

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Monday 30 June 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Alan Caine
Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Pat Mewis
Councillor Sue Rawlins

In Attendance:
Alex Reeks Assistant Chief Executive
Ruth Farningham Localism Team Leader
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor Angela Lawrence

Membership: Councillor Alan Caine substituting for Councillor Chris Darcel.

This being the first meeting of the new Civic year, the Chairman welcomed all Members present and thanked Councillor Caine, as out-going Chairman, for the work he had previously undertaken on behalf of the Committee.

7 MINUTES

(a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 18 March 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 18 March 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

- (b) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 19 May 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 19 May 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

8 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Pat Mewis declared a non-pecuniary interest in report CAI.03 14/15 (Tourism Group) as a bed and breakfast owner.

9 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.01 14/15)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be received and noted.

10 HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE – RESERVE MEMBER

The Committee were advised that there was a need to appoint a reserve Member representative to serve on the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire. It was noted that the Chief Executive could make this appointment through her delegated powers, but as the Member representative was required to be a serving Member of the Challenge and Improvement Committee, nominations were being sought in this forum.

Councillor Leaning, the appointed Member representative, outlined to Members the commitments arising from the appointment, and the work undertaken by the Health Scrutiny Committee.

On being proposed and seconded it was: -

RESOLVED that Councillor Geoff Wiseman be appointed as the reserve Member on the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire and that this appointment be ratified by the Chief Executive through her delegated power to appointment to outside bodies when vacancies arise mid-year.

11 LOCALISM REVIEW (CAI.02 14/15)

Challenge and Improvement Committee, through a Member Officer Working Group, reviewed the activities of the Localism Service. The aims were to ascertain what the service had achieved, where the service was effective,

where there were gaps in provision, and to find out what could be done to improve the service in West Lindsey. Consideration was given to the report which detailed the findings and recommendations.

In response to Members' questions it was confirmed that the intention was for each area to get a bespoke service, dependent on the outcome of current briefings being held with Ward Members for each area.

All were in agreement that there needed to be greater engagement with Parish and Town Councillors, some were of the view that Area Forums should be re-established, although this was not a general consensus.

Members were referred to actions 16 and 17 of the action plan which aimed to address parish engagement; however caution was expressed at relying solely on Minerva as a means of Communication as the number of Members accessing it was limited and connecting could be difficult.

In response to questions regarding the CCTV Contract, the Officer undertook to provide the contract renewal dates to the Member concerned.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the Prosperous Communities Committee that:

- (a) the action plan highlighted in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (b) the communications Delivery Plan in Appendix 3 be approved;
and
- (c) the current area manager arrangement be cancelled and that engagement with elected members be carried out by the Community Action Team

12 TOURISM GROUP (CAI.03 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview of the progress of the Tourism Group and a recommended way forward to conclude the Group's work.

Some Members considered there should be a more joined up approach with other agencies, whilst others were of the view that this form of working could result in West Lindsey being "swallowed up" by larger conurbations, citing Visit Lincolnshire.

There was a strong consensus that more should be being done to sell tourism in West Lindsey, Members made reference to historical issues and lack of resource in this area.

It was stressed that tourism had not previously been a priority thus resources reduced.

Lengthy debate ensued regarding the wording of the recommendation as Members were concerned that this was not strong enough and that tourism would again not be pushed to the forefront. There was a call for feedback reports to be submitted back to the Challenge and Improvement Committee advising of progress.

In responding Officers stressed that the work was now outside the remit of the Committee, furthermore any recommendations made were merely recommendations and the Prosperous Communities Committee were not duty bound to except such.

The rationale behind the recommendation was further explained and on that basis it was :

RESOLVED that Members approve the recommendation to the Prosperous Communities Committee, namely that the remit for developing the tourism economy in West Lindsey be covered by the Member lead for “Open for Business” and the Chief Operating Officer, and taken forward as identified within the emerging Economic Growth Strategy for the District.

13 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT – REPORTING PERIOD 3 (CAI.04 14/15)

Members gave consideration to a report which sought to provide an update on progress on the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities and an update on performance of service areas. The report is a key part of the Council’s governance framework and provides a public statement on how the council is performing against its publicly stated priorities.

In response to a Member’s question, it was confirmed that costs had been incurred as a result of the Guildhall demolition; this had been the subject of a previous report considered in closed session. It was stressed, however, that the Council was currently in a litigation process in a bid to re-coup the vast majority of this and thus it would be inappropriate to discuss the matter in open forum.

RESOLVED that having examined the contents of the report it be received and noted.

14 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.05 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 scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

15 WORK PLAN (CAI.06 14/15) – WORKSHOP STYLE ITEM

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

For this item, the webcast was switched off so that members could have a frank debate.

The discussion started with the remit of the Challenge and Improvement Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee to make clear distinctions. Members appeared to understand this.

Prior then to going through the 11 areas in the remit of the Challenge and Improvement Committee in the constitution, members identified things that they had concerns about that they felt Challenge and Improvement Committee should be able to review.

The key messages given where that some members of the Committee:

1. Did not understand the Call In procedure in detail but understood that it existed.
2. Felt that they should be able to start reviews on existing projects where they felt they had concerns about the decisions being made or whether or not a project was delivering the desired outcomes.
3. Felt that they should be able to review the success of projects after completion.

Members felt that they should have the remit to undertake reviews of service areas where performance was off track significantly.

Going through the functions that the Committee is responsible for, Members recognised that they did not fulfil the function of '***taking an overview of the policies, forward plans and related authorities of all public bodies and agencies as they affect the council's area or its inhabitants***'.

The Committee were not fully aware of which public bodies operated within the areas and requested officers bring a paper to the next meeting showing which public bodies operate within West Lindsey area.

Members highlighted that they were unclear how the review of the council's Forward Plan was supposed to work for this Committee and requested further guidance.

Members had differing views on whether or not the Call-In procedure was appropriate and on suggesting it should be changed, a proposal was made

that the Committee could make recommendations for changes to the Constitution but to be aware that there was a procedure to go through to get those recommendations approved and that they could be rejected.

It was identified that officers not putting items on the Forward Plan early on in the year was affecting the Committee's ability to identify subject areas that they would like to review or comment upon.

With regard to the Progress and Delivery Report, it was identified that the Committee's role was to scrutinise performance of the council and the decisions of the policy committees. It was therefore identified that the Progress and Delivery Report to the Challenge and Improvement Committee should include the relevant minutes from the policy Committees.

It was identified that members of the Challenge and improvement Committee did not receive pink papers which were sent to the policy Committees and therefore may not be reviewing potential decisions across the board.

Finally, it was identified that Members Forum should be considered as a route to instigating reviews by the Committee, either proactive reviews to support policy decisions or reactive reports where concerns had been identified.

Arising from the debate it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the Work Plan be noted; and
- (b) the following items be added to the work-plan:
 - (i) Service plans - to the January 2015 meeting to accompany the base budgets
 - (ii) A report on public bodies to inform the Committee on public bodies acting within the area to help inform the development of the work-plan at a future meeting.
 - (iii) The Progress and Delivery reports be added to the work at appropriate intervals
 - (iv) A closure report on the Progress and Delivery Working Group be added to the work plan.
 - (v) Proposed criteria for reviews to be added to the July meeting

The meeting concluded at 8.55 pm

Chairman