

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 9 September 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Pat Mewis

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
Lyn Marlow Customer Services Manager
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor Sue Rawlins

Membership: There were no substitutes appointed for the meeting.

16 MINUTES

(a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 30 June 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 30 June 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

17 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

18 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.07 14/15)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule be received and noted.

19 ANNUAL FEEDBACK REPORT (CAI.08 14/15)

Members gave consideration to a report which reviewed the number, type and results of complaints, comments and compliments made to the Council during 2013/14. The report further advised on any trends, areas for learning and future management of feedback.

A breakdown of the nature of those complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman, was also shared with the Committee. Members welcomed the way in which feedback was used to improve services going forward and encouraged this approach continue.

With reference to paragraph 5.1 of the report, Members sought, and were provided, with further details as to why SharePoint was no longer used to track complaints.

In response to Members queries the Customer Services Manager outlined how serial complainers were managed and the processes that were in place to facilitate this.

Members indicated they would be interested to understand how much complaints cost the Authority and suggested this could be included in future reports.

Discussion ensued regarding planning enforcement and the Committee indicated that historically they had received information on this service, and would wish to again.

The Governance and Civic Officer outlined to Members the background and history to this item, along with the reasons the information was no longer submitted to the Committee, namely that it no longer fell within their remit. The Director of Resources undertook to investigate how, in the future, planning enforcement issues were communicated to Members.

RESOLVED that the 2013/2014 results be noted and Members comments be borne in mind when producing the next annual report.

20 VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

It was proposed and seconded that the order of the agenda be varied to allow consideration of Paper D in advance of Paper C.

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

21 CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE OPERATING METHODOLOGY FOR 2014 / 2015 (CAI.10 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which aimed to outline the role of the Committee with regards to undertaking reviews; outline important considerations with regards to scrutiny and conduct; and provide criteria for reviews along with draft related processes for approval.

Officers indicated that if Members were supportive of the proposals, they had provisionally arranged for the Police Commissioner to be in attendance at the Committee's December meeting, drawing Members attention to Section 4 of the report, which outlined proposals as to how external bodies attending Committee would be managed.

Specific reference was also made to paragraph 4.5 of report, regarding the receiving of consultation documents, and Members confirmed their agreement to this being included within their role.

In responding to Members comments, Officers outlined the reasons why call-in had been set at 5 days. This was a standard practice and it was important to get the balance right between allowing Members enough time to call-in decisions, whilst not preventing Officers taking action within what was deemed a reasonable time frame. It was noted that to amend this time line would require a Constitutional change. Furthermore, Officers outlined why, in respect of performance management reviews, outlined in Appendix 1, the trigger point had been set at "after two consecutive periods of missed targets". It was important that the relevant Policy Committee had been provided ample opportunity to resolve any issues prior to the Challenge Improvement Committee becoming involved, the need to maintain good relationships between all the Committees was paramount, and it was therefore agreed that where there were major deviations in performance this could trigger a conversation with the relevant Chairman, in the first instance.

Members sought clarity as to whether planning application decisions could be called-in but it was stressed that quasi-judicial decisions fell outside of the scope of scrutiny.

This led Members to question the types of decisions that they were permitted to call-in. Verbal examples were provided but Officers undertook to provide working examples outside of the meeting to demonstrate the process.

Confirmation was given that organisations such as the CLJSPC could be asked to attend the Committee, referring Members to Section 4 of the report and Paper C.

Members cited a number of recent projects, including the Agile Working Project, where they considered their role would be best served, and which would involve the scrutiny of Officers and sought indication as to whether such a role was feasible. Officers confirmed this to be case, referring Members to the benefits realisation section within the report.

Members suggested that an informal session be included at the bottom of all agendas for Members to give consideration to the projects they may wish to review. Whilst Officers were open to the idea and considered it feasible, it was stressed they Officers would wish to see Members give consideration to and contribute to the development of appropriate scopes in order that any resulting reports brought forward would be fit for purpose and address the remit set by the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the proposed Methodology as outlined in Section 3 of the report be approved; and
- (b) the proposed processes outlined at Appendix 1 be approved.

22 PUBLIC BODIES (CAI.09 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which set out a list of public bodies operating in or affecting the residents and businesses of the District to assist the Committee in determining which, if any, they would like to invite to the Committee.

It was stressed to Members that Public Body Call-in aimed to aide Members' understanding of other organisations; their priorities; their gaps and then use the knowledge gained to help develop our own policies, aiding collaborative working.

Through the course of the debate a number of suggestions were made, namely: -

- ACIS in respect of DFGs
- Health and Well-Being Board and Other Health Organisations in respect of Access to Health Services
- CLJSPC
- Highways

Members were asked to forward any suggestions they had to the Governance and Civic Officer in order that a list could be created for future consideration by all.

RESOLVED that Members forward any suggestions to the Governance and Civic Officer for inclusion on a list for future consideration by the Committee.

23 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.12 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.

24 WORK PLAN (CAI.13 14/15)

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was discussed and the following item was added: -

- Future of Healthy Democracy (from the Members Forum) – October / December Meeting.

A Member indicated that he would like to review the Lea Road School Project and the Empty Homes Project and outline his reasons for this. Officers indicated they were happy to discuss the Member's concerns outside of the meeting. Furthermore, it was noted that Progress and Delivery would be an agenda item when the Committee next meet, detailing the two projects concerned. It was suggested that if this information did not satisfy Members at that point, a way forward could be agreed.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted, subject to the above inclusion.

The meeting concluded at 8.07 pm

Chairman