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 5 April 2016 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor David Bond (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Young (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor John McNeill
Councilor Jessie Milne
Councillor Pat Mewis
Councillr Angela White

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
Joanna Walker	Team Manager Projects and Growth
Nicola Calver	Governance and Civic Officer
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Alexander Bridgwood
Councillor Stuart Curtis

Also Present: Councillor Matthew Boles
Councllor Mick Devine

Membership: Councillor Jessie Milne substituting for Councillor Alexander Bridgwood

68 MINUTES

(a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 22 February 2016 (CAI.47 15/16)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 22 February 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

69 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Trevor Young declared a personal interest in report CAI.54 (Gainsborough Town Centre Management Proposals) as he owned a property within the town centre and was a seasonal market stall holder.

70 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (CAI.39 15/16)

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 24 March 2016.

It was reported that all actions within the report were marked as completed since the previous meeting of the Committee.

> **RESOLVED** that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 24 March 2016 be received and noted.

71 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY WORKING GROUP PROGRESS (CAI.49 15/16)

Members gave consideration to report which provided an update on the work undertaken to-date by the Challenge and Improvement Progress and Delivery Working Group.

> **RESOLVED** that the progress to-date with the Progress and Delivery Working Group be noted.

72 RECONFIGURATION OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER – RECOMMENDATION FROM THE DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP (CAI.50 15/16)

Having considered an update from the Democracy Working Group at its meeting on 22 February 2016, which had included detailed information of the work the Group had undertaken in respect of re-configuring the Council Chamber, the Committee had previously resolved that: -

> (c) prior to making any recommendation to Full Council on a revised configuration for the Council Chamber, the results from all three configurations (including the traditional layout) be considered again by the Committee at its next meeting.

In light of the above, the Committee were asked to give consideration to a report which presented the further findings of the feedback received from Members of Council on all three options for reconfiguration of the Council Chamber, as requested.

In presenting the report, the Governance and Civic Officer drew Members' attention to the initial comments which had been received from Members, summarised in Section 2.4 of the report, together with the average scores received for each option as set out in Section 2.5.

It was noted that the Democracy Working Group at their meeting on 16th March 2016 had considered each comment made and the scores received and favoured recommendation of Option 1 for adoption.

It was stressed that seating arrangements for any agreed option would be discussed and agreed by Group Leaders, and the appendices did not reflect a definitive seating plan, but a configuration only.

Committee's attention was also drawn to the additional costs associated with a change in configuration, estimated at £2,000.

Debate ensued and in opening, at the request of Members, the Governance and Civic Officer clarified how the average scores had been arrived at; this being the mean average of all responses received, and Members had been asked to score each question out of 10.

Opposing views were expressed during the discussion with some Members feeling the change was unnecessary and a waste of money. Some had found themselves seated in uncomfortable positions and considered the change to be for the worse. Concern was also expressed regarding the continuing movement of the water cooler, from a hygiene perspective.

In responding, it was stressed that the options presented were configurations only, and no individual seating plans had been agreed. This would be the responsibility of the Group Leaders and individual personal circumstances would be taken into consideration. It was clarified that the additional costs were a one-off cost, to relocate floor boxes to prevent trip hazards and the re-location of the water cooler on a permanent basis.

Referring to the data contained in Section 2.5 of the report, Members commented that there still did not appear to be an overwhelming preference or case for change and it was proposed that no change be recommended. Several Members supported this view, however others considered option 1 had helped deliver the original objective, that being to deliver a better opportunity for debate and to aid the democratic process and outlined their reasons for this.

The Committee considered whether the Democracy Working Group should be asked to investigate further options but were advised that numerous other options had been investigated. Due to the numerous limitations of the room, which had been outlined in the previous report, any other re-configurations would require a considerable additional spend as they would require new furniture and / or the relocation of fixed AV equipment.

It was therefore proposed and seconded that no change in configuration be recommended and that Members should liaise with their Group Leaders over individual circumstances to ensure these were accommodated in the seating plan.

On that basis it was:-

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND** to Council that Option 3 be the preferred option and as such there be no change in configuration.

73 CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 (CAI.51 15/16)

Consideration was given to a report which presented the draft Annual Report for Members' comment and agreement prior to submission to Annual Council.

Members commented on the amount of work they had undertaken throughout the year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report, in its current format, be submitted to Annual Council.

74 FORWARD PLAN (CAI.52 15/16)

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 pre-scrutiny.

No items were identified at this stage.

At the request of Members, a brief position update was provided in respect of Quickline and the appointment of an External Audit.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

75 WORK PLAN (CAI.53 15/16)

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

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

76 EXCLUSION OF 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 grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

77 GAINSBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND MARKETS (CAI.54 15/16)

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with outline proposals for West Lindsey District Council's involvement in the management of Gainsborough Town Centre including the street market. The report had been submitted to the Committee in order that they could scrutinise the options which had been considered, including the preferred option, this being set out in Section 5 of the report, with a view to making recommendations to Prosperous Communities Committee.

In presenting the report, Officers outlined at length the background and history to the Town Centre Management and West Lindsey's previous involvement, together with details of all of the options which had been explored to-date.

Currently the Council was not involved in the proactive management of Gainsborough town centre, yet it had been recognised that the revival of the Market Place and surrounding area, was integral to the success of the place. It was considered that the public realm work had provided a good foundation to build on but that there were still many issues to address, as identified by the Thinking Place project.

