute recommended:

b) the internal audit report be **REFERRED** to the Challenge and Improvement Committee in order to: -

- (i) establish a Cross- Party Working Group to develop a smart action plan to address the recommendations set out in the

- report and those of the Governance Audit Committee, as expressed throughout the course of the debate;
- (ii) monitor the delivery of the action plan by receiving quarterly reports on the implementation of its actions;
 - (iii) obtain assurance and evidence that the Governance framework, systems and processes for developments and key projects has been strengthened;
 - (iv) obtain assurance and evidence that these have been complied with on current developments and key projects; and

c) a report be received back from the Challenge and Improvement Committee in the future on progress with regard to the actions set out in recommendation (b) (i) – (iv) above.

Seven key areas were highlighted in the Auditor's report

1. Project Initiation and Management
2. Managing Contacts with Potential Developers
3. Evaluating Proposals.
4. Valuing Council Land for Disposal
5. Communication with Councillors
6. Clarity of Published Information
7. Stakeholder Engagement

Nominations were now sought from the Challenge and Improvement Committee for Members to form a cross party task and finish group to draft an action plan for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee.

Councillors Bowler (to be Chairman), Caine, Howitt-Cowan and Tinker were nominated. Councillor Dobbie then expressed an interest in being part of the group. This meant that the group would be politically unbalanced, so it was suggested that a further Conservative nomination be sought and the group comprise six, rather than five, members.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Councillors Bowler, Caine, Howitt-Cowan, Tinker and Dobbie form a task and finish group to draft an action plan for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee; and
- b) the Leader of the Council be consulted to seek a further Conservative Member to sit on the group.

51 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.31 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.

It was noted that in connection with item 17 (the Civic Solar Farm) a major application from the private sector was currently pending.

It was noted that with regard to item 35, there was an interest in beefing up tourism, with particular emphasis on the Wolds.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

52 WORK PLAN (CAI.32 13/14)

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was discussed. Members requested that the date for receipt of the Elswitha report be entered into the Forward Plan.

Discussion took place on the recent problems in the South West Ward and it was suggested that the area be made a special case for a steering group, like the ex-MOD communities, however other Members pointed out that there were many wards in the District with social deprivation problems.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.01 pm

Chairman