

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Wednesday 22 July 2015 at 6.30pm.

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

Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Jessie Milne
Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance :

Manjeet Gill	Chief Executive
Ian Knowles	Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Eve Fawcett-Moralee	Strategic Lead – Economic Development and Regeneration
Nick Ethelstone	Team Manager – Area Development Team 1
Jeannette Anderson	Team Manager – Corporate Systems Development
Phil Hinch	Team Leader – Licensing and Support
Andy Gray	Team Manager – Housing and Communities
Luke Brown	Neighbourhood Plans Officer
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present: Councillor Jeff Summers – Leader of the Council
Councillor Judy Rainsforth
5 x Members of the Public

Also in Attendance:

Brendan Gallagher Lincolnshire County Council

Apologies: Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Mrs Di Rodgers

Membership: There were no substitutes appointed for the meeting.

16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman advised that 3 people had registered to address the Committee, all regarding Agenda item 7 (a) (Selective Licensing – Position Update). It was noted that two of the submissions had been received from local residents who had requested anonymity and therefore their representations would be read to the Committee by the Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Gavin Dick, from the National Landlords Association to the meeting and invited him to address the Committee. Mr Dick raised concerns regarding the introduction of Selective Licensing as a number of banks had indicated that they would no longer provide mortgages for properties in such areas. Furthermore, the forthcoming de-regulation bill could result in resource issues for the Council in his opinion.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dick for his comments and indicated that these would be taken into consideration by the Committee when making future decisions.

The Chairman then read out to the meeting the first representation from a local resident, as follows: -

“In the last six years I have seen my house depreciate by between £25,000 and £30,000.

I was told by the valuer that this was due to the state of the properties in the area and by the activities of people living very near to us at the time. Landlords have invested to make money and we invested into living here. We are stuck with our house and cannot move to another area. This is just one example of what can happen when Landlords let to bad tenants without any conditions.

Some let without references and no deposit and with no list of do's and don'ts. Little wonder that houses are abused and sometimes used for illegal purposes. It costs money for the police to keep attending to the same houses time and again, not forgetting the ambulance and fire service, all costs paid by tax payers of course, not landlords.

The area is a gold mine for criminal activities. I know because I have seen it. One neighbour was told by a drug dealer that this was a drug area and that if they did not like it then they could move. That's just it, they can't because the house will not bring enough money to move to a better area. I have seen people selling shoplifted items from house to house and exchange the goods for drugs.

There are many people, who are law abiding, living in houses that need repairing. They need help from the owners of the properties ie. Landlords.

Drug dealers are not bothered what the properties are like just so long as they can continue to ply their trade and wreck families and communities. While some Landlords continue to be desperate to let properties and will let without deposits, or without references and without proper listed contracts then this area will definitely continue to have a bad reputation.

Here is a list of weapons carried in the street that I have seen from my house window: Long handled axe, An array of knives, Hammers, long and short, Machettes, some very long, Metal base ball bat, Bats and iron bars. This is just a sample, there are more including a large cat- o- nine tales and spades, farm garden forks and bricks.

I have been threatened myself. I was told by a certain youth that he was going to break into my house late at a night and seriously damage me.

To think I bought into Gainsborough for this.

If this council values Gainsborough, then please pass selective licensing.

You owe it to the law abiding people living here either in rented property or home owners.

You owe it to the children living in squalid damp conditions houses with noisy thugs for neighbours who play loud music well into the early hours. It cannot help their education”.

The Chairman then shared with Committee the contents of the second representation, as follows: -

“I bought my property in the South West ward 15 years ago, I knew all my neighbours and the good folk were in the majority. I now learn who my new neighbours are by reading about them in the local paper's Court reports. I fear that there are vested interests in the criminal activities being carried out in several rented properties being used as Cannabis Factories, other neglected by owners who do not repair broken windows and turn a blind eye to tenants bypassing electricity meters. These are the sort of people that make no positive contribution to society, do not live normal lives, have no respect for the area or their neighbours and constantly dump rubbish in the streets to the cost of WLDC workers and the detriment of the South West Ward.

