

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 4 February 2014 at 7.00 pm.

Present : Councillor Malcolm Parish (Chairman – In the Chair)
Councillor Gillian Bardsley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Geoff Wiseman
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance :
Mark Sturgess Chief Operating Officer
Alex Reeks Assistant Chief Executive
Karen Whitfield Area Development Officer – Trinity Arts Centre
Michelle Howard Team Manager – Home Choices
Andy Gray Team Manager – Housing and Communities
Tracey Bircumshaw Group Accountant
Katie Coughlan Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present : Councillor Mick Tinker

Apologies : Councillor Irmgard Parrott
Councillor Lewis Strange

Membership : Councillor Owen Bierley substituting for the late
Councillor William Parry
Councillor Roger Patterson substituting for Councillor
Irmgard Parrott
Councillor Giles McNeill substituting for Councillor Lewis
Strange

70 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all present to meeting and took the opportunity to remind the Committee of the forthcoming Mr Big visit, taking place on Thursday 13 February, at 11.00am in the Market Place, Market Rasen.

71 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

72 MINUTES

(a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 17 December 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 17 December 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

73 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT THE CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 27 JANUARY 2014 (PRCC.42 13/14)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 27 January 2014.

In reference to the Black Matters Arising ID No. 4 (Gainsborough Manufacturing Business Relocation Fund), the Councillor who had been nominated to sit on the Panel, indicated that since his appointment, he had not received any further information. Officers undertook to ensure the relevant Officer made contact with the Councillor concerned.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in report PRCC.42 13/14 be received and noted.

74 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Trevor Young declared a pecuniary interest in report PRCC.45 13/14 (Proposed Fees and Charges), particularly in respect of market and car parking charges as a market trader / town centre business owner and indicated that he would withdraw from the meeting during consideration and determination of this item.

Councillor Geoff Wiseman declared a personal interest in report PRCC.48 13/14 (Disabled Facilities Grants Alternative and Independent Living) as he was a member of the Local Management Board for ACIS, at which the matter had been discussed.

75 COMMUNITY ACTIVATION FUNDING (PRCC.43 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which sought to update Members on an application to the Community Activation Fund.

Members welcomed the report which they considered demonstrated the Council's ethos of partnership working. It was further considered to demonstrate the commitment to the District's communities and would benefit a considerable number of residents. Statistics had shown that small investments in health initiatives could generate much greater savings for the NHS. Health was a corporate priority and the bid which had been made was fully supported.

Members also indicated that they would wish to see partnerships with sports clubs and local councils strengthened, as the number of these struggling to continue was increasing. Reassurance was offered that this was addressed in the job description which had been submitted as part of the bid. In responding, fellow Members also made mention of the variety of both small and large grants, including the local councillor initiative fund and the community asset fund, which were currently being made available by the Council to support such organisations.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Note: Councillor Owen Bierley declared a non-pecuniary interest in the above item of business as a member of Keelby Sports Association.

Councillor Lesley Rollings declared a non-pecuniary interest in the above item of business as a Mayor of Gainsborough Town Council.

76 TRINITY ARTS CENTRE UPDATE (PRCC.44 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which sought to provide Members with an update on current progress with Trinity Arts Centre.

In opening the debate, Vice Chairman Councillor Gillian Bardsley wished to place on record her thanks to Council as a whole for having faith in giving the Centre a chance; to the Area Development Officer for the work she had undertaken; and to the shadow board who had been questioning and challenging and brought fresh ideas forward for consideration and had assisted in the demonstrated improvements.

The aspiration to make greater community use of the building was fully supported and the need to engage with the local community as to what they would like to see the centre's future use "look-like" was acknowledged and the outlined intentions welcomed.

Members considered the increased attendance / usage of the Centre must have realised benefits for surrounding local business and facilities, although Officers indicated such data had not been collected.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the progress to date and improvements be noted; and

- (b) a further report on progress be presented to Members in 12 months' time.

Note: Councillor Trevor Young withdrew from the Chamber at this point.

77 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2014/15 (PRCC.45 13/14)

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the proposed revised Fees and Charges to take effect from 1 April 2014.

Members welcomed the proposed no increase to car parking charges which they hoped would help support local businesses. Reference was made to a number of previous initiatives Members had suggested around car parking, and they questioned why these had not been referenced within the report. In responding Officers indicated that the Committee had previously resolved to give further consideration to these in the preparation of 15/16 fees charges in order that any proposals could be fully worked up. Officers indicated that they would give consideration to parking in the market place as part of this.

A Member expressed concern that residents purchasing new homes were being charged for the provision of a suite of bins, and was of the view that this charge should be made of the developers through the appropriate planning agreements if possible. Officers reminded the Committee that ultimately it would be for Full Council to agree all Fees and Charges but the views and comments expressed would be taken on board.

Members also questioned the status of the lease on the Beaumont Street Car Park and whilst Officers stressed that this was not a matter relevant for consideration this evening, a report would be brought to a future meeting of the relevant committee when appropriate.

RESOLVED that the proposed Fees and Charges, as detailed in Appendix A to report PRCC.45 13/14, be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

Note: Councillor Trevor Young returned to the Chamber at this point in the meeting.