To this end, it was being proposed to re-focus current resources, working towards the following objectives:

- To improve the built environment and restore the historic fabric of the town centre
- To encourage a more rounded and diverse mix of shops and services in the town, addressing known gaps in provision
- To enhance and expand the street market and promote the further animation of the streetscape
- To engage with and support the existing business community, and to rebuild relationships with key partners;

whilst at the same time exploring options for the longer term future management and operation of the street Market.

Key objectives and indicative work streams were outlined to the Committee together with their linkages to the wider Gainsborough Growth Programme.

Detailed and lengthy discussion ensued, and in opening, Members asked a number of questions regarding the Council's legal duties in respect of operating a Market, what the Gainsborough Town Centre Partnership's involvement was? What had been the markets previous objectives? Why was it failing and how did it engender entrepreneurialism if it continuously lost money? Why the District Council operated Gainsborough's Markets when it did not support other markets in the District ie Market Rasen?

The questions were responded to accordingly and it was stressed that the issue of the Market was being looked at in the wider context of Gainsborough's Regeneration and Growth and as such the market was part of this package.

A number of Members expressed concern that the Council wanted to continue to support and to continue to invest in a failing concern. There was an overriding view that the Market was failing due to the way it was being operated. Members considered the expenditure was way too high and this stemmed from management operation decisions, for example, the same number of stalls were erected on a Saturday as were on a Tuesday, despite their only being an average of 7 traders on a Saturday. Members questioned why self-erect options had not been considered. Another example offered was the handing out of electric cables by Council staff, why were these not simply left for traders to manage themselves. The introduction of invoicing for stalls was also questioned and this did not make stall rental easy and again was considered to be contributing to over expenditure. Concern was expressed that this was a medium term Strategy when quick wins were required.

Comments were also expressed that if the driver to continuing operating the Markets was to support local businesses, should they be asked to make a contribution towards it upkeep? Had consultation on the benefits of the Market to businesses been undertaken with them?

It was also suggested that different styles of market should be trialled, for example car boots and bric-a-brac offering different rates for traders over public and that the market should be held on different days with greater advertising and promotion being undertaken.

Some Members were supportive of the Market's retention and acknowledged that this was part of the visitor economy but wanted to see tangible visible benefits. Concerns was also expressed that if the Markets were to cease this would have a detrimental effect to the visitor economy, which some Members wanted to see increased as opposed to scaled back. It was suggested that the running of the Market should be left to experts in the field and Council involvement was potentially hindering its growth and allowing opportunities to be missed.

Referring to Option 4.1 of the report, the Committee expressed concern that this option presented the town with risks and could potentially result in further decline within the town centre.

Some Members requested better partnership working and were of the view that the market had operated before the Council had become involved and would continue to do so if the Council ceased to be involved, just not at a cost to the Authority. It was also noted the recommended option did nothing to address previous concerns arising from two petitions submitted to the Authority.

In light of all of the above comments the Committee requested that the paper be deferred and re-submitted to them with answers to the questions they had posed. The Lead Officer advised that this was not within their gift and re-iterated their role was to make recommendations on the preferred option to the Prosperous Communities Committee who would ultimately decide on the future of the Market.

A proposal was the moved and seconded that:

> It be recommended to Prosperous Communities that in order to encourage the Growth of Gainsborough the contract for the Market Operations be tendered for with a view to scaling back West Lindsey District Council involvement especially regarding stall erection. That events continue to be pursued, but in liaison with partners, but that the Council do not invest further or directly into the running of Gainsborough Market. Furthermore the Market Trader rules be amended as per the report.

Officers made it clear that the Prosperous Communities Committee would need to have further information before they could consider the proposed recommendation from the Challenge and Improvement Committee as the arising implications would need to be fully considered in order for a legally sound decision to be made.

In light of this, the proposal was withdrawn and replaced with: -

The Challenge and Improvement Committee would recommend to the Prosperous Communities that in light of their comments and concerns no decision be taken on this matter until such time as these have been answered.

This was moved and seconded and on that basis it was

> **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Prosperous Communities Committee that the preferred option not be supported and that in light of the comments and concerns expressed when scrutinising the report no decision be taken on this matter until such time as these have been answered.

78 CONSIDERATION OF SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC BODY – ISSUE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN WEST LINDSEY

Consideration was given to a report which presented Members with an outline approach to identifying and inviting relevant bodies associated with the issue of youth unemployment.

Members were welcoming of the approach outlined in the report and discussion ensued regarding the proposed agencies to be invited.

The role of the Education Authority was considered limited and Members therefore suggested this should be replaced with Lincoln College, the current sponsor of Gainsborough Academy. Brief discussions were held regarding some of the current practises being undertaken at the Academy.

A number of other agencies were suggested this included, William Farr School, Caistor Grammar School and individual employers.

Agreement was reached that the Careers Service would be the first party invited to attend.

Members acknowledged that their scope of influence could be considered small, however it was important to understand what some of these other agencies required to be successful and see if the Council could find a creative solution to assist.

On that basis it was

RESOLVED that:

(a) a revised report setting out revised agencies be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee along a with a series of draft questions to be posed to the Careers Service.

(b) the Careers Service be invited to attend at the Committee's June Meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.43 pm

Chairman