I am asking that members support the decent South West Ward residents by approving the Paper on Selective Licensing of Landlords. On reading all the official paperwork, research and my own observations I believe that there is no reasonable alternative to this”.

The Chairman thanked the two local residents for their comments and indicated that these would be taken into consideration by the Committee when making future decisions.

Committee enquired as to whether they were entitled to receive the two representations from residents in full. Officers advised of the rules around Data Protection and indicated that if the residents concerned were happy for their information to be released in this way, then the representations would be forwarded to all Members of the Committee.

17 MINUTES

- (a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 8 June 2015.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 8 June 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT THE CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 14 JULY 2015 (PRCC.07 15/16)

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 14 July 2015.

Members sought an update in respect of the action entitled “Visit to Young Persons Accommodation Project – Gainsborough” and were advised that Officers were in the process of finding a mutually agreeable date and this would be circulated to Members at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in report PRCC.07 15/16 be received and noted.

19 MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Trevor Young declared a pecuniary interest in report PRCC.08 15/16 (Selective Licensing Position Update), as a property owner / landlord in the South West Ward. However he indicated he would remain in the meeting during consideration of the item as no decisions were being made.

Councillor Gillian Bardsley declared a pecuniary interest in report PRCC.08 15/16 (Selective Licensing Position Update), as a property owner / landlord in the South West Ward. However she indicated she would remain in the meeting during consideration of the item as no decisions were being made.

20 CMS REPLACEMENT – PRESENTATION BY JEANNETTE ANDERSON

The Chairman invited Mrs Anderson to the meeting and invited her to make her presentation to Committee. The reasons why the CMS (Website) needed replacing were outlined, together with the associated timeline, this being: -

- May – consultations and drawing up specification / requirements.
- June – Pre-qualification questionnaires
- July – Invitation to Tender and presentations
- Aug – Evaluation of all proposals
- Sept – Implementation
- Oct – Content migration and further developments
- Nov/ Dec – Go Live

The ways in which the new specification would deliver a website that would meet the current needs, as well as the future needs, of the Council were shared with Members, together with the ways in which the new website would benefit householders, namely: -

- It would offer more flexibility to access all services (including social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video sharing sites)
- It would have more detailed information specific to customers (ie citizens accounts)
- The Website would be available on phones, tablets, etc
- It would Support the Customer Access Strategy and enable channel shift of services.
- It would offer different options to access services (Live web chat etc)

In responding to Members comments, Officers confirmed they would not be “shutting the door” to those Members of the Public who still wished to visit the Offices, the website offered an extended service for those who preferred to undertake their business this way.

21 SELECTIVE LICENSING – POSITION UPDATE (PRCC.08 15/16)

Members gave consideration to a report which provided an update on selective licensing proposals in Gainsborough.

In presenting the report to Members, Officers outlined at length the background to the project, the legislation which governed such schemes, the consultation undertaken to date and the proposed next steps in light of all of this information.

In summary, it was evident from the NKM report that there was an evidenced link between ASB and the Private Rented Sector in particular areas of Gainsborough, shown most clearly in the South West Ward. There was a need to respond to recent case law rulings on consultation and for any future process to consider such to ensure that the risk to the Council was minimised should it wish to proceed with a selective licensing scheme.

The Chairman encouraged all to engage in the consultation process, and on that basis, it was: -

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the contents of the report and the findings of the NKM report be noted; and
- (b) proposals for a selective licensing scheme in a specific part of the South West Ward be consulted upon in the timescales set out within report PRCC.08 15/16.

22 ECONOMIC GROWTH A PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE (PRCC.09 15/16)

Members gave consideration to a report which outlined the national and local agendas including devolution. The report further advised of proposed partnership arrangements to support the delivery of the West Lindsey Economic Development Strategy and the growth of Gainsborough, as well as proposals regarding the Council investing in the “place marketing” of Gainsborough to help attract investment to the town and the wider District.