78 DRAFT REVENUE ESTIMATES 2014/15 – 2018/19 (PRCC.46 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which set out details of the Committee's draft revenue estimates for the period of 2014/15 – 2018/19.

RESOLVED that the 2014/15 - 2018/2019 base budgets, as detailed in Appendix A, to report PRCC.46 13/14 be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

**79 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (PRCC.47
13/14)**

Consideration was given to a report which sought to provide Members with information on the updated evidence base for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation across Central Lincolnshire.

Members noted the revised recommendations which had been tabled and the Chief Operating Officer outlined the reasons for the amendments.

As stated in the report the need identified does not have to be met where the need arises, Officers therefore felt it important that greater re-assurance was given as to how the assessment had been undertaken with a view to achieving a more equitable distribution of pitches across central Lincolnshire and the wider area beyond.

In responding to Members' comments, Officers confirmed the assessment did deal with Emergency Stopping Sites / Temporary sites.

Reference was made to the Summergangs Lane site and the considerable investment which had recently been made. Some Members were of the view that the County Council needed to be held to greater account, better enforcement was required and this would assist in changing people's attitudes towards the Gypsy and Traveller Communities settling in the District.

Officers stressed that the assessment was not about addressing people's desires but about addressing identified needs. Comments made about other smaller sites were taken on board. It was stressed that the assessment would be used to develop a policy that would help the planning committee, in time, ensure appropriate criteria for sites was set and applications would be assessed against it, and thus the problems reported would have a lesser chance of materialising.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Committee challenge the robustness of the figures for West Lindsey District and central Lincolnshire generally and refer the Assessment to the Challenge and Improvement Committee to review the brief, methodology and how robust the "need" figure is for West Lindsey.
- (b) The Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of Members, express their objection to the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee and ask for a review of the Assessment in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of pitches across central Lincolnshire and the wider area beyond as part of the duty to co-operate.

80 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS ALTERNATIVE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING (PRCC.48 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with information on the DFG alternatives project and which sought approval of the Assisted Move Scheme policy.

The proposals were fully supported by Members who welcomed the benefits they would help realise.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the contents of the report and the development of the initiatives be noted; and
- (b) the Policy for the assisted move scheme be approved for implementation with immediate effect.

81 FIRE SAFETY VULNERABLE ADULTS (PRCC.49 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of identified fire safety risk for vulnerable adults and information sharing opportunities to enable prevention.

Officers reported that the work referred to at section 2.3 of the report had now been successfully completed.

Members suggested it may be worth speaking to local parish councils some of whom may hold information on vulnerable adults within their local communities.

Councillor Wiseman referred to ACIS's intention to remove wardens from some sheltered accommodation schemes and considered this posed a further increased risk to a number of residents. Officers undertook to raise this matter through the appropriate channels.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

82 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY – PERIOD 2 (PRCC.50 13/14)

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 responding to Officers' questions regarding success stories Members considered should be greater reported, it was suggested there should be greater promotion of the raft of local grants available.

Members also considered the refit of the Leisure Centre had been a success and indicated of positive feedback they had received. However, the cycle racks had been removed during the works and to-date had not been replaced. Officers undertook to raise this matter with the contractor for resolution.

Some Members urged Officers to give greater consideration for future plans to enable healthier communities, such as increased provision of such things as cycle routes and jog paths, alongside the future infrastructure plans.

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

83 WORK PLAN (PRCC.51 13/14)

The Governance and Civic Officer presented the Committee work plan.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan as set out in report PRCC.51 13/14 be received and noted.

84 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act

85 EMPTY HOMES CLUSTER FUNDING (PRCC.5213/14)

Consideration was given to a report which provided members with information on the empty homes cluster funding project in the South West Ward of Gainsborough.

In presenting the report, Officers provided Members with detailed information relating to the proposals and how the initiative would work in practice. It was stressed that the Authority would continue with its enforcement role, when property owners were unwilling to engage.

Whilst some Members supported the proposals and welcomed any such initiatives which would assist in regenerating the area and remove the blight of empty properties and their associated problems, some Members were more sceptical.

Reference was made to similar initiatives which had been adopted in the 80s and 90s with little long term benefit. There was concern that this was an ad-hoc approach and would not deliver the level of improvements required. It was considered a full Housing Renewal Strategy was required and that the proposed initiative should be one of a raft of tools being used. It was acknowledged that achievements were made, and benefits and improvements seen, however these

were small, and piecemeal and it was considered the area was in need of much greater intervention.

In responding Officers outlined how the proposals would link to the selective licensing scheme currently being developed, and the work being undertaken by Localism team to demonstrate the multi-prong approach been used.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the proposals to bring properties back into use on a purchase to repair and lease and repair basis as part of the cluster funding project, subject to the standard property specific checks being made be approved;
- (b) it be supported and **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee that £300k of the DCLG empty homes cluster funding grant be allocated to deliver an “empty property assistance scheme” for housebuyers and landlords; and
- (c) the revised Housing Assistance Policy and Cluster of Empty Homes Policy, as a tool for delivering the “empty property assistance scheme” be approved.

The meeting concluded at 9.09 pm.

Chairman