

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 2 December 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Bowler (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Geoff Wiseman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Pat Mewis

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
Mark Sturgess Chief Operating Officer
Russell Stone Head of Finance
James O' Shaughnessy Team Manager Business Improvement and
Corporate Governance
Joanna Riddell Head of Localism
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present: Chief Inspector Simon Outen

Apologies: Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Sue Rawlins
Councillor Mick Tinker

Membership: There were no substitutes appointed for the meeting.

34 MINUTES

(a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 28

October 2014

With regard to minute 33, a Member indicated that he was disappointed to see the issue he had raised regarding parking enforcement was not contained within the bullet point list. Officers confirmed this matter had been picked up within the draft list of questions, however as soon as it had become apparent that the Police Commissioner would be unable to attend the meeting, the questions had not been widely circulated.

There was no proposal to amend the minutes and therefore: -

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 28 October 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

35 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

36 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.15 14/15)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule. In response to a Member's query, Officers confirmed the report on enforcement was due to be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its January meeting. This was reflected in the Workplan.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be received and noted.

37 CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR 6 MONTHLY UPDATE – VERBAL REPORT FROM INSPECTOR SIMON OUTEN

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Simon Outen to the meeting and invited him to make his presentation. Inspector Outen addressed the Committee with regards to a general update on crime trends and action taken; resources; Anti-Social Behavior general update and action taken; and partnership working including Operation Pottery and the South West Ward, during which the following points were noted: -

- General update on crime trends and action taken:
Crime was currently reducing compared to this time last year. This remained a positive trend over the past 4 years, with overall crime reduced significantly within this period. Police were continuing to take positive action regarding

offences, with enforcement remaining the mainstay of action in relation to serious acquisitive crime (which included burglary offences).

In relation to crime statistics the recent HMIC inspection had identified Lincolnshire as one of the top performing forces in relation to its crime recording standards and compliance with national guidelines and its ethical approach to crime recording practices.

- Resources:

Resourcing remained relatively stable across West Lindsey. The Inspector outlined some of the challenges that would face Lincolnshire Police in the future.

- ASB general update and action taken:

ASB legislation had recently changed as of October, and the Police were currently in the interim period of embedding new working practices, whilst awaiting finalisation of some of the changes. West Lindsey District Council and Lincolnshire Police together with other partners were continuing to work closely together to address ASB, and the ASBRAC and ARM (Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Meeting) processes were being embedded to ensure high and medium level ASB was tackled cooperatively. ASB was continuing to reduce in line with the County picture. Examples of recent successful cases in both Market Rasen and Gainsborough, involving prolific offenders, were shared with the Committee.

- Partnership working-Operation Pottery and SWW

Operation Pottery was a multi-agency approach to modern day slavery. A number of individuals were rescued and assisted into the national referral programme. The police investigation was continuing and the offenders remain on police bail whilst this complex enquiry is progressed, with actions being undertaken in a number of different locations, across the country. The South West Ward remained a priority for local policing and assurance was offered that the Police would continue to work with WLDC to identify long term solutions for this area. Support has been given in relation to the selective licensing proposal, and Local Street surgeries with partner agencies had been undertaken to try and build community confidence. Further such surgeries were planned in the New Year. These surgeries had proved both useful and successful and a lot of learning had been taken away which could be used to replicate the initiative elsewhere.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Outen for his informative presentation and invited the Committee to pose questions, arising from which the Committee received information on restorative justice, coverage levels and Police powers with regard to Parking Enforcement.

In respect of the latter the Committee were provided with an e-mail address, parkingservice@lincolnshire.gov.uk where they could report concerns.

Inspector also undertook to look into the specific issue raised by Councillor Leaning with regard to an ongoing problem in Nettleham.

With regard to restorative justice, Members were advised of an ongoing pilot within Lincolnshire. It was considered that such approaches had the potential to deliver a number of benefits. It was stressed, however, that meetings between victims and perpetrators need to be carefully handled by well-trained mediators and it was accepted that this type of approach was not suitable for all people and all crimes. It was stressed that victim choice drove the programme.

Finally with regard to coverage and squad cars it was confirmed that coverage was better than that level stated by a member of the Committee, however it would be inappropriate to share in the public domain the exact coverage levels and how staffing was arranged. However Inspector Outen did outline the types of support both the local area and the County as whole received from outside the area and from specialist units if required.

The Chairman again thanked Inspector Outen for his attendance and contribution.

RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

38 UPDATE ON MTFP AND BUDGET PROCESS (CAI.26 14/15)

Members gave consideration to a report which presented an update on progress of the development of the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Debate ensued and with regard to the New Homes Bonus, in responding to Members' questions, Officers outlined how the bonus was calculated and paid. This was currently on a 6 year cycle based on CBT1 reports at a period in time each year, however, there was uncertainty regarding its future dependent upon the outcome of the general election and potential change in Government.

The table set out on page 5 of the report was explained to the Committee and Officers indicated they were always available to answer Members queries regarding budget information.

There was concern that the authority needed to focus on what it had to do, its statutory functions and a Member indicated he would like a report on this matter listing all statutory functions. These concerns were borne out of staffing levels in some statutory services and implication that some functions did not continue if an officer was absent, in particular planning and delays with recruitment despite the authority having been aware of pending staffing changes in advance.

Officers accepted that there had been delays in recruitment of late but stressed that in the current economic climate, it was essential a business case was

provided and proven to a fill a vacancy. It was noted that consideration was given to whether the post was within a statutory service or helping to deliver the Corporate Plan when considering all vacancy requests.

Whilst it was not considered appropriate to have a separate report to committee on this matter, Officers undertook to give consideration to this in a future Medium Term Financial Plan.

In responding to further concerns regarding staffing levels, which some were of the view were now effecting the service offered to the public, Officers outlined recent appointments that had been made within the department.

RESOLVED that the having received the report the Committee have assurance that progress towards delivering a balanced financial position and maintaining sustainability going forward, is being made.

39 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.27 14/15)

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 pre-scrutiny.

The following reports were identified for pre-scrutiny:-

- (a) Gainsborough Car Parking
- (b) Gainsborough Market Review

Whilst not specifically listed on the Forward Plan a Member again raised the issue of non-answered telephones and difficulty in contacting the planning department in particular.

The Chief Operating Officer, outlined his proposals for the department, including the recruitment of more staff including a team manager and was accepting that the current arrangement was not working as effectively as it should. There was a need however to manage the calls being received by the department to ensure applications could be dealt with in a timely manner.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted and the items listed at (a) and (b) above be added to the Committee's workplan.

40 WORK PLAN (CAI.28 14/15)

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was discussed.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

41 TO IDENTIFY A DATE (SPECIAL MEETING) FOR ATTENDANCE BY THE POLICE COMMISSIONER

It was unfortunate that the Police Commissioner had been unable to attend the Committee's meeting as planned. A series of proposed dates during mid – late February had now been posed to the Police and Crime Commissioner as alternative dates for attendance and once further communication had been received, the Committee would be advised. Members were supportive of the proposal to hold a special meeting towards the end of February.

One of the Vice-Chairmen indicated that he was not content with the questions Officers had drafted to date. Officers undertook to re-visit these at the next Chair's Briefing.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) arrangements be made to hold a special meeting towards the end of February 2015 for attendance by the Police Commissioner on a mutually agreeable date and details be circulated to Members at the earliest opportunity; and
- (b) the draft questions be re-visited at the next Chair's Briefing and circulated to all Members of the Committee.

42 PREPARATION FOR SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC BODY – BRIEFING NOTE REGARDING HIGHWAYS (CAI.29 14/15)

The Chief Operating Officer presented his strategic briefing note which set the context and provided an overview of key aspects of both the strategic approach and operational role of the local Highways Authority, in order to aid Members' understanding, and to assist them in formulating prospective questions to pose to representatives from the Highways Authority at their meeting in January 2015.

Lengthy informal workshop style discussion ensued during which the following topics were identified and raised: -

- Lobbying of Government. Why did Lincolnshire get no Funding? Did they make bids? Why were they not successful? How can the District Council support the process? What is the process?

- A15 duelling
- Development of GLLEP Plans and Funding
- Eastern Bypass, how is it funded? Reliance on CIL
- Infrastructure – what is definitely planned for the area? What projects are on the possible list and what projects have been ruled out? Including timelines for delivery.
- With regard to big planning applications – do they take into consideration the cumulative effect on schools, village centres, services rather than looking at each on a case by case basis, specific examples referred to including, Saxilby, Welton, Belt Road and the A159
- Hawthorn Road, how did you reach that decision?
- What criteria is used to assess sites? The meaning of terminology and do Officers visit sites?
- Members right to challenge “no objection” statements on planning applications
- Has there been a change in standards / assessment criteria in recent years?
- Contributions to roads from S106 monies – who determines the level of funding required.
- Do you work in partnership eg plans for m181 (north Lincolnshire) and how it may effect smaller roads within our District.

RESOLVED that Officers take away Members’ comments and work up a series of strategic questions to pose to the Highway Authority, for agreement with Chairman and Vice-Chairmen outside of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.05 pm

Chairman