In presenting the report to Members, Officers outlined at length and in detail the national and local context; the proposals for growth delivery throughout the District, the creation of the West Lindsey Growth Partnership and how it would drive economic development within the District and the growth and regeneration of Gainsborough, citing a number of initiatives and projects which would be driven by the Strategic Board of the Partnership, including the Greater Gainsborough Housing Zone, the Gainsborough Town Centre Investment Framework, the South West Ward regeneration programme and Infrastructure and connectivity.

Members were provided with a detailed position update and future planned work in respect of the six initiatives listed in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

Discussion ensued and Members made reference to re-considering a second bridge into the town. There was a view that entry into the town prohibited growth. There was a plea from Members to ensure that any projects undertaken now did not prevent further future developments. Rail links, and achieving significant improvements to these were considered critical if the town and district were to grow. Access to services was also considered key in particular education and health services. In respect of the latter, Members expressed deep concern at the current GP provision and in response the Chief Executive outlined the ongoing work in this area being headed by the local MP.

Members were also of the view that an impartial Chairman was critical to any partnership established.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the establishment of partnerships outlined in Appendix 1 of report PRCC.09 15/16 to deliver on priorities such as agri food, skills, Gainsborough Housing Zone and the A15 Corridor be agreed;
- (b) the principles for business led and partnership led approaches to successfully deliver growth outcomes be approved;
- (c) the development of a West Lindsey Marketing Strategy, starting with work on Gainsborough to accelerate housing growth and supplement the housing zone programme be supported;
- (d) the exploration of how the Council can work more formally with the Humber LEP be approved;
- (e) the holding of a Councillor workshop on Devolution and the opportunities be approved;
- (f) it be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that £300,000 from the Economic Development – Investment for Growth Reserve be approved for the investment projects outlined in Section 4.8 of report PRCC.09 15/16; and
- (g) it be **FURTHER RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that delegated powers be granted to the Prosperous Communities Committee to manage and monitor the £300,000 budget and delivery of the programme, referred to at (f) above, (subject to

changes in the Constitution being agreed by Council on 27 July 2015).

23 GAINSBOROUGH HOUSING ZONE (PRCC.10 15/16)

Following a successful bidding process part of Gainsborough had been allocated as one of twenty national “Housing Zones”. Consideration was given to a report which set out details of the zone and its implications and opportunities.

In presenting the report to Members, Officers outlined at length and in detail the background to the project, the scope and location of the greater Gainsborough housing zone, the Council assets located within the zone and the planned next steps.

In conclusion it was noted that the Council had been extremely successful in achieving LDO funding and being allocated as a National Housing Zone. This had brought funding opportunities and had enhanced the Council’s reputation as an ambitious authority who was working hard to deliver growth and regeneration. The next step was to support delivery of new housing on these sites.

To support this, a project team comprising of internal and external support had been put together and a governance structure had been proposed which would bring it underneath the West Lindsey Growth Partnership which would have a strategic view of all growth across the district.

The Housing Zone supported the regeneration of key brownfield sites and importantly Gainsborough town centre but also helped to further the Councils commercial agenda of enhancing asset value and generating income to support the delivery of services. The Council had a number of land assets within the zone and there would be a focus on generating a return from these assets either through development or disposal.

Discussion ensued and Members commented on the importance of having vision ambition and aspiration. Whilst quality housing was required the need for a quality environment in its broadest sense was what needed to be achieved.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) it be agreed that the governance of the Housing Zone be vested under the West Lindsey Growth partnership as set out in report PRCC.09 (Economic Growth a Partnership Response) (minute 22 above relates); and

- (b) any financial investment by the Council within the Housing Zone will be subject to agreement by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

24 CIL UPDATE (PRCC.11 15/16)

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with an updated position on the implementation of a Community Infrastructure charging schedule in West Lindsey, set out the timetable for the implementation of CIL and to highlight some of the issues with the implementation of a CIL regime across the District.

