

## **WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Tuesday 3 February 2015 at 6.30pm.

**Present:** Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman) (In the Chair)  
Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Richy Doran  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor Jessie Milne  
Councillor Malcolm Parish  
Councillor Irmgard Parrott  
Councillor Roger Patterson  
Councillor Lesley Rollings  
Councillor Geoff Wiseman

**In Attendance :**

Penny Sharp	Commercial Director
Alan Robinson	Strategic Lead – Democratic and Business Support
Tracey Bircumshaw	Group Accountant
Derek Lawrence	Interim Planning Team Manager
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor Chris Day

**Also In Attendance:** Ms Anita Ruffle, Lincolnshire County Council,  
Transport Department

**Apologies:** Councillor Gillian Bardsley (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Di Rodgers  
Councillor Trevor Young

**Membership:** Councillor Roger Patterson to substitute for  
Councillor Gillian Bardsley  
Councillor Geoff Wiseman to substitute for  
Councillor Di Rodgers

## **70 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

## **71 MINUTES**

- (a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 16 December 2014

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 16 December 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

In relation to Minute 64 (Community Grants) the Chairman advised the Committee that the Policy and Resources Committee had deferred their recommendation at its meeting on 15 January 2015, pending further information and the matter would now be reconsidered by them on 19 February 2015.

## **72 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT THE CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 26 JANUARY 2015 (PRCC.45 14/15)**

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 26 January 2015.

**RESOLVED** that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in report PRCC.45 14/15 be received and noted.

## **73 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lewis Strange declared a non-pecuniary interest in the presentation item (Minute 74 relates) as his daughter worked in the same department as the presenter.

Councillor Roger Patterson declared a non-pecuniary interest in the presentation item (Minute 74 relates) as he was employed by a public transport company,

Councillor Richy Doran declared a non-pecuniary interest in the presentation item (Minute 74 relates) as he was employed by East Midlands Trains.

**74 PRESENTATION ITEM: - PRESENTATION BY ANITA RUFFLE, LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, REGARDING RURAL TRANSPORT IN WEST LINDSEY.**

The Chairman welcomed Anita Ruffle to the meeting and invited her to make her presentation to the Committee regarding rural transport in West Lindsey.

In opening, the Committee were advised that Commercial Bus Operators, under current legislation could run services when and where they wanted to. Furthermore, they only needed to give 56 days notice of a new service, change in service or cessation of a service. The 1985 Transport Act and Transport Act 2000 gave local authorities a duty to consider “socially necessary services” However, local authorities were not permitted legally to compete on a commercial basis with operators.

The Committee were provided with contextual and historical information of providing public transport across Lincolnshire and the complexities which arose as a result of the county’s rural and sparse nature. The County Council over the years had developed a Strategy which aimed to: -

- address all elements deterring use of buses;
- reduce social exclusion; and
- maximise funding opportunities available.

Borne from this had been the Interconnect Strategy, comprising three elements:

**Interurban Network**

- Commercial Core Service
- Minimum hourly frequency
- Low Floor Buses

**Rural Feeder Service**

- Demand responsive service
- Guaranteed connections
- Accessible

**Tertiary Services**

- Community Transport eg. Dial a Ride, Voluntary Car Schemes

The Committee were provided with information on the current Interconnect – Interurban Services available and as well as the Call Connect – Rural Services available. Information on how the Call Connect scheme worked was also provided to the Committee.

The current funding situation was shared with Members, along with details of the bus services currently supported within West Lindsey and the Community Transport schemes in operation. In conclusion the current rail services across

the District were outlined, together with the increased service provision which was expected over the next four years.

The Chairman thanked Ms Ruffle for her very informative presentation and invited the Committee to submit their questions to her.

In responding to questions posed, Members were advised of the consultation process involved in the siting and design of village bus stops, the funding that was available in certain circumstances and restrictions that were applicable to common land.

Members cited a number of villages and routes where they felt a “permanent” service would be viable. However it was again stressed that the Authority could not compete with Commercial Operators, nor could they abstract from their revenue. Of the scenarios highlighted by Members, Ms Ruffle was confident that the Call-Connect Service could “plug” this gap.

One Member of the Committee advised that feedback he had received on the Call-Connect Service had not been overly positive, with customers advising that they had to book trips up to three weeks in advance and that they did not get the assistance they had previously.

In responding, Ms Ruffle disputed the booking / waiting times quoted, advising of the customer feedback mechanisms which were in place. Satisfaction levels were currently at 97% and all feedback received / customer demands was used to shape the service going forward . It was stressed that dial-a-ride had been a premium service, which could not be sustained in the economic climate of continued cuts to public funding. The change in service standard had meant only a handful of people who had previously used the service could now not. Call Connect drivers could and would assist travellers and the service was based around a strong customer ethos. The difference being that Call Connect was a door to door service as opposed to a house to house service, which dial-a-ride over time had become.

Members expressed concern that decisions around commercial viability were based on the income generated by each route, this took no account for those users travelling with a concessions card, which often accounted for a large percentage of the total number of travellers.

In responding, Ms Ruffle reminded the Committee of the legislation relating to public transport, unfortunately this was a commercial business which ultimately based its decisions around profit, rather than social return/ value as maybe a local authority would. Reassurance was offered however that any decisions made by the County Council, were based on “bums on seats”.

The Chairman again thanked Ms Ruffle for her presentation and Officers undertook to circulate the presentation to all Members and post this on the Members Extranet also.

**75 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY (SERVICES) – PERIOD 2 (PRCC. 46 14/15)**

Members gave consideration to the second of the newly styled Progress and Delivery reports, which highlighted the areas where services were “off target”, the reasons for this and the proposed rectifications. The report also provided Members with an opportunity to examine the reasons why performance was off track and seek assurance that the measures which had been put in place were sufficient to tackle the issues which had been identified with the service.

Members commented on the extremely positive position of the Trinity Arts Centre, making reference to the very different situation some three to four years ago, and thanked Officers and all involved for their hard work.

**RESOLVED** that having examined the areas where service performance was off target and having sought assurance from Officers, agreed that the rectifications proposed would deal with the issues identified.

**76 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY (PROJECTS) – PERIOD 2 (PRCC.47 14/15)**

Members gave consideration to the second of the new style Progress and Delivery reports which dealt with the projects. The report was an exceptions report, in that it dealt with those projects which were off track and in danger of not delivering by their deadline. The report also highlighted those projects which had been delivered within the period in order that Members could determine where progress was being made.

In respect of the project entitled “Gainsborough Young Person’s Accommodation” Councillors expressed concern that, without the revenue support for the scheme being secured, the project would not deliver against its original brief. Officers undertook to source further information as to the current funding position and provide further information outside of the meeting.

In light of the above, Members sought reassurance that the funding for the Market Rasen Forum was not at risk, again Officers undertook to source further information as to the current funding position and provide further information outside of the meeting, however reassurance was offered that no such risk had been raised to date.

In responding to queries regarding the Land Charges Project, Officers advised that whilst service performance had improved this was primarily as a result of additional resources, which would not be sustainable. The automation of the process was key and continued vigorous testing of the system was ongoing.

**RESOLVED** that having examined the areas where a project was off target and having sought assurance from Officers, it was

agreed that the rectifications proposed would deal with the issues identified.

**77 DRAFT BUDGET – PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE 2015/16  
– 2019/20**

Members gave consideration to a report which set out details of the Committee's draft revenue estimates for the period 2015/16 – 2019/20.

A Members sought an update on the Beaumont Street Car Park negotiations and was referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report, which set out the assumptions which had been made in preparing the budget. In view of the Committee being in open session, no further details were provided.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Prosperous Communities Budget be **RECOMMENDED** to the Policy and Resources Committee for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**76 ESTABLISHING GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES FOR  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING (PRCC.49 14/15)**

Consideration was given to a report which set down proposed governance procedures for dealing with Neighbourhood Planning.

The local planning authority had a duty under the Act to advise and support parishes with the production of their plans. It was noted there were currently seven plans at various stages of preparation and one other at area designation stage.

This report set out the support that would be offered to parishes from West Lindsey and in addition highlighted who was responsible for what. It built upon a previous report which had been approved by Prosperous Communities Committee.

Appendix 1 set out the stages of a Neighbourhood Plan and the support that West Lindsey may give. It was stressed that a balance had to be struck in that there were not unlimited resources available to undertake this work.

All parish councils would also be notified of the Guidance Note.

Appendix 2 detailed the internal procedures that West Lindsey must undertake as part of their duties under the Act. This aimed to help members remain aware of the progress of Neighbourhood Plans, but also inform them of who was making the decision at various stages of the process.

Debate ensued with all Members welcoming the production of the Guidance Note. There was common consensus that this needed to be distributed and brought to the attention of all Parish Councils as a matter of urgency.

Members also requested that the Interim Planning Manager make all Parish Councils aware of the various funding streams which were available to assist them. Officers undertook to provide such information to Parish Clerks, along with useful web links to relevant sites.

Members praised the invaluable nature of Neighbourhood Plans and were keen that as many communities as possible were encouraged to prepare one. The positive benefits a Neighbourhood Plan could bring to a Parish were outlined, including a greater percentage share of CIL contributions to be spent at the parish's discretion, and being able to greater influence the nature and location of development in their area.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note, attached at Appendix 1 to report PRCC.49 14/15 be approved and be:
  - (i) posted on the Council's website;
  - (ii) notified to every Parish Council within the District;  
and
- (b) the governance arrangements set out in Appendix 2 of report PRCC.49 14/15 for dealing with neighbourhood planning be approved.

**77 WORKPLAN (PRCC.50 14/15)**

Members gave consideration to the Committee work plan.

**RESOLVED** that the Work Plan as set out in report PRCC.50 14/15 be received and noted.

**78 ENTREPRENEURIAL FRAMEWORK AND COMMERCIAL PLAN (PRCC.51 14/15)**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the proposed Commercial Plan for the Council.

The proposed Plan focussed on four themes:

- Increasing income from Council services
- Increasing external funding to the Council and the district

- Increasing capital and revenue income from supporting housing and economic growth
- Strengthening the Council's commercial culture and capability.

It was intended that the proposed Commercial Plan would be supported by an annual delivery plan. The delivery plan would detail the specific projects that would be developed and delivered during each financial year.

Due to the commercial sensitivities the proposed Commercial Plan provided a high-level framework. This had been developed through discussion with Elected Members and Council staff over the last 3 months. Workshops had been held with Elected Members and the Council's Wider Leadership Team to discuss the key principles.

It was noted that comments were still awaited from Lincs Legal on the proposed Plan, along with consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee, prior to the Plan being submitted to Council on 3 March 2015 for final approval.

With regard to future Governance, whilst the report suggested that the Policy and Resources Committee establish a steering group, as a result of feedback to date, it had been suggested that any future steering group established should have cross committee and cross party representation thereon. Members were supportive of this amended suggestion.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Commercial Plan be endorsed for further development and **RECOMMENDED** to Council for approval.

The meeting concluded at 8.42 pm.

Chairman