It was noted that Members had considered some of these issues before, and in order to aide understanding of the process, Prosperous Community Committee reports from the discontinued Core Strategy process had been provided to Members as background papers.

In ensuing debate Members sought and received information on the difference between CIL and S106. Members thought it important that healthy lifestyles were built into any future developments.

Finally Members felt it important that CIL rates should be set at a level that would encourage and stimulate growth, where the District required it, this being the market towns of Market Rasen, Gainsborough and Caistor as well as the MOD Villages and A15 corridor.

RESOLVED that having considered the issues around the introduction of a CIL charging regime in the District, Members comments be used to influence the final scheme.

25 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE REGARDING AMENDMENTS TO TAXI POLICY (PRCC.12 15/16)

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the Committee of a recommendation from the Licensing and Regulatory Committee to amend the Taxi Policy. The amendments if approved would affect the taxi application process and thus needed approval from the appropriate Policy Committee, that being Prosperous Communities Committee.

In responding to Members comments regarding a recent incident, arising from a language barrier, Officers outlined the policies and procedures which had been introduced since 2013 to tackle such issues.

RESOLVED that the recommendations from the Licensing and Regulatory Committee meetings held on 9 June and 9 December 2014 be accepted and thus the changes to the Taxi Policy set out below be approved for implementation: -

- a) All new drivers on initial application and all existing drivers upon renewal will be expected to sign up to and abide by the Safeguarding Code of Conduct ;
- b) All new drivers on initial application and all existing drivers upon renewal will be expected to complete the required Safeguarding Awareness training module as a pre-requisite to making their application (once developed for the taxi trade);
- (c) all new taxi / private hire driver applications with 6 live points or more will be required to submit a Low Risk Driving Assessment from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership as part of their application; and
- (d) any existing taxi / private hire driver currently licensed by WLDC who has accrued 6 points or more on their driving licence will receive a warning and be required to take part in the Taxi Driver Information Programme and provide the relevant certificate to Officers accordingly. The matter may be referred to the relevant committee, if deemed appropriate.

26 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY – PERIOD 1 – SERVICES (PRCC.13 15/16)

Members gave consideration to the first of the newly styled Progress and Delivery reports for 2015/16, 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.

It was noted that this was an exceptions report and as such only contained off target measures for each service area. Furthermore it included the revised measures agreed in Spring 2015.

As the first report of year it was noted that it contained data for only two months. However there were patterns which were continuing from last year with performance on the development management service and the operation of the

Gainsborough Markets still raising concern. Whilst not referenced in the report, Members were advised that performance in land charges had slipped off target again, with applications currently taking 35 days to complete. Committee were assured that the Council Leadership Team were looking to maintain a sustained improvement and were taking necessary action.

RESOLVED that 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.

27 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY – PERIOD 1 – PROJECTS (PRCC.14 15/16)

Members gave consideration to the first of the newly styled Progress and Delivery reports for 2015/16, 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.

The transport champion, requested that he be kept engaged.

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.

28 SAFEGUARDING – SIX MONTH REVIEW (PRCC.15 15/16)

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with an update in respect of Safeguarding.

Members enquired as to how many safeguarding alerts had been made by Officers of West Lindsey, during the period which the report covered. Officers undertook to source this information. Members further indicated that they would welcome summary information on the outcomes of any alerts made by Officers and any lessons learnt.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

29 WORK PLAN (PRCC.16 15/16)

Members gave consideration to the Committee work plan.

Prosperous Communities Committee – 22 July 2015
Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire on Thursday 20 August 2015 at 4.30pm

The Governance Officer undertook to liaise with the Chief Operating Officer to ensure the timetable referred to in Paper E (CIL Update report) was reflected in the Committee's workplan

RESOLVED that the Work Plan as set out in report PRCC.16 15/16 be received and noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.47 pm.

Chairman